

# Assembly: What are war memorials?



War Memorials Trust

**Outline:** This assembly plan tells you what information should be included in your assembly and provides suggestions for how to deliver it. You may wish to adapt the format depending on the number and age of the pupils involved. The assembly can be used as a general introduction to what war memorials are and their history. It could be used around Remembrance Day or other significant anniversaries as a one-off, or be used to start a longer topic on war memorials and be followed by War Memorials Trust's lessons on war memorials and related issues with specific classes. During this assembly pupils will learn what war memorials are, how many of them there are in the UK and when many of them were created.

**Suggested timing:** 20 minutes

**Suitable for:** Key Stages 1 and 2

**Resources:** Photos of your local war memorial (if possible; if not photographs of any war memorial from [www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org/youth-groups/gallery](http://www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org/youth-groups/gallery) can be used), 'how many war memorials are there in the UK?' number cards, timeline cards, 'Teachers' information about war memorials' and 'Types of war memorials' primary helpsheets.

**Suggested teaching:**

## Introduction:

- Explain to pupils that they are going to learn about what war memorials are in this assembly. If appropriate, link this to any significant dates (such as Remembrance Day) so that the idea of examining war memorials is put into context.
- Before showing any photos or giving any further information, ask pupils what they think a war memorial is and take some answers.

## Key question 1: What are war memorials?

- Use children's answers to this question to explain that:
  - War memorials can be any object – some are large monuments located in prominent positions and might be in the shape of a cross or a statue, others are smaller, some are more unusual (additional information on different sorts of war memorials is given in our 'Types of war memorials' and 'Teachers' information on war memorials' primary helpsheets).
  - War memorials are intended to commemorate people who fought, died or were otherwise involved in a war or conflict. Some list the names of the people commemorated while others do not.
- Explain to pupils where a local war memorial is and describe what type it is and who it commemorates (if your school's locality has more than one war memorial you could compare them to emphasise the differences between war memorials). Photos of your local war memorial could be used to help explain key points.

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- If there is not a war memorial locally or photographs are not available, photos of other memorials taken from the Gallery on War Memorials Trust's learning website could be used instead.

### **Key question 2: How many war memorials are there in the UK?**

- Ask five children to volunteer and bring them to the front of the assembly. Give each of them one of the 'how many war memorials are there in the UK?' number cards to hold up.
- Ask other pupils to guess which number is the correct one. Tell them that the correct answer is 100,000 and that it is estimated that this is the number of war memorials that there are in the UK.
- Explain that, while this is a large number of war memorials, an important thing about them is that they are all different (they were usually created by local communities and there have never been any rules about war memorials and what form they should take, and so each one reflects the individual choices of the community that created it). This means that they are all important to their community, as well as being important historically as reminders of past events, and this is why it is important that young people, the next generation, find out about them and help to look after them.

### **Key question 3: When were war memorials created and why?**

- Recap that war memorials remember wars and ask children to suggest which wars might be remembered by war memorials. After taking their suggestions ask five different children to come up and give each one a timeline card. Arrange them in chronological order.
- Explain that war memorials have been created throughout history, with the earliest recorded being from the seventh century, but a large number (roughly two-thirds) were created after the First World War. Use the timeline to highlight when this was in relation to other key dates (you may wish to add to the timeline with other dates your pupils may be familiar with, such as when they were born, when your school opened, any other dates that are significant locally, to help pupils understand the amount of time that has passed since the World Wars).
- Ask pupils what the link between 1914 (the start of the First World War) and 2014 is.

### **Conclusion**

- End the assembly by encouraging pupils to try and notice their local war memorial next time they come across it, and to remember what it means.

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