



Key Stage 3&4 Assemblies

Remembrance past and present - Remembrance and the First World War centenary

Does the First World War centenary matter to Remembrance?

In preparation:

- DVD on the First World War: the piece of film Armistice Day 1920 or Liveliness at the Front
- DVD clip and CD Rom information about the Unknown Warrior
- DVD on Remembrance: the clip the Legion and Remembrance or Silence in the Square.

Script

This time of year is known as Remembrancetime, and today/this week we are going to think about Remembrance and what it means. Firstly I'm going to show you a piece of film.

Show the silent film on Armistice Day 1920 or Liveliness at the front.

That piece of film is 100 years old – there is no sound to it and it is not like modern footage.

It is a valuable piece of evidence from a time that was deeply affected by the war – the Great War as it was then known. But does that war matter now; after all there have been many wars that British troops have fought in since? Perhaps when we wear a poppy now we should be only concentrating on the men and women who are fighting in wars today?

However, it was the events and impact of the First World War (1914-18) that means that we wear a poppy today. It was a war so destructive and bloody that it shattered the countries of Europe and the lives of millions of people around the world. It's hard to think of something that would have that affect today.

Before the First World War we didn't have a Remembrance Day, although we'd had plenty of wars. For many hundreds of years those wars did not directly affect civilians on the same scale as the First World War. Every town and village didn't have a war memorial until the First World War. And the poppy was just another wild flower.

It was the loss of millions of lives, and the damage through injury and loss to millions of others, that meant people wanted to have a way to remember the sacrifice of a generation of Britons.

Nearly one million men from the UK, Empire and Commonwealth were killed in the First World War and more than two million more were seriously injured. At the end of the war, in 1919, everyone knew someone who had served, which meant that everyone had a real person to think about during the Two Minute Silence. It is likely that all of you have at least one relative who was affected by that conflict, even if you don't know about it.

But does it still matter and should we still remember the First World War at Remembrance time or should we now just think about the new generation affected by war?

Have a think about it.

Is it possible to do both? Remember those from the past and those presently.

The First World War provided us with our traditions of Remembrance – the poppy, observing a Two Minute Silence at 11am on 11 November each year, Remembrance Sunday Services, communities joining together

across the UK to take part in different Remembrance events and activities. As we reach the centenary is it time to update those traditions? Or can those traditions be kept but mixed with more modern things? After all, the last 100 years has seen many wars, but by remembering the generation that sacrificed so much we are being reminded that part of the lesson of Remembrance is the hope for a peaceful future. By ignoring or letting go of the past we might forget the horrors of war and the importance of working hard to maintain peace.

Show the film the Legion and Remembrance or Silence in the Square.

Moment of Reflection:

When we wear the poppy and pause for our Two Minute Silence we are carrying a tradition that has lasted for nearly 100 years. Those traditions were there to help us to remember, to pause and think, and to learn the lessons from the past.

Poem or prayer

Anthem for Doomed Youth

Wilfred Owen

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?

Only the monstrous anger of the guns.

Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle

Can patter out their hasty orisons.

No mockeries for them; no prayers nor bells,

Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, --

The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;

And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?

Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes

Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.

The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;

Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,

And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.