

## 2. What are war memorials?



**Background:** This lesson moves on from the general idea of Remembrance and encourages pupils to think specifically about what war memorials are, what their purpose is and the variety of forms of memorial that can be found. It provides essential prior knowledge for War Memorials Trust's later primary lessons on the continuing importance of war memorials, but could also be taught as a standalone lesson around Remembrance time. It may also be an interesting conclusion to more general studies of the World Wars, by showing the impact of conflict.

**Suitable for:** Key Stage 2 (could be adapted for Key Stage 1)

**Learning objectives:** Children will learn:

- What war memorials are and why they were created
- Some of the different types of memorial and the range of information on them

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

- Explain what a war memorial is and what its purpose is
- Describe some well known types of memorial and explain some of the reasons they vary

**Resources:** war memorial pictures, 'Teachers' information about war memorials' and 'Types of war memorial' primary helpsheets, 'What are war memorials?' PowerPoint, 'Why were war memorials created?' primary resource sheet, 'numbers of war memorials in the UK' cards, timeline cards.

### Introduction

#### What do pupils know about war memorials?

- Slide 2: Ask pupils what they think of when they hear/see the words 'war memorial.' Prompt them with questions such as, 'what are war memorials,' 'what do they look like,' 'what are they for,' and 'when might you visit one?' Note their answers on the slide to come back to later.
- Lead into a discussion of what we 'remember' on Remembrance Day. If War Memorials Trust's lesson, 'What is Remembrance?' has been used then a recap of this is sufficient.
- Slides 3 and 4: Introduce the learning objectives.

### Suggested teaching points and activities

#### What are war memorials?

- Slide 5: Show pictures of different memorials (some are given on the PowerPoint slide and others can be printed from the gallery of war memorials on

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[www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org](http://www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org)), ensuring a range of types and designs is shown. Pupils should spend time examining these in groups and thinking about why that design was chosen, what their opinions of the memorials are and whether any designs surprise them (and if so why).

- Discuss and explain features they have noticed, especially pointing out and explaining any symbolic elements such as Victory statues, religious elements, symbols of mourning or patriotism. Explain that all are war memorials and that these vary widely – were pupils surprised by any of the designs? Compare the pictures to a local war memorial if possible. Information about the different types of war memorials and what different designs mean can be found in War Memorials Trust's 'Types of war memorials' primary helpsheet.
- **Compare** different types of war memorials (there is information about this in the 'Types of war memorial' and 'Teachers' information about war memorials' primary helpsheets). Explain that all war memorials are unique – both in terms of design and of the people that created them.
- Explain that they were created by communities with no 'rules' about what the memorial should look like. Each one reflects community feeling at the time and the way friends and family of the dead chose to remember them. This accounts for the variety in designs that we can see. Other comparisons to make include:
  - The information on war memorials. Some do not list names at all, others may list the full name or initials and surname, and some list this plus other details such as rank and dates of service or death.
  - Who is named on the memorial. This depended on the wishes of the community. Some commemorate only those who served and died, some include those who survived. Others also commemorate civilians.
  - Who created the memorial. Families, workplaces, schools, scout groups, churches or clubs, as well as geographical communities erected memorials to their fallen.
- Explain that the reason for such variation in war memorial design is that each one was created by different communities, so each one is a reflection of that community's thoughts and feelings about commemorating their dead.
- Slide 6: Get pupils to guess how many war memorials there are in the UK and reveal the correct answer (100,000). Alternatively you could use the 'number of war memorials in the UK' cards and get volunteers to hold them up while pupils guess the correct one.

### **When were war memorials created?**

- Slide 7: Look at the timeline and use it to help children put the First World War (as the period when many war memorials were created) into context. You can adapt it to show any other periods or conflicts pupils know about.
- Alternatively, you could use War Memorials Trust's timeline cards to create a timeline display or have pupils holding up the date cards. Again additional dates can be added in that are relevant and help pupils understand the passing of time since the First and Second World Wars.

### **Why were war memorials created?**

- Give out War Memorials Trust's 'Why were war memorials created?' primary resource sheet and give pupils time to examine the inscriptions on the memorials shown. Ask them to explain what these tell us about **why** communities created war memorials. Feedback their

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suggestions and add to them through further discussion and questions. Ensure pupils understand:

- People killed during the World Wars were not repatriated and buried at home, so bereaved families had no grave as a focal point for their grief.
  - Wars such as the Boer War (1899-1902) saw a positive shift in public perception of volunteers in the armed forces and therefore a feeling of pride and an urge to commemorate the fallen individually by those that knew them personally.
  - The numbers killed and the far reaching impact of the war (including on civilians) had never been experienced before and meant an unprecedented calling for memorials to commemorate the sacrifices made and to act as a permanent reminder of what had happened.
- Slide 8: Recap understanding and fill in the bullet points on the slide. You could also return to the pupils' original thoughts on what war memorials are (slide 2) and add to this to show what they now know.

### **Conclusion**

- Question pupils about what they have learned in this part of the lesson and ensure they understand the key points about defining a memorial, the different types of memorial that exist and why and how they vary.

### **Support/extension:**

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.

- When examining pictures, lower ability children may find it helpful to examine pictures of war memorials that have a well-known design (e.g. a cross) and clear information on it so that they can develop a good understanding of its purpose and significance. Word cards to accompany pictures of different types of war memorials may help to consolidate understanding of the different names given to memorials and will be useful for a classroom display.
- This lesson is largely based on discussion and use of strategies such as talking partners may help all pupils to be included and have their thinking supported.
- Older or more able children could extend their learning by researching the history of a local memorial or investigating how memorialisation has changed over time. Further resources for these topics can be downloaded from the primary and secondary sections of our website.

### **Ideas for further work:**

- Children's understanding will be enhanced if they visit a local war memorial and apply what they have learned. Further suggestions for this and the cross curricular work that could be linked to a visit are given in War Memorials Trust's next lesson, 'Visiting a war memorial,' and our primary helpsheet, 'Planning a visit to a war memorial.'
- The activities carried out during this lesson and a visit to a war memorial provide opportunities to create a classroom display of work produced relating to war memorials and Remembrance.

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