

## 2. Armistice Day 1918 and now



War Memorials Trust

**Background:** This lesson provides a way of relating the events of Armistice Day 1918 and commemorations in subsequent years with the events which take place today. It is the second of three lesson plans and has been created so that pupils can compare and contrast the events of 100 years ago with those of today. Pupils will learn about the events on Armistice Day at different points in the last one hundred years including 1918, the first anniversary and subsequent years including today.

**Suitable for:** Key Stage 2

**Learning objective:** Pupils will learn:

- What took place in Britain on Armistice Day 1918
- How the Armistice was commemorated in the first few years after 1918
- How the Armistice is remembered 100 years later

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

- Compare and contrast the events on Armistice Day in 1918 with today
- Explain how the first Armistice Day commemorations have shaped what we do today

**Resources:**

- 'Teachers' Armistice primary helpsheet'
- Images which show Armistice Day events through the last 100 years;
- 'Armistice Day primary resource King George proclamation'

**Introduction:** If taught as lesson 2 in the sequence of Armistice Day lessons, pupils will have an understanding of the events leading up to the end of World War I, when and where the Armistice was signed and the public reaction to the news that World War I had ended. Recap some of the events which took place in Britain including:

- celebrations: crowds gathered to rejoice. There was cheering and whistling. Scenes like this occurred in other Allied countries as well
- church bells rang out – these had been quiet for much of the war
- processions of soldiers
- maroons (fireworks used as a signal or warning) exploded
- crowds outside Buckingham Palace called for the King to appear on the balcony. He subsequently appeared with the Queen, Princess Mary and the Duke of Connaught and spoke a few words

If this lesson is being taught in the lead up to or following 11<sup>th</sup> November 2018 it should be emphasised that it is 100 years since the end of World War I and we still remember this date today. Explain that pupils will be finding out about Armistice Day 1918 and how it relates to what happens on Armistice Day today

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

### **How was the first anniversary of the Armistice commemorated in 1919?**

- The following information should be conveyed to pupils. The way in which this is done will depend on how your pupils learn best. Activities could include a short presentation, a cartoon strip to read, text to read from which pupils identify the key points
  - Prior to the 11<sup>th</sup> November 1919 the idea of a silence to remember those who had died and commemorate the first anniversary of the Armistice had been suggested
  - On 7<sup>th</sup> November 1919 King George V proclaimed there would be a two minute silence on the 11<sup>th</sup> November at the exact time the Armistice had come into effect the previous year i.e. 11am. You may like to share the announcement (or an excerpt) with pupils. The King understood that people would want to remember those people who had laid down their lives
  - The first of the two minutes was for those who had died and the second minute for the families and living that were left behind
  - The Armistice commemorations began with a Banquet in Honour of the President of the French Republic hosted by King George V on the evening of 10<sup>th</sup> November 1919 at Buckingham Palace
  - Armistice Day events were held in the grounds of Buckingham Palace on the morning of 11<sup>th</sup> November 1919. This set a trend for decades to come. The temporary Cenotaph which had been erected on Whitehall near Westminster Abbey in London in time for the Peace Day Parade formed the centrepiece of the first Armistice Day. Alongside the official ceremony huge crowds gathered and laid wreathes. Many wore black as a sign of mourning rather than the celebrations of the previous year
  - For members of the British public there was no instruction on where to observe the two minute silence. Many chose to go outside and stand in a public place
  - The start of the two minute silence was announced by maroons and church bells to ensure the moment of contemplation united the whole country as times were not fully standardised across the UK
  - Everything came to a standstill including factories, buses, trams and court proceedings

### **How was Armistice Day commemorated in the early 1920s?**

- Show pupils images which relate to Armistice Day events in the early 1920s. These could include the temporary Cenotaph, poppies, a local war memorial, a remembrance service. You may also choose to share an excerpt from 'Flanders Fields' with pupils. Discussions in small groups or as whole class can take place. The following should be established:
  - the temporary Cenotaph was removed in January 1920 and a permanent monument erected. The Portland stone Cenotaph was unveiled on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1920. As part of the unveiling the body of an unknown soldier was returned to London and reburied at Westminster Abbey
  - the poem 'In Flanders Fields' by John McCrae inspired an American called Moina Michael to make and sell red silk poppies. Anna Guerin, a French woman, brought the poppies to England. The Royal British Legion formed in 1921 and ordered 9 million poppies for the first 'Poppy Appeal' that year. The money raised was used to help World War I veterans with employment and housing
  - the Poppy Factory was set up in 1922 and employed disabled ex-servicemen
  - Communities erected war memorials to remember the fallen of World War I. Some were unveiled in 1919 to join some put up during the war but many more were unveiled though the 1920s as local communities took time to organise them. These became a focal point for communities on Armistice Day when, often, the names of the fallen would be read out

## How is Armistice Day remembered today?

- Ask pupils to think about what happens on Armistice Day or Remembrance Day as it has also been known since the end of World War II. They could share things they have done on Armistice Day or things they have seen
- Suggestions may include:
  - attending remembrance services at their church or at a local war memorial. Pupils may have attended with their families or with cub, scout, brownie or guide groups
  - two minute silence. Pupils may have experienced this at school
  - members of the Royal Family, leading politicians and religious leaders gathering at the Cenotaph. This is just as central to Armistice Day now as it was in 1919
  - wearing poppies. The Poppy Factory, set up in 1922, still produces millions of poppies each year
- Activities which you may wish to carry out to highlight the traditions and changes could include:
  - a cartoon strip which shows what has been done to commemorate Armistice Day at different points in the last 100 years including what happens now
  - write a short newspaper article for each year (e.g. 1918, 1919 and now) detailing what took place on Armistice Day
  - freeze frames for each year. Pupils could freeze, come to life and freeze again so they can convey what took place

**Conclusion:** Recap the key points from the lesson considering the aspects of Armistice Day have remained the same over the last hundred years and those which have changed

## Support/extension:

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.

- It is important to realise that this lesson will introduce pupils to the subjects of war, death and loss, which may be distressing for some. Teachers will need to consider how appropriate it is to approach these subjects with their class, and be sensitive to the needs of individuals who may have direct experience of them

## Ideas for further work:

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

- Local History: find out when local war memorials were unveiled and use these as a starting point to explore how World War I (a global conflict) impacted on the local area
- Science: explore the choice of materials for the temporary (wood and plaster) and permanent (Portland stone) Cenotaph to develop understanding of properties and changes of materials
- PSHE and Citizenship: use Armistice Day and the traditions surrounding this to find out more about other local and national traditions and dates of cultural importance

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