

Unit 17 What are we remembering on Remembrance Day?

ABOUT THE UNIT

In this unit, children explore an event that has been commemorated annually for nearly 100 years. Children investigate the origins of Remembrance Day and how its significance has grown to incorporate conflicts up to the present day. Children who belong to service or refugee families may have direct, personal experiences of recent hostilities, and their schools will need to exercise sensitivity and discretion in teaching this topic.

WHERE THE UNIT FITS IN

The unit complements Unit 5 'How do we know about the Great Fire of London?' which looks at another famous event in the past, but not one that is commemorated. It is designed to take the form of a short, intensive history investigation, perhaps a week either side of Remembrance Day.

PRIOR LEARNING

It is helpful if the children have:

- considered other types of anniversaries, and/or commemorations, such as Bonfire Night, New Year, Divali, Easter
- used historical sources, such as artefacts and photographs to ask and answer questions about the past

VOCABULARY

In this unit, children will have opportunities to use:

- words associated with the passing of time, including everyday words, *eg now, then, a long time ago, recently, a short time ago, before, after, first, second*, and conventions, *eg century, decade, 1918, 1940s, 1990*
- words associated with commemoration, *eg commemorate, remembrance, anniversary, Cenotaph, veteran*
- words associated with specific events, *eg World War I, World War II, conflict, Armistice, ceasefire*
- words associated with types of evidence, *eg memorial, eyewitness*

RESOURCES

- Remembrance Day poppies
- video showing present-day Remembrance Day commemorations in London and/or at a local war memorial
- pictures, family memories or memorabilia from World War I or World War II recording local involvement, if applicable, *eg photographs, postcards, medals, ration books*

EXPECTATIONS

at the end of this unit

most children will:

know that Remembrance Day has its origins in events in the past which really happened; appreciate that Remembrance Day touches directly on some people's lives today through their personal experience of war in the past and/or now; sequence the main events covered in the unit; recognise that there are different types of evidence for these events; ask appropriate questions and gather information from different sources of evidence; communicate their findings through speaking, writing and drawing

some children will not have made so much progress and will:

sequence some of the events in the unit; gather information from a limited range of evidence for these events; talk about their findings

some children will have progressed further and will:

recognise that different types of evidence for the events in the unit tell us different things; use dates and technical vocabulary accurately when sequencing events; communicate their findings through written narrative

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

- that symbols may represent commemorative events

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- to use historical sources in the locality to find out information
 - how to record their findings so they can demonstrate to other people what they have learnt
 - to ask and answer relevant questions from the past

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- that commemorations are linked to specific events in the past which really happened
 - when World War I and Armistice Day occurred
 - why specific symbols are associated with commemorations

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- how some historic events are commemorated by pageantry or celebrations, which usually stay the same every year
 - to compare and contrast information about remembrance

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- that some important events are commemorated by people in Britain and the wider world

POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Why are people wearing poppies this week?

Find out why the children think people wear poppies. Through discussion, establish that poppies are worn around a special time in November, called Remembrance Day. Talk about remembering, *eg What sorts of things do we remember? Are there special people/events we remember? Why is it important to remember?*

Who do we remember on Remembrance Day?

Arrange, if possible, a visit to a local war memorial. Encourage the children to describe accurately what they can see, *eg lists of names, dates, symbols*. Also prompt them to ask questions, *eg Why are there lists of names? When might the memorial have been built? How could we find out? What do the symbols mean? Why did people want to build a war memorial? Are there war memorials in other towns/villages?* Discuss with the children the sort of information war memorials can give us and the information they leave out.

Help the children to record information in several ways, *eg sketches/observational drawings of the war memorial, tallies of names*.

Why do we have Remembrance Day?

Explain that the origins lie in World War I (1914–18). Discuss with the children how it relates in time to other famous events/people that they may have already encountered or to generations of their families.

Explain briefly that the war lasted a long time, that soldiers from countries all over the world fought in the war and many died and people were very sad. Tell the children that the soldiers saw the poppies growing in the battlefields and how they came to represent both loss and hope.

Tell the children how the Armistice (ceasefire) to end the war happened on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month (11.00 am, 11 November, 1918) and that this was the moment the guns fell silent.

What happens on Remembrance Day?

Discuss with the children what happens in the local community on Remembrance Day.

Show the children video extracts of events in London. Ask the children to identify the special features of the commemoration, *eg wearing poppies, the march to the Cenotaph, wreath laying, involvement of the Queen and government representatives, two-minute silence, special music*.

Ask the children to compare Remembrance Day events in London and in the local community.

Why is it important to remember?

Ask the children to think about why we still have Remembrance Day. Develop the discussion to include other commemorations, *eg international, national, local and family events* as appropriate. Help children to identify, through discussion, why some commemorations are national/international events.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

CHILDREN

- explain that poppies are worn as a symbol of Remembrance Day
- make connections with other events they commemorate each year

- know the location of the local war memorial and that it lists the names of soldiers killed in World War I and World War II
- gather relevant information from a war memorial and communicate what they have learnt by writing and drawing

- know that World War I happened a long time ago and that many soldiers from all over the world died in the war
- make links between the date of the Armistice and the subsequent timing of Remembrance Day
- explain why the poppy was chosen as a symbol of remembrance

- recognise and name some features of Remembrance Day
- make simple comparisons between Remembrance Day locally and nationally
- identify similarities and differences between Remembrance Day and other events that are commemorated

- demonstrate knowledge of a range of events that are commemorated
- give reasons why some events are commemorated by countries across the world

POINTS TO NOTE

One purpose of this activity is to determine children's prior knowledge. There are opportunities to explore and value the experiences of other cultures and beliefs. This links with RE.

Several resource packs are available.

Reading a story about remembering special people or events would provide children with complementary opportunities to discuss Remembrance. This links with PHSE and citizenship.

The introduction of new vocabulary can support word-level work in literacy.

It is helpful if teachers are aware before the visit if children might be able to trace members of their families on local memorials.

There may be an opportunity for a museum visit. Some schools may be able to involve families or other members of the community in sharing their personal experiences of events, or loaning memorabilia.

ICT could be used to help children communicate their findings, using art, word-processing or simple data-handling packages. This could be linked to mathematics (Ma2,5).

Any discussion of war and remembrance will introduce aspects of death, killing and loss. There are strong links here between history and the spiritual dimension of the curriculum. Teachers will need to consider the extent to which these issues are appropriate for the particular circumstances of their school, as well as the level of detail.

It is important to recognise the extent of involvement of soldiers and civilians from across the world in the British army in World War I, including soldiers from India, Africa and elsewhere.

Teachers might wish to consider inviting a member of the local Remembrance Day parade to talk to children.

The discussion could support work in PHSE or RE.

Some families may have had direct experience of recent hostilities. Teachers will need to be sensitive to this.



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