

## 8. What are war memorials made from?



War Memorials Trust

**Background:** This lesson links war memorials to science. It can be used as part of a unit on uses and characteristics of materials to help pupils apply their scientific knowledge, and can also be taught in conjunction with other lessons in this sequence from War Memorials Trust. It would, for example, be a useful introduction to lessons on war memorial designs, and learning about materials war memorials are made from can be useful if children are getting involved in war memorial conservation projects such as War Memorials Online. During the lesson pupils identify a range of materials by looking at what different war memorials are made from. They will learn about the characteristics of different materials, and why some materials are more suitable than others for particular types of war memorials. They will then have the opportunity to apply their scientific knowledge by looking at the situation of one particular war memorial and analyse why certain materials have been chosen for it.

**Suitable for:** Key Stages 1 and 2

**Learning objectives:** Pupils will learn:

- Some materials that war memorials are commonly made from and the characteristics of these materials
- To consider the effects of different variables when selecting materials for a purpose
- Which material is best for a memorial in a given location

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

- Identify the materials that war memorials are made from and their characteristics
- Explain what factors affect a material's suitability to be used for a war memorial
- Understand advantages and disadvantages of using different materials for a war memorial

**Resources:** 'What are war memorials made from?' PowerPoint, selection of materials, 'Teachers' information about war memorials' and 'Types of war memorial' primary helpsheets, pictures of war memorials.

### Introduction

- Slide 2 and 3: Introduce the objectives and context of the lesson.

### What are war memorials made from?

- Slide 4: Ensure that pupils understand that war memorials vary (refer to previous lessons if applicable) and that they are made from a range of materials. Ask them what materials they think war memorials could be made from and list (This could be a talking partner, group or

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whole class discussion). Give out pictures of war memorials from our online gallery if necessary to support identification of materials.

## **Suggested teaching points and activities**

### **What are these materials like?**

- Look at the list pupils have written, and if necessary add to it. See our 'Types of war memorial' primary helpsheet for information about materials that war memorials are often constructed from.
- Slide 5: Give pupils time to examine samples of materials and describe their characteristics. Feedback their ideas. See 'Ideas for further work,' and 'Support and extension' below for suggestions for developing this activity.

### **What materials are suitable for different war memorials?**

- Slide 6: Recap what war memorials are and what their function is, and discuss what 'must haves' a war memorial might need. If examples are needed, this will include ideas such as being long-lasting, having clear inscriptions so people know who is commemorated, and aesthetic appeal (bearing in mind this varies according to what community wishes were when the memorial was erected).
- Slide 7: Link these requirements to the characteristics of materials and explore pupils' ideas about the suitability of different materials for a war memorial. You could either give them a specific memorial type to consider (e.g. a plaque situated inside a building, a roll of honour book whose pages are turned regularly, or a monument to be placed in a town square) or lead a discussion about what memorial different materials such as paper, wood, metal or stone would be appropriate for. You could have each group examining a different memorial or material type and feeding back to the class so that a wide range of points are covered. Examples of a range of different types of war memorials can be found in the Gallery section of [www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org](http://www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org). An activity like this would be a good introduction to War Memorials Trust's next lesson, 'War memorial designs.'
- A well-known example of a war memorial which highlights these issues is the Cenotaph in London. When this was originally built for the 1919 Peace Parade, it was intended to be a temporary structure and was made of wood and plaster. Later it was replaced with an identical design built from stone, and the Cenotaph which stands in Whitehall today was unveiled on November 11<sup>th</sup> 1920. You could discuss why the original Cenotaph was not suitable as a permanent memorial due to its materials and why stone was a better material.
- If applicable, look at a local war memorial and the materials it is made from. Discuss why those materials might have been chosen, given the memorial's location and design.

## **Conclusion**

- Summarise what the children have learned about the characteristics of the materials they have looked at and, for each material, question them about the material's advantages and disadvantages for a war memorial.
- Ensure pupils understand that different materials can be suitable for different memorials and choice of material can depend on many factors including the memorial's structure and location.

## **Support/extension:**

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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. However, some suggestions for differentiating the lesson are given below.

- When asking pupils to describe the characteristics of the material samples, you could support less able children by providing them with a range of words to choose from and therefore extend the vocabulary they use. You could also extend more able pupils by getting them to sort the materials based on their characteristics.
- More able pupils could extend their learning by researching or discussing the wider issues surrounding some materials and war memorials. An increasingly important issue is that of metal theft (see our 'Current issues affecting war memorials' primary helpsheet). Pupils could think about reasons for and against replacing materials with alternatives when war memorials are repaired.

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

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

- Citizenship: pupils could get involved in war memorial conservation and raising community awareness of the memorial. **Any type of work to the structure and fabric of a war memorial must be carried out by professionals**, but young people could find out about the conservation issues surrounding the materials they use in this lesson, take some responsibility for monitoring the condition of the local war memorial and tell the local community about it and potential threats to it. War Memorials Trust has a range of conservation help sheets detailing some of the issues surrounding different materials.
- Science: some further scientific practical work linked to this lesson could be done to consolidate children's knowledge. For example, pupils could predict which material would be most effective if used for a memorial that needed to be weather-proof, strong etc, and then test materials to see if their predictions are correct.
- ICT: There is potential for using ICT in this lesson to record pupils' findings or to research the uses of different materials. Pupils can also get involved with adding information about their war memorial to War Memorials Online, a project which aims to get the public uploading photographs and condition information to a website, [www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk](http://www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk). Further details of how to do this can be found on this website and in the 'War Memorials Online' project sheet for young people in the Youth Groups section of [www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org](http://www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org).
- Art: As well as studying the materials from which a war memorial is made, pupils can examine the design features of a war memorial and think about what they represent and why they were chosen. This is explored further in the next primary lesson, 'War memorial designs.' They can also consider the suitability of different materials for specific design features.
- Maths: If you choose to carry out a sorting activity when pupils are describing the characteristics of materials, this could be a good opportunity to get pupils to use tables or diagrams and apply knowledge acquired during mathematics lessons.

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