

## 2. Visiting a war memorial



**Background:** This is a general lesson plan that can be adapted for different age groups within secondary schools and used at any time of year. It will be of particular use as part of a wider study of the World Wars or other conflicts, or around Remembrance Day. It is a useful follow up to War Memorials Trust's secondary lesson, 'What are war memorials?' During the lesson pupils will have the opportunity to apply their knowledge about war memorials by identifying the purpose and type of a local one. The lesson also provides an opportunity for pupils to develop and express their own opinions about war memorials. If an actual visit to a memorial is not possible photographs can be used. Examples are available in the Gallery section of [www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org](http://www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org).

**Suitable for:** Key Stages 3 and 4

**Learning objectives:** Pupils will learn:

- What type of war memorial their local one is, and what design features it has
- To consider their own and others' opinions about war memorial design

**Learning outcomes:** Pupils will be able to:

- Explain what the key features of their local war memorial are
- Express their opinion about the war memorial and listen to that of others

**Resources:** 'Planning a visit to a war memorial,' 'Teachers' information about war memorials,' and 'Types of war memorial' secondary helpsheets, 'Looking at a war memorial' secondary resource sheet.

### Introduction

- Ensure that all necessary risk assessments have been carried out before taking pupils out of school.
- Explain the purpose for the visit and recap any prior learning, especially if you have used War Memorials Trust's secondary lesson 'What are war memorials?'
- Establish a code of conduct that pupils will be expected to follow during the visit. Remind them of the historical and emotional significance of the memorial and how they should therefore behave. Further suggestions for this can be found in our 'Planning a visit to a war memorial' secondary helpsheet.

### Suggested teaching points and activities

- War Memorials Trust's 'Looking at a war memorial' secondary resource sheet contains the space for pupils to record their responses to and information about the memorial.

- Take photographs of the war memorial to use in future lessons, including its location and close ups of significant features and inscriptions, especially names if you are planning to research these.
- Encourage pupils to examine the memorial, identify what type it is, what material it is made from and its features. They could also assess its condition.
- Draw attention to any names on the memorial. Look for surnames that are the same and discuss why this might be. Pupils should consider the impact of such losses. It might be possible to calculate the proportion of that community that was lost during a particular conflict. Relating this to something pupils are familiar with may help them understand the scale of loss (for example calculating how many of their class/year group would have been affected).
- If you have been able to research anything about the history of the war memorial or the people it commemorates prior to the visit, you could explain these stories to pupils while they are on site.
- Encourage pupils to think about their impressions of the war memorial. They can consider these questions during the visit or discuss them back in the classroom:
  - What is your opinion of the design of the war memorial? Why do you think it was originally chosen by the community to commemorate those they had lost? Do you think it is a suitable way of remembering the fallen?
  - Consider the location of the war memorial – is the location significant (some locations were chosen because they were meaningful for those commemorated)? Does it make it accessible to people wanting to use the memorial to remember (e.g. during Remembrance services). Is there any risk (e.g. from theft or damage) posed to the memorial by its current location or the surrounding area?
  - Is the memorial still as important/relevant to the community today as it was when it was first created? Why/why not? Do you think we should work to look after the memorial?
  - What is your overall impression of the war memorial? How does standing in front of it make you feel?
- Additional information to help you lead this discussion can be found in War Memorials Trust's 'Teachers' information about war memorials' and 'Types of war memorial' secondary helpsheets.

## Conclusion

- Draw together some of the ideas pupils have offered during discussion. If applicable, link their work in this lesson to future learning (see ideas for extension activities and further work).
- Check the War Memorials Online website ([www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk](http://www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk)) to see if the memorial you have visited is recorded on it. If it is, add any information or photographs that you are able to as a result of your visit. If it is not, create a new record for the memorial using the information from the visit. This could be an activity for pupils to get involved in beyond the lesson too, perhaps by setting out to record all the war memorials in the locality. Further information about using the website and activities pupils could do is given in the Youth Groups section of [www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org](http://www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org).

## Suggestions for differentiation and further work

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**Registered Charity Commission Number:** 1062255  
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The activities in this lesson plan are suggestions only and teachers will need to adapt the lesson to take account of the needs of their class, and extend it with further work if necessary:

- Descendants of those named on a war memorial may still live locally, and some pupils may have relatives involved in current conflicts. Teachers should consider and be sensitive to how this may affect pupils.
- Having seen the local war memorial pupils could now progress to researching the names that are commemorated on it, or finding out more about the history of the memorial itself and the decisions that were made when it was created. See the range of other secondary lesson plans from War Memorials Trust.
- Pupils can get involved in raising awareness about the memorial within the community, helping to monitor its condition, record information about it and take steps to protect it. This has links with aspects of the Citizenship curriculum. War Memorials Trust has information about In Memoriam 2014 and War Memorials Online, both projects with which young people can get involved, in the Youth Groups section of [www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org](http://www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org).

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