

# Remembrance Day

Remembrance Day is used to commemorate members of the armed forces who lost their lives due to conflicts. Originally, it was a tribute to those who served during the First World War. The day is now observed annually to allow people the opportunity to pay their respects to all members of the armed forces who have sacrificed so much to protect their country.

## The First World War

In August 1914, it was announced that a world war had begun. For many reasons, opposing forces – each with their own allies for support – felt that war was necessary. After over four years of devastation and relentless battles, the First World War ceased in 1918. Worldwide, over ten million soldiers tragically lost their lives; many of them were as young as 16. It became known as the Great War because it had a profound effect on so many people across the world.

## The First Remembrance Day

The first official event of remembrance that happened in Britain took place at 11 a.m. on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 1919 – exactly one year after the First World War had ended. The decision to have one minute's silence was instigated by King George V in the hope that "...the thoughts of everyone may be concentrated on reverent remembrance of the glorious dead".

At the time, newspapers reported on the event by describing the atmosphere and the reactions of the people. Observations made were that tram cars became still, motor cars ceased to cough and fume and people took off their hats to bow their heads. Another report described how an elderly woman wiped her eyes while the man beside her looked pale and stern. Mighty-limbed horses were also seen to hunch back upon their loads and stop – almost as if they were doing so by choice.



The eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month (11<sup>th</sup> November 1918) marks the signing of the Armistice – an agreement to end the First World War.

## Wearing Poppies

After the First World War, red poppies grew from the damaged, battle-weary ground in France and Belgium. These flowers, which were mentioned in the famous poem 'In Flanders Fields', have long been associated with the Great War. The poem was written by John McCrae – a doctor serving in the First World War – and it told of how red poppies grew around the graves of those who had died in the battle. Poppies have become a symbol through which many people pay their respects on Remembrance Day, with many people actually calling it Poppy Day.

Each year, people have the opportunity to buy a poppy. This includes items, such as a paper poppy, a sticker, a badge or a wristband. A crucial reason why people are encouraged to buy a poppy each year is that a portion of the money raised goes to charities that work to improve the lives of wounded soldiers and their families.

## An Annual Event

Annually, people pause and pay tribute with a moment of silence on this day. This tradition takes place in many countries around the world, honouring those who have lost their lives during times of war and conflict.



## Remembrance Sunday

During the service, the head of the monarchy lays the first poppy wreath at the foot of the Cenotaph, followed by representatives of the armed forces who then lay more wreaths.

# Questions

1. When was the first official event of remembrance? Tick one.

- the day after the First World War had ended
- the day the Armistice agreement was signed
- one year after the Second World War had ended
- one year after the First World War had ended

2. Draw **four** lines and complete each sentence.

It became known as  
'The Great War'...

red poppies grew from  
the damaged, battle-weary  
ground in France and Belgium.

During the service,...

refer to Remembrance Day as  
Poppy Day.

Many people...

because it had a profound  
effect on so many people  
across the world.

After the First  
World War,...

the head of the monarchy  
lays the first poppy wreath  
at the foot of the Cenotaph.

3. Who wrote the poem 'In Flanders Fields'?

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4. How is the ground in France and Belgium described following the First World War?

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5. Look at the section **The First Remembrance Day**.

Find and copy one word which means the same as **started**.

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6. **Mighty-limbed horses were also seen to hunch back upon their loads and stop – almost as if they were doing so by choice.**

What do you think that this sentence is trying to imply?

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7. What evidence in the text tells us that John McCrae was the ideal person to write about the poppies? Explain your answer.

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8. Using 25 words or fewer, summarise what happens now on Remembrance Sunday.

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9. Based on what you have read about newspaper reports at the time, do you think that members of the public were respectful during the minute of silence? Tick one.

yes       no

Explain your choice.

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10. Imagine that you have been asked to design a new item for sale on Remembrance Day that has a poppy (or the image of a poppy) included. What would it be? Explain why you've chosen to do this.

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