

3. Armistice Day: exploring emotions



Background: This lesson provides a way of exploring the different emotions that the nation demonstrated following the Armistice on 11th November 1918. It is the third of three lesson plans and has been created to help pupils gain a deeper understanding of the nation's reaction to the end of World War I. Pupils will learn about the celebratory mood, the sadness and grief that marred the celebratory mood, what life was like following World War I and the wave of public remembrance which led to the creation of war memorials on an unprecedented scale.

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

Learning objective: Pupils will learn:

- How people reacted to the news of the Armistice
- Why there was a wave of public remembrance which led to the creation of war memorials

Learning outcomes: Pupils will be able to:

- Use images and inscriptions to explain how people felt following the news of the Armistice
- Give reasons for the different feelings in response to the news
- Explain why war memorials were created on an unprecedented scale

Resources:

- Images of the celebratory mood on Armistice Day 1918,
- Images of war memorial inscriptions

Introduction:

- If taught as lesson 3 in the sequence of Armistice Day lessons, recap what pupils know about World War I and the events leading up to 11th November 1918
- Remind pupils that World War I had lasted for over 4 years despite the fact that many initially thought it would be over in a few months and soldiers would be home by Christmas 1914
- World War I did not just affect the soldiers who were away fighting. People at home were affected too. They faced threats from the sky and from the sea. Women took on jobs which were typically done by men before the war. Children also helped with the war effort by helping to grow vegetables, deliver milk and deliver messages

Suggested teaching points and activities:

What was the reaction to the Armistice and end of World War I?

- Ask pupils to suggest how people may have felt when they heard the news that the Armistice had been signed and World War I was over? How would they have reacted?
- The opportunity could be taken for pupils to create a quick freeze frame to show the different emotions that have been discussed

- Following a brief discussion ask pupils to look at and sort some images which show people's reaction to the war. Images may include those which highlight the celebratory mood such as the crowds gathering in Trafalgar Square and the Mall in London, church bells ringing out, bands marching through streets and maroons (fireworks used as a signal or warning) exploding. Other images may highlight the more sombre mood such as war memorial inscriptions, troops in the trenches or returning home
 - Pupils may choose to sort images using their own categories or ones that you have preselected to highlight the contrasting emotions
 - Once the images have been sorted pupils can write words around them which describe the emotions that are being shown
- You may choose to show films (available online) of people celebrating the Armistice
- Use these written ideas to contribute to a class discussion and develop understanding further by explaining that there was a celebratory mood following the end of the war. People were excited that the soldiers were coming home after several months or years away fighting. However the mood was tinged with sadness because many people had lost loved ones. Over 900,000 men from the British Army did not return home. The majority of the population would have lost a husband, brother, son, father, uncle or neighbour

What was life in Britain like after World War I?

- After the Armistice and the celebrations which followed life in Britain was unable to go back to how it was before the war in 1914. The ability and understanding of the pupils you are working with will determine the detail you wish to explore this question
- You may like to explain that:
 - David Lloyd George was elected as Prime Minister on 14th December 1918 and would represent Britain at the peace talks the following year. He promised British soldiers would return to a land fit for heroes but the reality of this was quite different
 - It took time for all the soldiers who had been fighting to return home.
 - Many of the returning soldiers struggled to adjust to their peacetime life because they had suffered injuries, were disabled or had suffered trauma because of what they had seen and found this difficult to forget
 - War had changed people's opinions on equality. Ordinary soldiers wanted more of a say on how the country was run as they had fought on equal terms with higher ranking officers. Women who had taken on jobs normally done by men were not always keen to give these up and return to looking after the home
 - Britain owed money. They had borrowed money during the war to pay for weapons and machinery and now they needed to pay it back.
 - Many communities began to create war memorials to remember the fallen
- Ask pupils to consider the mood of the country after the immediate end of the war and once they had settled back into everyday life. Had the mood changed from the initial feeling of joy? Their thoughts could be added to the first sorting activity

Why did communities create war memorials?

- Ask pupils to consider how those people whose relatives did not return may have felt
- You may wish to discuss what people would normally do when someone dies: have a funeral, visit a grave. Explain that this was not possible after World War I because the government did not allow the bodies of the fallen to be brought home (no repatriation). Many who were killed were buried overseas, where they fell, or they were missing in action. Ask pupils to consider people's reactions and feelings towards this
- As a result many communities formed war memorial committees and set about creating a war memorial which would be a permanent reminder of the sacrifice made by those who had not returned home and provided a place to visit to grieve and remember

- You may wish to show an image of the school's local war memorial at this point. The inscriptions may suggest how the local community felt at the time and why they felt the need to create a war memorial. Alternatively the inscriptions used earlier in the lesson or those found in the Gallery at <http://www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org/youth-groups/gallery/inscriptions/> could be used to discuss this. Further activities which could be used to explore the local war memorial in subsequent lessons can be found at www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org/primary/pri-lessons

Conclusion:

- Recap the key points from the lesson linking to the contrasting emotions people felt following the end of the First World War
- One way of doing this could be through the use of a conscience alley. Split the class in half. Ask one group to come up with a word or phrase which relates to the celebratory mood associated with the news of the Armistice and ask the other group to come up with a word or phrase which reflects the more sombre mood associated with the loss of life and post war Britain. Line the groups up, facing each other, to create an alley/corridor. Select one pupil to slowly walk through the alley. As they walk past, the rest of the class will whisper their words or phrases

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. Much of the content of the lesson is written with Key Stage 2 in mind but elements could be adapted for younger pupils in Key Stage 1.

- When discussing the reactions and emotions of people to the news of the Armistice, less able pupils may benefit from having cards with words and images to help generate ideas
- It is important to realise that this lesson will introduce pupils to the subjects of war, death and loss, which may be distressing for some. Teachers will need to consider how appropriate it is to approach these subjects with their class, and be sensitive to the needs of individuals who may have direct experience of them

Ideas for further work:

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

- Literacy: explore the work of war poets and look at the emotions they are trying to convey. This could lead to pupils writing their own poetry expressing the different reactions in response to the end of World War I or a creative writing piece of writing which could be used as an inscription on a war memorial
- Art: create artwork which shows the contrasting emotions. Pupils could split their artwork in half to show the celebratory mood on one side and the more sombre mood on the other
- History: research what Armistice celebrations took place in the local area and explore the history of the local war memorial including who formed the war memorial committee, how the memorial was paid for, who designed it. Local history groups or local museums and archives may be able to support you and the pupils in your research

War Memorials Trust 14 Buckingham Palace Road London SW1W 0QP

Telephone: 020 7834 0200 / 0300 123 0764

Email: learning@warmemorials.org **Website:** www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org

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