



Key Stages 1 & 2 Assemblies

Remembrance assemblies - Remembrance and the First World War centenary

Why do we still need to remember events from so long ago?

These two assemblies address the subjects of Remembrance and the Centenary of the First World War and are designed to be delivered over two days.

Day One

In preparation you will need:

- The Royal British Legion CD Rom
- Screen
- A poppy

Script

Does anyone recognise this (*hold up an actual poppy*)?

This is a poppy and we wear the poppy as a symbol to help us to remember something.

Aren't poppies beautiful?

When you think of flowers do you think of good things or bad things?

Usually good things, as flowers make us feel happy.

Even at a terrible time flowers can help us feel hope.

Between 1914–1918 Britain was involved with a terrible war – some of you may have heard of it – it was the war we now call the First World War, or the Great War.

During that war a serving doctor noticed the poppies growing on the battlefields. He had spent his day trying to help the men who had been hurt in the fighting.

Shall we read the poem?

In Flanders Fields

John McCrae

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw the sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:

To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

That is a lovely poem but it is also a poem with a message. It says that it is passing on the torch – do you know what that might mean?

The writer of the poem wanted the horror that he had seen to be remembered so that the sacrifice of those that had fought would not be forgotten.

After the war was over some people just wanted to forget about it because millions of people had been killed or hurt. But so many people had been involved others thought it should be remembered. They hoped that if people remembered how bad war was it might not happen again.

Because the poppy had grown on the battlefields of Western Europe where so many men had fought it was adopted as a symbol. A symbol helps us to remember, but the symbol was not to be sad by using the flower, it was to be a symbol of hope. The poppy had been the only thing that had still grown on the battlefields amongst so much fighting – it was a little flower of hope that showed that things could survive even when the whole world seemed to be in a terrible mess.

People have been wearing a poppy every November for nearly 100 years – isn't it good that you are helping to keep alive a belief in hope after so many years.

So when we wear the poppy we are thinking about the terrible wars that make everything bad, but we are also wearing a poppy because it gave people a feeling of hope. We are reminding those around us that the poppy was chosen so that we would learn about those men and women from the past and those now who go and do dangerous things in the Army, Navy and Air Force.

Also we are doing what John McCrae asked as well – we/you are making sure that all those people who have been killed in wars will be thought about at least one day of the year. If enough people think about that then we might start being able to stop wars.

Moment of reflection

This week we will learn about the importance of Remembrance. We will learn about some of the ways that people remember things and we will learn about what it is they remember when they wear the poppy. We learn about how important it is to remember certain things and we will help keep that memory and message going from generation to generation.

Poem or prayer

Remember

Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)

Remember me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go, yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
You tell me of our future that you plann'd:
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:

For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad

Day two

In Preparation:

- A poppy

Script

Holding up the poppy - Can you remember what this is and what it is for?

Can you remember the poem that seems to go with it – shall we hear it again?

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As well as the poppy it was decided that if people were going to remember it should be at a special time every year.

Although families who had someone killed or hurt might think about those people any day of the year, it was decided that there would be one time each year that everyone in Britain would think about those men and women and their families. It was decided that the day should also be one that gave hope – the day the fighting had stopped.

Can anyone tell me what day that is?

That day is 11 November, and the fighting stopped at 11 o'clock in the morning. So at 11 o'clock on the 11th day of the 11th month of the year we wear a poppy to think about those men and women.

The day is called Remembrance Day and on that day important things happen.

People hold an act of Remembrance. At an act of Remembrance a number of things can happen – poems can be read, so can names, letters, or anything that enables people to remember these people and what they went through.

The main two things that happen are the reading of the Exhortation and then a Two Minute Silence.

The exhortation is a poem:

"They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them."

At the end everyone repeats the line 'We will Remember them'. During the Two Minute Silence you can think about people you know or have heard about who have had their lives affected by conflict. Or you can just think about those people who are fighting in wars today and how hard that must be for their families at home. Who would you think about?

After the Two Minutes Silence people then lay wreaths – but you don't have to, it is remembering people that is important.

So do we just remember the men and the women from the the First World War?

No. Unfortunately many other wars have followed the First World War. In fact British people are on active Service around the world today.

So when we wear a poppy we are remembering all the men and women and their families whose lives are affected by war since the First World War.

Do you think it is just those that get killed that we remember when we wear a poppy?

No. The poppy and Remembrance day are about remembering or thinking about all those people whose lives are affected by war, including the families of those who fight. For 100 years the poppy and the Two Minute Silence have been a chance for us all to think about the people hurt by wars, and is rooted in a tradition of hope that the future will be peaceful.

So this year have a think about how you are keeping a tradition of hope alive that started 100 years ago.

Moment of reflection

Let us reflect on all those who have suffered in wars and think about how we can help them to feel hope.

Poem or prayer

Why Wear a Poppy.

Don Crawford

"Please wear a poppy," the lady said,
And held one forth, but I shook my head,
Then I stopped and watched as she offered them there,
And her face was old and lined with care;

But beneath the scars the years had made
There remained a smile that refused to fade.
A boy came whistling down the street,
Bouncing along on care-free feet.

His smile was full of joy and fun,
"Lady," said he, "may I have one?"
When she'd pinned it on, he turned to say;
"Why do we wear a poppy today?"

The lady smiled in her wistful way
And answered; "This is Remembrance Day.
And the poppy there is a symbol for
The gallant men who died in war.

And because they did, you and I are free -
That's why we wear a poppy, you see.
I had a boy about your size,
With golden hair and big blue eyes.

He loved to play and jump and shout,
Free as a bird, he would race about.
As the years went by, he learned and grew,
And became a man - as you will, too.

He was fine and strong, with a boyish smile,
But he'd seemed with us such a little while
When war broke out and he went away.
I still remember his face that day.

When he smiled at me and said, 'Goodbye,
I'll be back soon, Mum, please don't cry.'
But the war went on and he had to stay,
And all I could do was wait and pray.

His letters told of the awful fight
(I can see it still in my dreams at night),
With the tanks and guns and cruel barbed wire,
And the mines and bullets, the bombs and fire.

Till at last, at last, the war was won -
And that's why we wear a poppy, son."
The small boy turned as if to go,
Then said: "Thanks, lady, I'm glad to know.

I slunk away in a sort of shame,
And if you were me, you'd have done the same:
For our thanks, in giving, if oft delayed,
Though our freedom was bought - and thousands paid!

And so, when we see a poppy worn,
Let us reflect on the burden borne
By those who gave their very all
When asked to answer their country's call
That we at home in peace might live.
Then wear a poppy! Remember - and Give!