

3. Great artists and war memorials



Background: This lesson forms part of a series of six art lessons looking at the work of great artists who designed war memorials to commemorate the fallen during the wave of memorialisation which followed World War I. It has been created to increase pupils' awareness of different kinds of design and the work of great artists including the architects Baker, Blomfield, Lorimer, Lutyens and the sculptor Toft. Teachers may choose to focus on one of these artists throughout the series of lessons particularly if they designed a war memorial nearby. Equally a selection of work from several of the artists may be used. Pupils will learn about some of the symbols which are incorporated into the designs of war memorials and what these represent.

Suitable for: Key stage 2

Learning objective: Pupils will learn:

- To develop an awareness of the shapes and symbols used in war memorial designs

Learning outcomes: Pupils will be able to:

- Understand the meaning behind symbols and shapes that the artists used in their war memorial designs
- Sketch part of the war memorial designs which can be reviewed and revisited when designing their own

Resources:

- Primary helpsheets for each of the artists: [Sir Herbert Baker](#), [Sir Reginald Blomfield](#), [Sir Robert Lorimer](#), [Sir Edwin Lutyens](#) and [Albert Toft](#)
- '[War Memorials Online links for memorials designed by Baker, Blomfield, Lorimer, Lutyens and Toft](#)' Resource sheet
- Images of familiar symbols (e.g. fire exit, no entry, green man traffic signal)
- Sketching materials e.g. pencils, viewfinders, paper or sketchbooks

Introduction:

- Share a range of symbols with pupils which they may be familiar with e.g. fire exit, no entry sign, familiar brands, green or red man traffic signal. Ask pupils what the symbols represent
- Ask pupils to consider other symbols they have come across or that they can see in the classroom and share these
- Discuss the purpose of symbols
- Pupils should understand that a symbol is something that represents or stands for something else, especially a material object representing something abstract
- Explain that pieces of art can include symbols. The architects and sculptors who designed war memorials often included symbols which represented events, emotions and ideas. The meaning behind these symbols would probably have been important to the community who had commissioned the war memorial

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Suggested teaching points and activities:

What symbols can you identify?

- In groups pupils should have a selection of war memorial images, ideally by the artist they researched in lesson 2. Examples of war memorials by some of the artists can be found in WMT's Resource sheet '[War Memorials Online links for memorials designed by Baker, Blomfield, Lorimer, Lutyens and Toft](#)'
- Encourage pupils to spot parts of the design which may be symbols. You could model this
- As pupils identify symbols encourage them to group the war memorials according to the type of symbol (e.g. cross, wreath, Crusader ship, sword, statue). Strips of paper for pupils to label the groups they have created or the use of a Venn diagram may be appropriate for this task
 - If it proves challenging for pupils to identify the symbols, prompts such as what is carved into the stone, who do you think the figure is, what shape is the memorial, may aid them

What is the meaning of these symbols and what do they represent?

- Once the different symbols which pupils spotted have been shared, the class should explore why these were incorporated into the war memorial design
 - What is the meaning of the different symbols?
- The way in which pupils explore the meaning of the symbols could be done in a range of ways. One way could be through a matching activity. Pupils could be given two sets of cards. One set will have the types of symbols which may have images as well as words to reinforce what the symbol looks like. The other set will explain what the symbol represents. Pupils should then try to match up the corresponding cards
- By the end of this activity pupils should have an understanding of the meaning of some of the following symbols:
 - cross – reflects the religion of many in the UK at the time of World War I
 - cenotaph – Greek word meaning 'empty tomb' highlighting that the fallen were buried elsewhere
 - coat of arms – those commemorated are from the local area
 - Crusader warship – the conflict element of war, possibly a naval link
 - figure of Peace – a hope that peace would remain
 - figure of a soldier – who is being remembered. If stood with arms reversed (head bowed with hands resting on an upturned gun) this is a traditional symbol of mourning or respect
 - figure of St George - patriotism
 - figure of Victory – a belief that Britain had been victorious
 - flags – patriotism
 - rose and lilies – represents England and France
 - sword – reflects the military aspect of the memorial
 - wreath – traditional symbol of commemoration often in laurel which is a symbol of victory
- It may also be an opportunity to consider symbols which may be unexpectedly missing. Today, remembrance is strongly connected with the poppy but this was introduced as a symbol into the UK in 1921 after many of the World War I war memorials had been created. It therefore rarely appears on war memorials as it would not have had meaning at the time so when designing war memorials it is important to consider what was appropriate at the time

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- War Memorials Trust's '[2. Armistice Day 1918 and now Primary lesson plan](#)' includes information about the first Poppy Appeal and could help pupils to understand this idea further

Why were these symbols used and do they represent those who are remembered?

- Ask pupils to consider why these symbols might have been chosen by the artist who designed the war memorial or the community/committee who commissioned the design
- Ask pupils which of the symbols resonate most with them. Which do they think represent those who are commemorated by the war memorial and the conflict which they were involved in?
- Following time to consider this and/or discuss, pupils to sketch these symbols. It may be that pupils will find viewfinders useful so that they are just focusing in on the selected symbol
 - If pupils wish to sketch two or three different symbols this should be encouraged

Conclusion:

- Recap the key points from the lesson including some of the different ideas that the symbols on war memorials represent
 - It may be that you ask pupils to tell a partner about the symbols they have sketched to ensure they have understood what these represent

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.

Ideas for further work:

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

- Visit to a local war memorial: if the design of the local war memorial includes some of the symbols which have been discussed during this lesson, you may wish to visit it. This would give pupils the opportunity to see, touch and sketch the symbols in real life. Whilst walking to the memorial, the opportunity could be taken to look out for and record other symbols in the local area. Guidance on this is covered in War Memorials Trust's 'Visiting a war memorial lesson', www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org/primary/pri-lessons/visiting-war-memorial