

1. What are war memorials?



War Memorials Trust

Background: This lesson is an introduction to war memorials and will equip pupils with the knowledge necessary for them to get the most out of a visit to a local war memorial (which could follow this lesson) or a memorial or war cemetery overseas. During the lesson pupils will learn about the different types of war memorials that exist in the UK and become aware of their significance. By examining examples of war memorials from different periods pupils will also understand some of the changes to the concept of 'Remembrance' that have taken place throughout history.

Suitable for: Key Stages 3 and 4

Learning objectives: Pupils will learn:

- That there are different types of war memorials in the UK
- When and why war memorials have been created by local communities
- How war memorials have changed over time

Learning outcomes: Pupils will be able to:

- Identify some different types of war memorials and explain some aspects of their designs
- Explain why war memorials were created by communities, especially in the aftermath of the First World War
- Explain some of the changes in how conflicts have been commemorated over time

Resources: Pictures of different types of war memorials for groups to annotate (available from the Gallery section of www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org), film clip or photographs of a Remembrance service, 'Types of war memorial' and 'Teachers' information about war memorials' secondary helpsheets, 'What are war memorials?' secondary PowerPoint.

Introduction

- Introduce and capture pupils' interest in the subject by showing a short film clip of a Remembrance service and/or footage from or about the First or Second World Wars (photographs could be used if showing a film is not possible, and an example photo is given on slide 2).
- Question pupils about what is happening to establish/review their existing knowledge, and, if showing a Remembrance service, why it is happening?
- Depending on the extent of pupils' existing knowledge, establish the link between conflicts, Remembrance and war memorials and introduce the objectives for the lesson.

Suggested teaching points and activities

- Slide 5: Give groups different pictures of war memorials, ensuring that the pictures show a range of war memorial types (see the Gallery section on www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org)

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for pictures of different types). Pupils annotate the pictures with things that they notice and can identify about the memorial's structure, images, inscriptions and features, what these may mean or symbolise, and any questions they have about it. Move groups around the pictures until all pupils have seen all of them.

- Slide 6: Lead a discussion about different war memorials, why they have been created at various times during history, and pupils' observations about the pictures. Ensure that pupils understand the following (see our 'Types of war memorials' and 'Teachers' information about war memorials' secondary helpsheets for more information):
 - There are approximately 100,000 war memorials in the UK, commemorating conflicts throughout history. There is huge diversity in their design, inscriptions and appearance. Around two thirds were created after the First World War, the conflict which is seen as something of a turning point in terms of memorialisation, but there are war memorials to conflicts as far back as the seventh century.
 - The purpose of war memorials has altered over time. The focus on commemorating ordinary servicemen and women developed in the late nineteenth century after conflicts such as the Crimean and Boer Wars, and particularly after the First World War when there were so many casualties, many of whom had no known grave and those that did were buried overseas.
 - There have never been any central 'rules' or government guidance on what form memorials should take. Decisions have been made on an individual basis, and after the First World War by local committees. This has led to the diversity we see today.
 - Some communities at this time chose an artistic or architectural form of commemoration, others a more functional memorial such as a school or village hall, and others a simple plaque or roll of honour.
- There are various possibilities for pupil activities in this lesson. They could produce a description of a local war memorial's origins and design for a class or school display. (There is guidance on doing such research in depth in War Memorials Trust's 'Researching a war memorial' secondary lesson plan, but pupils can use their existing knowledge for this activity and use this as a starting point for further research.) Alternatively pupils could write a letter as if from a bereaved relative offering a local war memorial committee suggestions for the design of a war memorial and explaining why a war memorial is wanted by the community.

Conclusion

- Review what pupils have learned. You could return to the questions they posed at the start and see if they can now answer them, or review the activity they have done to check their understanding of the key issues.

Suggestions for differentiation and further work

This lesson is intended to be a general introduction to the subject of war memorials and should give pupils the knowledge needed to help them progress and understand subsequent lessons from War Memorials Trust. 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, and can extend it with further work if needed:

- Teachers should bear in mind that this lesson will address the themes of conflict and loss which some pupils may find distressing. You will need to decide what is appropriate to teach depending on individual circumstances.
- Visit a war memorial with pupils and identify its type and any significant features it has using the knowledge gained during this lesson. Taking photographs of the memorial will be useful if you intend to use subsequent lessons from War Memorials Trust. Further guidance on this is available in War Memorials Trust's 'Visiting a war memorial' secondary lesson plan and our 'Planning a visit to a war memorial' secondary helpsheet.
- Many secondary schools visit war cemeteries and memorials overseas as part of their programme of study, and support for such visits is being made available to secondary schools during the First World War Centenary. You can combine local work near school with the visit by researching the names on your local war memorial prior to a trip and finding out where they are buried or commemorated overseas. Depending on where you are visiting and how much time you have you could then visit the grave of or memorial to a local casualty. Many schools have told us how moving pupils find this and suggest it is an excellent way of bringing the subject matter home to them and helping them see casualties as real people not just names on a memorial. Remember pupils may also be able to trace ancestors – we suggest you inform parents or carers if you plan to do this. Further information about researching the names on a war memorial can be found in our 'Researching names on a war memorial' secondary helpsheet and lesson plan.
- Having learned how the purpose of war memorials has altered over time, another lesson could look at the changes to attitudes to the traditional Remembrance Day commemorations during the twentieth century. Further information about this is given in War Memorials Trust's 'Teachers' information about war memorials' secondary helpsheet. This may be an interesting extension to a more general lesson or assembly about Remembrance in November.
- This lesson lends itself to various opportunities for writing. In addition to or instead of the suggestions in the lesson plan pupils could, for example, produce their own version of a newspaper report about the unveiling of a war memorial (this could be the local one) giving details about its design and purpose.
- The examination of how the community took decisions about the creation and design of a war memorial could be the focus of a citizenship lesson about these processes and be linked with other relevant local examples.

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