

# Changes to war memorials and Remembrance



**Background:** This lesson examines some of the changes to war memorials that have occurred over time, and also looks at some of the changes to Remembrance commemorations that have taken place since 1918. It is designed to extend older pupils' knowledge of Remembrance and encourage them to consider their own views of its importance, and also places the idea of war memorials into historical context, helping pupils to understand the different reasons why so many have been created at different points in history.

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

**Learning objectives:** Pupils will learn:

- That the function and style of war memorials has altered over time
- How Remembrance Day traditions originated and how these have changed at key times since 1918

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

- Explain some of the key changes to what and who war memorials commemorate
- Explain how the way in which Remembrance Day has been marked has changed since 1918 and explain some of the reasons for and their opinion of this

**Resources:** 'Changes to war memorials and Remembrance' secondary lesson PowerPoint, 'Teachers' information about war memorials' secondary helpsheet.

**Introduction:**

- Show a picture of a war memorial (you could use a photograph of your local one, or there are examples of fairly traditional designs that pupils are likely to be familiar with given on slide 4) and ask pupils to explain what it is and any key date they associate it with.
- Establish that war memorials are often focal points during Remembrance services that take place around 11<sup>th</sup> November. Briefly recap the basics of what Remembrance Day is (it is expected pupils of this age will be aware of why we have Remembrance Day, when it is and a basic knowledge of what war memorials are, so at this point a simple overview is all that is required).
- Explain that, although we tend to associate Remembrance with the two World Wars and increasingly with more recent conflicts, the history of war memorials themselves extends back beyond the twentieth century. In addition to this, the way Remembrance Day has been marked has not always been what pupils may know today, and that this lesson will focus on some of these changes and the reasons for them.

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## **Suggested teaching points and activities:**

### **Which wars are commemorated by war memorials?**

- You may wish to use this part of the lesson to recap any conflicts prior to the First World War that your pupils will be familiar with and when these were – a timeline may be helpful for this. You could also add to this with conflicts from the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

### **What were pre-First World War memorials like?**

- Slides 5 and 6: Using the photographs of memorials to earlier conflicts, explain what these memorials commemorate and discuss key aspects of their designs. Additional information about these differences is given in War Memorials Trust's 'Teachers' information about war memorials' secondary helpsheet but the key points pupils should be aware of are:
  - Prior to the nineteenth century, most war memorials were erected to commemorate significant leaders or individuals, events or victories.
  - It was not commonplace to list the names of all individuals from lower ranks in the same way that it is now until the later nineteenth and early twentieth century. Some individuals from these wars are commemorated but these tend to be on smaller memorials erected by families, such as plaques placed in churches.
  - This means some memorials from this period are more elaborate and celebratory in appearance than more recent examples.

### **How and why did commemoration change after the First World War?**

- If pupils have previously studied the First World War you may wish to recap any key relevant information that they will be familiar with, particularly concerning the war's impact on communities. If they have not studied the First World War, give a brief summary of key facts about it to put the following information into context.
- Slide 7: Explain that the First World War is seen as a major turning point in terms of the commemoration of war. There are an estimated 100,000 war memorials in the UK and around two thirds of these are thought to be associated with the First World War.
- Ask pupils why they think this increase in war memorials occurred and discuss their suggestions. The key points for them to understand are:
  - The First World War saw more casualties than previous wars – over 900,000 in the British army died, and many more were injured.
  - Many people volunteered for service, which meant that most communities had at least some sort of connection to those involved (there are only around 50 'thankful villages' where a community suffered no losses). Therefore there was a widespread feeling that the service and sacrifices of ordinary people should be marked. Many war memorials refer to those that served and returned as well as those who died, reflecting a widespread respect for everyone who served.
  - The impact of the war on those at home was greater than in previous wars in other ways – civilians were more involved than in previous conflicts
  - The bodies of the dead were not repatriated but were buried close to where they had died, resulting in few families being able to visit their relative's grave. This led to a call for war memorials to commemorate the fallen at home too.
- Slide 7: Explain that the result of this was the creation of a huge number and variety of war memorials, many of which individually named people of all ranks (a feature that became more

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widespread after the Boer War but is less common on memorials to previous wars). The variation in design is due to the fact that they were all created by communities which no central rules about their appearance, so they are very personal reflections of the feelings of communities at the time.

- War Memorials Trust's 'What are war memorials?' secondary lesson plan goes into more detail about the different types of war memorials and why communities chose different designs. You could use the activities from that lesson here to familiarise pupils with the range of war memorial types and designs that can be found in the UK. You may need to allow extra time for this.
- Bring the issue up to date by giving an overview of how later conflicts have been commemorated, including the fact that many Second World War and subsequent casualties' names were added to existing war memorials, and that details of current conflicts, as well as additions to past inscriptions that were missing originally, are still added now.
- The idea of more 'functional' war memorials such as the memorial buildings shown on slides 8 and 9 also provides an interesting contrast to the other examples looked at in this lesson and show another way of commemorating those affected by conflict that many communities chose – by providing something for the community and future generations.

### **Changes to Remembrance Day commemorations**

- Explain that, as well as war memorials changing over time, the way in which people use memorials and commemorate these conflicts has also varied at times since 1918. There is more information about this in War Memorials Trust's 'Teachers' information about war memorials' secondary helpsheet, which you can use to guide discussion about this.
- In particular, encourage pupils to consider **why** some of these changes in opinion towards Remembrance occurred – why was it generally considered less important to 'remember' towards the middle of the twentieth century and why might some people have seen it as a cause for celebration rather than sombre reflection? Encourage pupils to put themselves in the position of people at the time and consider what they may have felt about commemorating the war at different times. There is potential here to include an activity using drama or writing in role.

### **Remembrance today**

- Ask pupils what is significant about this year (2014; if using this plan in later years you may wish to amend the question accordingly) and through their answers establish that 2014 is the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War, and that events to mark the centenary of key events during the war will be taking place over the next few years.
- Encourage pupils to consider their opinions of the importance of the centenary and of Remembrance more generally – do they feel it is important to continue to commemorate the First World War 100 years on? Why/why not? You may wish to set up a debating-style discussion to explore this, get pupils to present their opinion or to examine the question in writing.

### **Conclusion:**

- Recap the key parts of the lesson and draw together any opinions/conclusions reached by pupils about the importance of commemorating past conflicts and continuing to observe Remembrance Day.

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- Pupils should understand that many people feel that the First World War and other conflicts should continue to be commemorated, even though in some cases those conflicts are beyond living memory, to ensure that the people involved are not forgotten and that we can continue to learn about the past.

### **Suggestions for differentiation and further work**

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 can extend it with further work if needed:

- You may wish to adapt the conflicts mentioned in this lesson to include any that are of particular local significance or more relevant to pupils.
- You may be able to visit a war memorial locally to examine its design and try to identify any of the features mentioned in this lesson. Further information about planning a visit can be found in War Memorials Trust's 'Visiting a war memorial' secondary lesson plan.
- War Memorials Trust's 'Designing a memorial' secondary lesson plan provides more detailed information about the different types of war memorial that exist in the UK and guides pupils through selecting appropriate designs for a memorial.
- The First World War Centenary may provide opportunities locally for pupils to get involved in commemorative events and activities.

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