



Remember
Remembrance
Sunday

LESSON OF THE WEEK



REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

Remembrance Sunday is held in the United Kingdom as a day to commemorate the contribution of British and Commonwealth military and civilian servicemen and women in the two World Wars and later conflicts. It is held at 11am on the second Sunday in November.

In this lesson

you'll learn:



What is the Remembrance Sunday?



Corn Poppy - The Symbol



The Poem - Flanders Fields



Remembrance Day Ceremonies





Remembrance Sunday

What is the Remembrance Sunday?

Remembrance Sunday, in the United Kingdom, holiday held on the second Sunday of November that commemorates British service members who have died in wars and other military conflicts since the onset of World War I. By tradition, a two-minute period of silence is observed throughout the country at 11 AM, and church services and other ceremonial gatherings take place during the day. A nationally televised remembrance service, generally attended by politicians, religious leaders, military personnel, and members of the British royal family, has been held for decades at the Cenotaph monument in central London.

The holiday has its origins in Armistice Day, which was dedicated in Great Britain on Nov. 11, 1919, in commemoration of the one-year anniversary of the peace agreement that ended World War I. In response to a politician's suggestion, King George V requested that the country pause in silence for two minutes in acknowledgment of the war's fatalities. Thereafter a period of silence became the centerpiece of Armistice Day events that occurred annually until the outbreak of World War II in 1939, when it was

decided that general celebrations would not be held on November 11 of that year. Instead, a proximate Sunday was observed as a "day of dedication" during the span of the war. After the conclusion of World War II, the British government, seeking to honour participants in both World Wars, officially replaced Armistice Day with the new Sunday observance, which was thereafter known as Remembrance Sunday. In 1956 the date was fixed as the second Sunday of the month. In recent years Armistice Day has been revived as an additional occasion for silence, though Remembrance Sunday remains the main day of commemoration.

The most recognisable symbol of Remembrance Sunday is the red poppy, which became associated with World War I memorials after scores of the flowers bloomed in the former battlefields of Belgium and northern France. (The phenomenon was depicted in the popular 1915 poem "In Flanders Fields," by Canadian soldier John McCrae.) In 1921 the newly formed British Legion (now the Royal British Legion), a charitable organization for veterans, began selling red paper poppies for Armistice Day, and its annual Poppy Appeal has been enormously successful since. In addition to poppies intended to be worn on clothing, wreaths made of poppies are frequently

displayed at memorial sites. Beginning in the 1930s, some groups have alternatively promoted white poppies as an emblem of peace, though this has often met with controversy.





Remembrance Day Ceremonies

Wreath-laying ceremonies, usually organised by local branches of the Royal British Legion, are observed on Remembrance Day at most war memorials across the UK at 11 am on 11 November, with two minutes of silence observed; a custom which had lapsed before a campaign for its revival began in the early 1990s. The silence is also broadcast as a special programme on BBC with a voice over usually saying "This is BBC One. Now on the 11th hour, of the 11th day of the 11th month. The traditional two minute silence for Armistice Day." The programme starts with a close up of the Big Ben clock chiming 11 and then the programme shows different parts of the world observing the silence. The programme ends with a bugler sounding The Rouse and then normal programming is resumed.

Many employers and businesses invite their staff and customers to observe the two minutes' silence at 11:00 am. The beginning and end of the two minutes' silence is often marked in large towns and cities by the firing of field artillery gun, often provided by the local Royal Artillery battery.

The first two-minute silence held in London (11 November 1919) was reported in the *Manchester Guardian* on 12 November 1919:

- The first stroke of eleven produced a magical effect.
- The tram cars glided into stillness, motors ceased to cough and fume, and stopped dead, and the mighty-limbed dray horses hunched back upon their loads and stopped also, seeming to do it of their own volition.
- Someone took off his hat, and with a nervous hesitancy the rest of the men bowed their heads also. Here and there an old soldier could be detected slipping unconsciously into the posture of 'attention'. An elderly woman, not far away, wiped her eyes, and the man beside her looked white and stern. Everyone stood very still ... The hush deepened. It had spread over the whole city and become so pronounced as to impress one with a sense of audibility. It was a silence which was almost pain ... And the spirit of memory brooded over it all.

In the United Kingdom, the main observance is Remembrance Sunday, held on the Sunday nearest to 11 November. There is a National Service of Remembrance in London, as well as other services and ceremonies in the regions. Typically, poppy wreaths are laid by representatives of the Crown, the armed forces, and local civic leaders, as well as by

local organisations including ex-servicemen organisations, cadet forces, the Scouts, Guides, Boys' Brigade, St John Ambulance and the Salvation Army. A minute's or two minutes' silence is also frequently incorporated into church services.

Commemorative coins and exhibitions

In 2014 the Royal Mint issued a colour-printed Alderney £5 coin, designed by engraver Laura Clancy, to commemorate Remembrance Day.

Also in 2014, to commemorate the outbreak of World War I a huge display called Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red, consisting of 888,246 ceramic poppies was installed in the moat of the Tower of London, each poppy representing a British Empire fatality.

On 5 November 2018 and set to continue for 4 months, about 10,000 torches were lit at the foot of the Tower's walls, in its dry moat to mark the centenary of the end of the World War I.



The World War Origins of the Poppy as a Remembrance Symbol

The Remembrance Day symbolism of the poppy started with a poem written by a World War I brigade surgeon who was struck by the sight of the red flowers growing on a ravaged battlefield.

From 1914 to 1918, World War I took a greater human toll than any previous conflict, with some 8.5 million soldiers dead of battlefield injuries or disease. The Great War, as it was then known, also ravaged the landscape of Western Europe, where most of the fiercest fighting took place. From the devastated landscape of the battlefields, the red poppy would grow and, thanks to a famous poem, become a powerful symbol of remembrance.

Across northern France and Flanders (northern Belgium), the brutal clashes between Allied and Central Powers soldiers tore up fields and forests, tearing up trees and plants and wreaking havoc on the soil beneath. But in the warm early spring of 1915, bright red flowers began peeking through the battle-scarred land: *Papaver rhoeas*, known variously as the Flanders poppy, corn poppy, red poppy and corn rose.

Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, a Canadian who served as a brigade surgeon for an Allied artillery unit,

spotted a cluster of poppies that spring, shortly after the Second Battle of Ypres. McCrae tended to the wounded and got a firsthand look at the carnage of that clash, in which the Germans unleashed lethal chlorine gas for the first time in the war. Some 87,000 Allied soldiers were killed, wounded or went missing in the battle (as well as 37,000 on the German side); a friend of McCrae's, Lieutenant Alexis Helmer, was among the dead.

Struck by the sight of bright red blooms on broken ground, McCrae wrote a poem, "In Flanders Field," in which he channeled the voice of the fallen soldiers buried under those hardy poppies. Published in *Punch* magazine in late 1915, the poem would be used at countless memorial ceremonies, and became one of the most famous works of art to emerge from the Great War. Its fame had spread far and wide by the time McCrae himself died, from pneumonia and meningitis, in January 1918.

Across the Atlantic, a woman named Moina Michael read "In Flanders Field" in the pages of *Ladies' Home Journal* that November, just two days before the armistice. A professor at the University of Georgia at the time the war broke out, Michael had taken a leave of absence to volunteer at the New York headquarters of the Young Women's Christian

Association (YWCA), which trained and sponsored workers overseas. Inspired by McCrae's verses, Michael wrote her own poem in response, which she called "We Shall Keep Faith."

As a sign of this faith, and a remembrance of the sacrifices of Flanders Field, Michael vowed to always wear a red poppy; she found an initial batch of fabric blooms for herself and her colleagues at a department store. After the war ended, she returned to the university town of Athens, and came up with the idea of making and selling red silk poppies to raise money to support returning veterans.



The Queen watched the last Sunday (November 8th, 2020) ceremony from a nearby balcony



The Poem - Flanders Fields

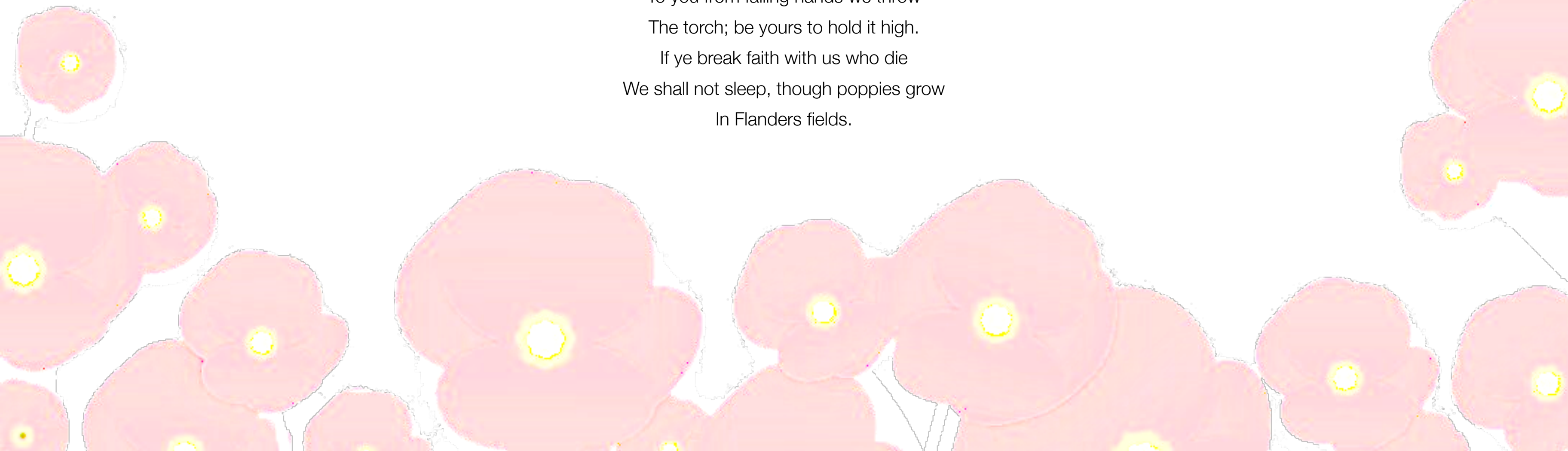


Flanders Fields” by John McCrae

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 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.



This lesson content was excerpted from:



Britannica



Wikipedia



The Guardian



BBCNews

