

# 1. Armistice Day 1918



**Background:** This lesson provides a way of looking at the events surrounding 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918 which brought World War I to an end. It is the first of three lesson plans and has been created to help provide pupils with a greater understanding of what led to the end of World War I and why we still commemorate 11<sup>th</sup> November today. Pupils will learn about the events which led to the end of World War I, the signing of the Armistice on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918 and the reactions to this, the Paris Conference which took place in 1919, the resulting Treaty of Versailles and the reaction to the peace treaty. While it is possible that some pupils may have prior knowledge of Armistice Day and the events before and after it, this is not assumed and teachers may wish to adapt the lesson to include more challenging material for more able pupils.

**Suitable for:** Key Stage 2

**Learning objective:** Pupils will learn:

- What happened towards the end of World War I
- When and why the Armistice between Germany and the Allies was signed
- What happened after the Armistice to ensure peace continued

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

- Explain what happened to leading up to and on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918
- Explain the reaction to the Armistice
- Explain what happened as a result of the Paris Peace Conference
- Give reasons why the Treaty of Versailles was not popular with everyone

**Resources:**

- 'Teachers' Armistice primary helpsheet',
- 'Armistice Day Primary resource matching and sequencing cards',
- Images showing the reaction to the news of the Armistice

**Introduction:**

- Ask pupils what the date 11<sup>th</sup> November means to them? Through discussion establish that today we know this date as Remembrance Day. Pupils should consider what happens on Remembrance Day and why. Ask pupils if they know why Remembrance Day is commemorated on this date? Ensure they understand that it was the date which World War I ended.
- Pupils will need to have some understanding of World War I, when it occurred, which countries were involved and the effect of the conflict on people at home. They may already have this understanding if they have previously studied World War I in which case a brief recap should be all that is necessary

- If the pupils have limited or no knowledge of World War I it would be useful for them to know the following:
  - began in 1914
  - ended over 4 years later on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918
  - the Allies, including Britain, France, Russia and America, fought against the Central Powers, including Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria
  - first truly global conflict
  - changes in fighting compared to previous wars: introduction of trench warfare and tanks
  - many people were killed or injured: over 900,000 in the British Army were killed
  - affected everyone in the country

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

#### **What happened in the months leading up to the end of World War I?**

- To understand why the Armistice was agreed in November 1918, pupils first need to know why this was necessary. This can be done by looking at the events which took place leading up to November 1918, key battles and offensives and who was in the stronger position as a result of these
- This can be done in a range of ways and may depend on the existing understanding your class has
  - In pairs or small groups pupils could order the events to create a timeline
  - In pairs or small groups pupils could match the event to a short description and then order to create a timeline ('Armistice Day primary resource matching and sequencing cards')
  - As a whole class create a washing line timeline and discuss the events one by one. Pupils could consider whether the event put the Allies or the Central Powers in a stronger position
- It should become apparent through discussion that Germany was in a strong position at the beginning of 1918 and this was further enhanced by Russia's withdrawal from the conflict. However following the arrival of American troops to support the Allies, new tactics employed by the Allies which had more successful results and the discontent in Germany, the tide turned and the Allies were in the stronger position
- As a result various ceasefires began to be agreed between the Allies and some of the Central Powers. These saw the withdrawal of some of Germany's allies from the conflict before the Armistice on 11<sup>th</sup> November came into effect

#### **When and where was the Armistice signed?**

- Using the information in the 'Teachers' Armistice primary helpsheet' explain to pupils what happened on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918 including where the Armistice talks took place, when the Armistice was signed and when it came into effect
- If pupils have created a timeline as part of the previous activity you may wish for them to add the events of 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918 to this

#### **What was the reaction to the Armistice?**

- Ask pupils to suggest how people reacted to the news of the Armistice. You may wish to provide images which highlight the celebratory and joyous mood of many
- It is important to explain that the mood was tinged with sadness as many people had suffered the loss of a loved one during the conflict
- The emotion and reaction in response to the Armistice can be explored further using War Memorials Trust's 'primary lesson plan Armistice Day: Exploring Emotions'

## What happened after the Armistice was signed?

- It is important for pupils to understand that the Armistice was a cease fire between German and Allied forces that had been agreed so that they could discuss a possible peace treaty
- Explain to pupils that at the Paris Peace Conference which began in January 1919 discussions took place to decide the different points of the peace treaty. The leaders from the Allied countries had different ideas about what the outcomes of the peace treaty should be
- Ask the children for suggestions of what they would have included in the peace treaty
  - Who should be blamed/take responsibility for starting the war?
  - What could be put in place to make sure peace lasted for a long time?

The time taken on this activity and whether it is purely a discussion or a written exercise depends on the depth you wish pupils to consider the questions

- Share with pupils the key points from the Treaty of Versailles which was signed on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1919. Do they think the treaty was fair? Why?
  - Discussion around the fairness of the treaty provides an opportunity for drama. Pupils could be take on the role of a person from an Allied country or a person from the German delegation and share their reaction to the Treaty of Versailles

Through pupils' discussions it should be determined that Germany felt the treaty was too harsh and that the Big Three had had to compromise on some outcomes in comparison to what they had originally hoped for

- In the UK there was a public wave of remembrance which led to the creation of vast numbers of war memorials. This can be explored further using War Memorials Trust's primary lesson plans 'Armistice Day 1918 and now' and 'What are war memorials?'

## Conclusion:

- Recap the key points from the lesson focusing on the date that the Armistice was signed and what happened to ensure that there was peace following the end of World War I
  - If pupils have studied or have knowledge of World War II you may wish to discuss how successful the terms of the Treaty of Versailles were in keeping peace for years to come
- If this lesson is being taught in the period leading up to or following the centenary of the Armistice in 2018 you may ask pupils to reflect on this and the events from 100 years ago. A photograph of the school's local war memorial or a poem such as 'In Flanders Fields' or 'For the Fallen' may be used as part of this reflection

## 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.

## Ideas for further work:

There are many opportunities to extend this lesson and link it with other areas of the curriculum.

- Literacy/Computing: pupils could create a series of newspaper reports or news bulletins which are filmed to document the events leading up to and following 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918
- Geography: pupils could use maps to locate the different countries and major cities which played a role in events leading up to and following 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918

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**Registered Charity Commission Number:** 1062255

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