

Assembly: Centenary of the Armistice



War Memorials Trust

Outline: This assembly covers the events surrounding the Armistice and could be particularly useful as part of the centenary of this event. Pupils will learn about events leading up to, on and after 11th November 1918. Additional information about these events can be found in the 'Teacher's helpsheet 'Armistice'. This assembly could be used in isolation to provide pupils with an understanding of why regional and national events are taking place to mark the centenary of the Armistice or as part of a wider World War I project. This assembly plan tells you what information should be included in your assembly. You may wish to adapt the format depending on the number and age of the pupils involved.

Suggested timing: 20-30 minutes

Suitable for: Key Stages 1 and 2

Resources:

- 'Teachers' Armistice primary helpsheet'
- 1918-1919 timeline cards
- Images relating to the events being discussed

Suggested teaching:

Introduction:

- Introduce the assembly and display 11th November 1918. Ask pupils if this date is familiar to them and why it is an important date?
- Once it has been established that this is the date that World War I ended, you may choose to ask pupils what they already know about World War I. The following key points would be useful for them to know before continuing with the assembly:
 - began in 1914
 - ended over 4 years later on 11th 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
- Following pupils answers or having shared the key points explain that in this assembly they will be learning about when the Armistice was signed on 11th November 1918

Key question 1: What led to the end of World War I?

- Explain that World War I (the Great War as it was known at the time) had lasted much longer than had originally been anticipated. At the start of 1918 Germany and the Central Powers were considered to be in a strong position and it looked like they would go on to be victorious
- Ask for 8 volunteers to come to the front and hold up some key events from 1918 which led to up to 11th November 1918 and the Armistice

- One by one ask the volunteers to turn over their cards to reveal the event. Explain each event briefly. The detail you go into will be determined by the age and experience of your pupils. As a minimum they should understand which side was in the strongest position. More information about each event can be found in the 'Teachers' Armistice primary helpsheet'

Key question 2: what took place on the 11th November?

- Explain that the talks between the Allies and Germany in the railway carriage in the Forest of Compiègne, France lasted for 3 days
- Ask for two more volunteers to come and join the timeline of events. Reveal that the Armistice was signed at 5.10am on 11th November 2018
- Reveal the next event and explain the Armistice came into effect 6 hours later at 11.00am when guns fell silent. World War I had ended. You may like to add that fighting continued up to the last moment
- Explain that news of the Armistice spread quickly around the world. Ask pupils to consider how people at home in Britain, France and the other Allied countries felt when they heard the news that the war had ended and why they felt that way
- Through their answers and subsequent discussion establish that the news of the Armistice was greeted with great joy and lots of celebrations. You may choose to show some images of crowds celebrating the news. However, many people had lost loved ones in the war which meant the celebrations were tinged with sadness

Key question 3: what happened after the Armistice was signed?

- Ask for two final volunteers to come and hold the last two timeline events
- Explain that the Armistice was a ceasefire which allowed for peace talks to take place to discuss a possible treaty. These began in January 1919 at the Paris Peace Conference. The detail into which you wish you explain the talks will depend on the age of the pupils and their existing understanding. Pupils should understand that the leaders of Britain, France and America met to decide what would be included in the peace treaty. Many felt the treaty needed to be strict and have strong penalties for Germany to make sure this was the peace to end all wars
- Explain that the Treaty of Versailles, so called because it was signed at the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles was the treaty which was agreed between Germany and the Allies on 28th June 1919
- You may wish to ask pupils to suggest what they think should have been included in the Treaty before sharing some of the key points

Conclusion

- Refer back to the timeline event which shows World War I ended at 11.00am on 11th of November 1918. Ask pupils if this date and time is familiar. Pupils answers and further discussion should identify that this is the date of Remembrance Day and the time is when the two minute silence takes place
- Sum up the key points from the assembly and if you are delivering this assembly in November 2018 highlight that this Remembrance Day is particular important as it is 100 years since the end of World War I, the centenary of when then Armistice came into effect
- If you would like pupils to have a moment of reflection at the end of the assembly you could display an image of a war memorial which names local people who served during World War I or read out a poem such as Laurence Binyon's 'For the Fallen' before having 2 minutes of silence

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Registered Charity Commission Number: 1062255

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