

# Activity sheet: War memorial epitaphs



War Memorials Trust

On this sheet you will:

- Find out what an epitaph is.
- Collect ideas to come up with your own epitaph for a war memorial.

## What is an epitaph?

An epitaph is a piece of **writing** on a gravestone or memorial. On many gravestones it mentions the person's relatives. Others mention religion. Some are written in a way that 'speaks' to the reader, telling them to **remember** the person or consider their own life.

This style is often used in war memorial **inscriptions**, encouraging the living to remember the dead and live their lives in a way that is **worthy** of those who had sacrificed theirs.

Some epitaphs were widely used on memorials after the First World War and have become well known. For example:

- "When you go home, tell them of us and say  
For your tomorrow, we gave our today." (The Kohima Epitaph)
- "They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old.  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,  
We will remember them." (From *For the Fallen*, Laurence Binyon)
- "Their name liveth for evermore."



Stone of Remembrance at a CWGC cemetery

## Writing an epitaph or a Remembrance poem

There are many other examples of war memorial inscriptions and epitaphs in our Gallery of war memorial images ([www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org/youth-groups/gallery](http://www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org/youth-groups/gallery)). Use ideas from these to either write your own epitaph suitable for a memorial or to write a Remembrance poem. This activity can be done alongside any other war memorial work you might be doing – there are lots of suggestions for other activities and projects on our website.

Your epitaphs can be read out at a Remembrance **service** or be included on a Remembrance object such a **wreath**. If there are lots of you in a group doing this activity you could put all your work together to make a **display** or Remembrance **book**.

Remember a war memorial epitaph is meant to be fairly **short** and usually pays **tribute** to the people commemorated and urges those still living to **remember** them. To get ideas, look at the epitaphs on this sheet and in the pictures on our website and make a list of some of the key words and ideas you want to use. Then try and put those into your own short epitaph. You could use the space on the next page to help you.



Inscription on the memorial gates dedicated to the 24th Nottingham Scouts. © War Memorials Trust, 2011

## Writing your epitaph

Key words and phrases:

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Use this space to write your epitaph or poem