

Unit 4

World War I – Veterans’ Day Program

GRADES 4-6

Length: Approximately 15 minutes

Supplemental Lessons for Social Studies and Language Arts included.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

World War I, also known as The Great War or The War to End All Wars was the major event, by all accounts in the early 20th century that led to the fall of empires established as far back as the crusades, led to the formation of new countries such as Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and created new and still familiar conflicts such as Israel and Palestine. It was also the War that introduced new warfare in the form of air strikes, chemical weapons, tanks and large losses of civilian life. Only World War II would see more casualties among armed forces and civilians than World War I. World War I would also see a new reverence and admiration for veterans.

While the war began in 1914 among European countries, the United States did not enter into the conflict until 1917. At the end of World War I in 1918, an armistice was declared, a truce between the Allies and the Central Powers. At 11:00 AM on November 11, the armistice was enacted. Delirium erupted in the streets of cities and towns in Europe and in the United States. The celebration continued over several days and eventually, President Woodrow Wilson declared November 11th a national holiday. After World War II, the name of the holiday was changed from Armistice Day to Veterans Day to honor the patriotism of men and women in the armed forces.

Internet Resources: <http://www.firstworldwar.com/features/armistice.htm>
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armistice_Day)

PROCESS

Children seem to want to have ways to express their patriotism. By way of performance, this exercise introduces children to the history of Veterans’ Day and introduces them, through personal accounts, of the sacrifices made by so many in America’s military history.

OUTCOMES

This experience enables students to develop skills in public speaking, language arts and Social Studies through oral presentation, vocabulary enhancement, and American history. Music may be introduced if desired, and music teachers may wish to contribute to the program by working chorally on the “National Anthem” and/or “America The Beautiful”.

Materials

(A script of the program follows with Handout #3 at the end of the unit.) Teachers may wish to adapt the script to suit particular speakers. The script features speeches for twenty different speakers, or teachers may wish to assign multiple parts to fewer students. If it is possible, teachers may wish to create a Power Point presentation of visuals to accompany the oral presentation.

The program calls for the playing of Taps. This may be done using a student musician or a recording. It may also be omitted; in which case, the script may be edited to delete the reference to Taps.

The following letters have been used in the formation of this program. Teachers may wish to refer to the

entire text to help the students understand what life as a soldier really is like.

Private Ralph Coeey, 30th Ambulance Company, third letter (pages 51-52, I)
 Captain Weir Miley, 3rd Division, Mobile Field Laboratory, fourth letter (pages 63-64, I)

Directing the program:

Teachers may notice that the speeches vary in length and difficulty. This allows all students of all abilities to participate. Teachers may wish to place their more adept speakers in the parts with more text.

Additional Activities:

Social Studies

- Read the article in the Detroit News (see excerpt in handout on next page).
- Research Armistice Day celebrations in your Hometown. *How do they compare to the celebration in Detroit?* [ed. note: If you live in the Detroit area, select another city to compare the account in the Detroit News.] *How are they similar? Different?*

This website contains a letter written by a father in Florida to his sons at war in Europe describing the Armistice celebrations at home. Resources: www.detnews.com/history/veterans/veterans.htm and <http://www.floridamemory.com/FloridaHighlights/Armistice/>

Language Arts

- That poetry and art can flourish amid so much death and destruction during war is a tribute to the human heart and spirit. Even the most virile of warriors can take pen to paper and create a lilting memorial to bravery in a horrible time. John McCrae, was one such soldier who wrote the famous poem, “In Flanders Fields” upon the death of his friend Lt. Alexis Helmer in May 1915. Explore how art and poetry can help us deal with our experiences in life. Use *In Flanders Fields* as an aid to your explorations.

For a brief biography of Lt. Col. **John McCrae**, MD (November 30, 1872 – January 28, 1918), see the following web site: <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext95/infla10.txt>

Lt. Col. John McCrae was a Canadian poet, doctor, author and artist and soldier during World War I, who wrote the famous war memorial poem "In Flanders Fields". He was a field surgeon in the Canadian Artillery and served during the Boer War as well as during World War I. When his friend and former student, Lt. Alexis Helmer, died in battle, McCrae wrote “In Flanders Fields on May 3, 1915 as a memorial to him. The poem was published in the British magazine, *Punch* in that same year. Lt. Col. McCrae died in France of pneumonia. See Handout #3 at the end of the unit for *In Flanders Fields*

Selected Bibliography:

Farwell, Byron. *Over There: The United States in the Great War, 1917-1918*. (W.W. Norton, 1999).

Haythornwaite, Philip J. *The World War One Source Book*. (London, Cassell Imprint, 1998).

Hook, Alex. *World War I Day by Day*. (Grange Books, 2004).

Stokesbury, James L. *A Short History of World War I*. (reprinted Perennial, 2002).

Handout # 1
The Detroit News

The First Armistice Day:

When the doughboys came marching home

By Patricia Zacharias

The Detroit News
November 11, 1918

... Within hours, the city of Detroit became a vast cheering throng. Whistles, sirens and church bells proclaimed the joyous word to the sleeping city. Acting Mayor Jacob Outhard quickly sent police patrols and fire trucks racing through the streets, sirens shrieking, carrying the good news.

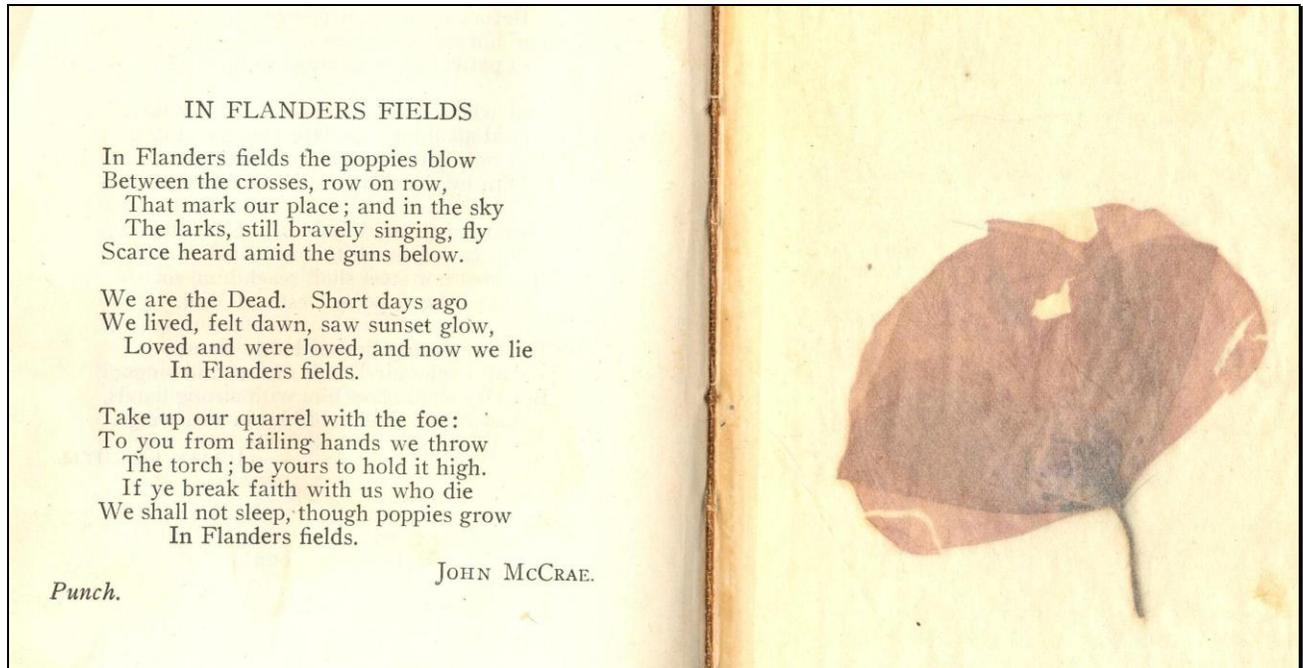
Before dawn, the streets filled with delirious people ringing bells, pounding on tin cans and washboards, blowing horns and whistles. Night workers in the munitions plants left their shops and joined the ever-increasing crowds. By common consent, everyone headed for the center of downtown.

Everyone who owned a flag started a parade. The parades went anywhere, everywhere and nowhere. Every truck and vehicle headed downtown packed with celebrating Detroiters. By 6 a.m., 80 percent of the police force joined to help control the celebration.

Conscientious workers on their way to their jobs changed their minds when they arrived downtown. They, too, joined the revelers. "Closed – Too Happy to Work" read a sign in a Woodward jewelry store. Every store, every office, every factory closed.

Handout #2

***In Flanders Fields* - John McCrae**



IN FLANDERS FIELDS

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.

JOHN McCRAE.

Punch.

This image of the poem (shown above) was included with a pressed poppy, which was preserved in tissue. McCrae's poem, along with hundreds of other poems from the Great War, was published in *War Verse* edited by Frank Foxcraft, (Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1918).

Handout #3
Script for
Veterans' Day Assembly Program

Source: Karlyn Fox and Melanie Marshall, Park Tudor Lower School

Speaker 1	Today we are celebrating Veterans' Day. It is a day we stand and support our fellow Americans who have so proudly served our country in the Armed Forces. America has survived many battles fought bravely by our men and women in uniform. It is these men and women both past and present we should remember and thank by honoring them on this day.
Speaker 2	In 1780 the American Patriot, Thomas Paine, wrote these words, "These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crises, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman."
Speaker 3	Today, we are gathered to do just that – to offer our love and thanks to the unbroken line of men and women who have given service to their country. America's Armed Forces have always been prepared to defend our freedom and the freedom of other throughout the world.
Speaker 4	More than one million American service members died in the service of this country. More than 1.4 million lived with the wounds they suffered while fighting for us. More than 25 million former service members are still living today. They are that special group of Americans we call veterans. Today, we honor them and say "Thank you for serving." Please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance and the singing of our National Anthem.
Music	<i>[Student should raise arm indicating that the student assembly should rise for the pledge and anthem]</i>
Speaker 5	Some of you may ask, "Who is a veteran?" A veteran is a person who has served in the armed forces, an experienced soldier, especially one who served in time of war. A veteran is a man or woman who has served in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard or Air Force.
Speaker 6	Veterans' Day is a time to thank living veterans for their service, to show appreciation for their contributions to our national security, and to emphasize the fact that all those who served – not just those who died – have sacrificed and done their duty.

Speaker 7	And their duty is to defend freedom and help other countries defend freedom, too. For example, Captain Weir Miley, a doctor from Anderson, Indiana joined the Army when America entered World War I in 1917 to help Great Britain and France defeat Germany. Thousands upon thousands of American men like Captain Miley joined the Armed Forces to help our friends and defend our country. Through their letters, we learn about what it was like to be an American Soldier. It wasn't easy being away from home and family in a foreign country.
Speaker 8	In 1918, Captain Miley was assigned to a field hospital in France. He sent many letters home to his wife and little daughter, Eugenie. Listen to one letter sent to Eugenie in which Captain Miley sounds a little homesick. "My dear Genie: This is your 4 th birthday, and as I cannot be with you to help you enjoy it, I will write you a little letter, just to let you know that daddy is thinking of you...
Speaker 9	It is very hot where daddy is and it does not rain much any more. I got your letter a few days ago and was very glad to hear from you and to know that you were well and having such a good time... There are lots of flowers over here in France where daddy is, and I wish you were here to gather some. Well, Genie it is beginning to get dark and I will have to stop for this time. ...You be a very good girl and do just what mother and grandma tell you to do, and some day daddy will come home.
Speaker 10	So, Captain Miley is just one of the millions we honor on Veterans' Day. Why do we honor Veterans on November 11 th ? Why not October or September? Well, in 1918, on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day in the eleventh month, the world rejoiced and celebrated. After 4 years of bitter war, an armistice was signed and World War I, the "war to end all wars" was over.
Speaker 11	How did it feel to actually be at war when this Armistice was signed? Private Ralph Cooley, from Martin's Ferry, Ohio joined the 20 th Ambulance Corps. He was thrilled to be able to serve his country but he was also very happy to come home. Listen to this letter that he wrote to his mother from France on November 12, 1918.
Speaker 12	... Well, my dear mother, I guess the war must be over... We have not heard and guns or cannons for some few days, and the Armistice has been signed on the 11 th day, 11 th month, and on the 11 th hour, so I guess that means peace... Oh! Gee, I wish I could only be home [by Christmas], and if I don't get home until after Christmas, I want to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. From your loving son...
Speaker 13	So, November 11, 1919, was set aside as Armistice Day in the United States, to remember sacrifices that men and women like Capt. Miley and Private Cooley made during World War I. In 1938, Armistice Day was made a federal holiday to be celebrated every year on November 11 th .
Speaker 14	On the first Armistice Day, soldiers who survived the war marched in a parade through their hometowns. Politicians and veteran officers gave speeches and held ceremonies of thanks for the peace they had won.

Speaker 15	It wasn't until 1953 when the townspeople of Emporia Kansas called the holiday veterans' Day in gratitude to all of the veterans in their town. Soon after, Congress passed a bill renaming the holiday to Veterans' Day. In 1971, President Nixon declared it a federal holiday to be celebrated on the second Monday of November.
Speaker 16	You may be wondering if the US is the only country that honors veterans with a special day. There are a number of countries that honor their veterans each year on November 11. Canada and Australia observe "Remembrance Day" on November 11 th and Great Britain observes "Remembrance Day" on the Sunday nearest to November 11 th .
Speaker 17	Americans still give thanks for peace on Veterans' Day. There are ceremonies and speeches and at 11:00 in the morning, most Americans observe a moment of silence, remembering those who fought for peace.
Music	<i>[Chorus/choir sings "America the Beautiful"]</i>
Speaker 18	And our annual tribute continues each November 11 th , in Washington DC, at Arlington National Cemetery. At 11:00, a color guard made up of each of the military branches, renders honors to America's war dead during a traditional ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown soldier. The President places a wreath at the tomb and a bugler sounds taps.
Speaker 19	While Veterans' Day is typically a tribute to America's living veterans, it is always appropriate to include a moment of respect for those who gave their lives for their country.
Speaker 20	Please stand and join us in a moment of silence and Taps (Taps is optional). As we stand, let us remember those who are protecting us today both home and abroad. In respect, let us dismiss in silence.