

Why do we remember?

Every year at 11 O'clock on the 11th day of the 11th month people all over the country stop what they are doing and pause silently for two minutes. We do this because at 11 O'clock on the 11th November 1918 the First World War ended. The First World War was the first major world conflict and this is the reason why we choose this time to remember.

How can we remember people that we don't know? What we are doing on 11th November is showing our thanks to all of the people who have put themselves in danger to protect us. This is what we call Remembrance. Remembrance Day is a time to think about all those who gave their lives for our freedom, not just in World War I and World War II but all of the wars that have happened since as well as those that are going on now.

Stopping what we are doing is one way of showing that we are remembering; but are there any other ways that we can show other people that we are remembering?

People wear poppies. The Symbol of Remembrance is a flower called a poppy. Poppies grow in areas where the ground has been disturbed. During the First World War, fields were transformed into battle grounds and poppies began growing over the mess that was left after the fighting. John McCrae was a soldier in the First World War and he wrote a famous poem about these poppies.

*'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'.*

The poem was printed in a magazine and a woman named Moira Michael was so touched by the poem that she wrote a poem saying that she will promise to wear a poppy to show that she is remembering;

*'And now the torch and poppy red
Wear in honour of our dead
Fear not that ye have died for naught
We've learned the lesson that ye taught
In Flanders' Fields'.*

You can buy poppies from sellers who stand in the street. The money that you give goes towards helping men and women from the Royal Air Force, Royal Navy and Army who have been injured in conflict and to look after families of service personnel who have lost a loved one through war. By wearing a poppy you are showing that you are remembering and helping at the same time!

Remembrance Day takes place on the Sunday closest to the 11th November. Men and women who have fought in wars come to London to a special statue called the Cenotaph and they place wreaths of poppies to show that they are remembering their friends that have died. Because the whole country is remembering the Queen and the Prime Minister and other important people also lay poppy wreaths too. This ceremony is shown on the television so that everyone can watch and take part.

So don't forget to buy your poppy when you go out with your family and wear it for everyone to see!

In Flanders Fields

By: Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, MD (1872-1918)
Canadian Army

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 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.

Miss Moira Michael was so impressed with the poem she wrote the following:

"We Shall Keep The Faith"

Oh! You who sleep in Flanders' fields,
Sleep sweet – to rise anew;
We caught the torch you threw;
And holding high we kept
The faith with those who died.
We cherish, too, the Poppy red
That grows on fields where valour led.
It seems to signal to the skies
That blood of heroes never dies,
But lends a lustre to the red
Of the flower that blooms above the dead
In Flanders' Fields.
And now the torch and poppy red
Wear in honour of our dead
Fear not that ye have died for naught
We've learned the lesson that ye taught
In Flanders' Fields.

and made a decision to always wear a Flanders poppy "to keep the faith".