

### 3. Visiting a war memorial



War Memorials Trust

**Background:** This lesson is intended to follow War Memorials Trust's primary lesson, 'What is a war memorial?' but also provides useful guidance for a visit to a war memorial taking place at any point. A visit to a local war memorial will enable pupils to consolidate their knowledge of what war memorials and some of their typical features are, and apply this by looking at a local memorial and finding out about its appearance and condition. A visit can also be combined with a lesson on what we can learn from the memorial and researching the names on the war memorial to provide a complete study of your local war memorial and its place in the community. If a visit is not possible, it would still be beneficial for children to study a particular war memorial and carry out some of the activities suggested here, but good quality photographs can be used instead. Some localities may also have relevant museums or other sites that can be worth visiting.

**Suitable for:** Can be adapted for any primary age group, but intended to accompany other lessons aimed at Key Stage 2.

**Learning objectives:** Pupils will learn:

- Where there are war memorials in their local area
- To identify the features of a local war memorial
- To add to an online record of war memorials

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

- Say where the local war memorial is situated
- Describe some of the key features of the local war memorial
- Know who is commemorated on the local war memorial
- Add or update records on War Memorials Online

**Resources:** 'Planning a visit to a war memorial,' 'Teachers' information about war memorials,' and 'Researching a war memorial' primary helpsheets, 'Looking at a war memorial,' primary resource sheet, camera. Other resources needed will depend on the activities chosen.

#### Introduction

- We recommend you carry out a pre-visit before the lesson in order to plan what you are going to ask, tell and show pupils. You may also need to do some simple research before the lesson to be able to lead some of the suggested activities.
- Ensure that the necessary risk assessments and preparations have been carried out.
- Recap our previous primary lesson, 'What are war memorials?' if used, and establish the purpose for the visit.

**War Memorials Trust 14 Buckingham Palace Road London SW1W 0QP**

**Telephone:** 020 7233 7356/ 0300 123 0764

**Email:** [learning@warmemorials.org](mailto:learning@warmemorials.org) **Website:** [www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org](http://www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org)

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- Set a code of conduct, reminding pupils of the historical and emotional significance of the war memorial and how they should behave. See our 'Planning a visit to a war memorial' primary helpsheet for further guidance. Further ideas for teaching pupils about the significance of war memorials are also given in lesson 4, 'Why are war memorials still important?'

### **Suggested teaching points and activities**

NB: The activities suggested here may not all be possible, depending on the nature of the memorial you are visiting. You may also need to adapt the structure of the lesson to accommodate difficult weather conditions, for example by explaining the stories of the memorial and the people named on it back in the classroom.

- If you are able to find out information about the memorial (such as why its location was chosen, details of its unveiling and any other significant events in its history such as additions of names or restoration) tell pupils about this. Use our 'Researching a war memorial' primary helpsheet to help with finding this out.
- Get pupils to examine the memorial and its features and inscriptions. In particular, draw attention to the names of the fallen, looking at the numbers of people involved in conflicts, and look at any distinctive decorative features, use of symbols or functional uses of the memorial. Pupils can use our 'Looking at a war memorial,' primary resource sheet to record these.
- Discuss why these features may have been chosen for the war memorial – has it got a practical use and if so what was the motivation for that? If the war memorial is located in a place of worship or contains religious inscriptions or symbols, this can be used for cross curricular work related to RE (see 'Ideas for further work' below). If particular symbols are used (e.g. a statue depicting Victory, or a patriotic or optimistic image) discuss what they mean and why they would have been important at the time.
- If the war memorial shows names, discuss any recognised by pupils and whether relatives still live locally (see 'support/extension' below). Highlight names that appear to be from the same family, discuss why this occurred and what the impact would have been. If the war memorial commemorates a specific group (for example former pupils of a school or members of the same workplace) consider what the impact on that specific community would have been.
- If you can, choose a name in advance, research their background and tell the pupils that person's 'story' in order to show them how personally significant it would have been to families at the time. Explain that, by learning about the people named on the memorial, we are continuing to 'remember' them and what they did.
- We recommend that you take photographs of the memorial for future reference. Children can help preserve the war memorial by adding photos to War Memorials Online, a website that allows the public to add to war memorial records. Further details of this can be found at [www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk](http://www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk).
- If you intend to follow this lesson by getting children to research the names on the war memorial, ensure they make a note of which ones they want to research (we recommend you take photos or a transcription of the names too).

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## Conclusion

- Discuss how pupils felt looking at the war memorial – did it make them think about the war and people it commemorates?
- Question whether they feel differently about the war memorial and the people named on it now they have examined it closely. Do they know more about it now than they did previously? Do they think they will make more of an effort to notice it in the future?
- Show pupils the War Memorials Online website ([www.warmemorials.org.uk](http://www.warmemorials.org.uk)) and check to see if the memorial you have just seen is recorded. Add or update a record accordingly.

## Support/extension:

The activities in this lesson plan are suggestions only, and teachers will need to adapt the lesson according to the needs of their class.

- Remember that in some communities descendants of those named on a war memorial may still live locally. Teachers should consider how this may affect pupils.
- Older or more able pupils could extend their learning by comparing their local war memorial to others that they have looked at. You may wish to adapt our 'Looking at a war memorial,' primary resource sheet to allow for this.

## Ideas for further work:

There are many opportunities to extend a visit to a war memorial and link the lesson to other areas of the curriculum:

- Art and design: Pupils can use the memorial to practise making and recording close up observations. Using sketch books, encourage them to focus on recording the memorial as a whole structure, and closer details such as inscriptions or carvings. Looking at the material the memorial is made from can also encourage them to consider showing different textures and colours in their sketches.
- Science: Consider the condition of the war memorial and think about the material it is made from. Discuss suitable materials for a war memorial in this and alternative locations, and what the considerations might be when choosing the material for a war memorial.
- RE: Many war memorials are located in churches or churchyards and a study of such a memorial could form part of a wider study of what the church building is used for. Many memorials also contain religious symbols, images or inscriptions and a follow up lesson could focus on why the community chose these and what their significance is for remembering those that died.
- History: Pupils can use the Commonwealth War Graves Commission database to research the names on the war memorial. There is further guidance on this in War Memorials Trust's primary lesson plan, 'Researching names on war memorials.'

Having developed a good understanding of what war memorials are and what their local one is like, pupils should be able to progress to looking at some of the wider general issues

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surrounding war memorials and their significance in the present day, and use them as the basis for their own historical research. There is further guidance given in subsequent primary lessons from War Memorials Trust.

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