


# Memorial Day Lesson Plan Grades 9-12

*It's not a burden, he's my brother* 



*American Legion Auxiliary*

**Hannah Hofer - SD**

Class V

Best Overall Northwestern Division



# Wreaths Across America

## Lesson Plan

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Teacher:           | Date:   |
| Grades: 9th – 12th | Lesson: Memorial Day; “In Flanders Fields”, Find a Way to Serve on Memorial Day in Honor of Our Fallen Heroes |

|   |   |                |              |       |              |           |              |             |             |         |
|---|---|----------------|--------------|-------|--------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|-------------|---------|
| <p><b>OBJECTIVES: NCCSS, 1. CULTURE</b> Through the study of culture and cultural diversity, learners understand how human beings create, learn, share, and adapt to culture, and appreciate the role of culture in shaping their lives and society, as well the lives and societies of others.</p> | <p><b>STRATEGIES:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Drawing/Coloring</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Writing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Questions</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Think-Pair-Share</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Small Groups</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Large Group</li> </ul> <p>*Before conducting this lesson, make sure you are aware of students who may have parents deployed in the Military, or who may be Gold Star Children.</p>   |                |              |       |              |           |              |             |             |         |
| <b>MATERIALS:</b>   | Computer/laptop; internet (with access to YouTube); Smart Board; copies of “In Flanders Fields”/“We Shall Keep the Faith” poems; copies of the “In Flanders Fields”/“We Shall Keep the Faith” Worksheet; copies of the Memorial Day Reading; copies of the Acrostic Poem Worksheet  |                |              |       |              |           |              |             |             |         |
| <b>Engage:</b> Hook the students  | Activity – Think-Pair-Share. On a piece of paper or in their Journal, ask students to write the following three questions: What is a memory? What is the happiest memory you have? What is the saddest memory you have? Allow the students a few minutes to reflect as this can be difficult for some students. When the students have finished, ask them to share with their partner as much as they are comfortable sharing. Play the History of Memorial Day Video, <a href="https://youtu.be/YChfpVD5xpk">https://youtu.be/YChfpVD5xpk</a>  |                |              |       |              |           |              |             |             |         |
| <b>Explore:</b> Students make sense of a concept through observations.  | Play the Memorial Day PowerPoint located here <a href="#">Memorial Day PowerPoint</a> Read the background information about John McCrae and Moina Michael aloud before students read the poems “In Flanders Fields” and “We Shall Keep the Faith.” Ask students to read the poems silently, and then read them aloud as a class. Hand out the “In Flanders Fields” and “We Shall Keep the Faith.” Questions. Students will complete the questions. Students will read the Memorial Day Reading. Hand out the Acrostic Poem Worksheet.   |                |              |       |              |           |              |             |             |         |
| <b>Explain:</b> Teacher introduces formal vocabulary and language to students.  | <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;">Decoration Day</td> <td style="width: 33%;">armed forces</td> <td style="width: 33%;">meter</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Memorial Day</td> <td>Civil War</td> <td>alliteration</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Red Poppies</td> <td>World War I</td> <td>symbols</td> </tr> </table>   | Decoration Day | armed forces | meter | Memorial Day | Civil War | alliteration | Red Poppies | World War I | symbols |
| Decoration Day  | armed forces  | meter          |              |       |              |           |              |             |             |         |
| Memorial Day  | Civil War   | alliteration   |              |       |              |           |              |             |             |         |
| Red Poppies   | World War I   | symbols        |              |       |              |           |              |             |             |         |
| <b>Elaborate:</b> Students apply what they have learned.  | Students will read the poems “In Flanders Fields” and “We Shall Keep the Faith”; complete the “In Flanders Fields”/“We Shall Keep the Faith” Worksheet; students will create an Acrostic Poem on the meaning of Memorial Day based on the information they have learned in today’s lesson.  |                |              |       |              |           |              |             |             |         |
| <b>Evaluate:</b> assessment.  | The teacher will choose the items to be used for formal and informal assessment.  |                |              |       |              |           |              |             |             |         |
| <b>Enrichment/Service-Learning Project</b>  | Reminder: The Friday before Memorial Day is National Poppy Day, wear a red poppy in remembrance of those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for the freedoms we enjoy every day. For more information on National Poppy Day, go to <a href="https://www.legion-aux.org/national-poppy-day">https://www.legion-aux.org/national-poppy-day</a> . Students can pick from many projects, placing small flags on the graves of fallen heroes at a local cemetery; making cards for veterans in a local VA Home, VA Hospital or nursing home; share what you have learned about Memorial Day in class with your family and friends; participate in the Wreaths Across America Youth Service Project available for download <a href="#">here</a> . |                |              |       |              |           |              |             |             |         |

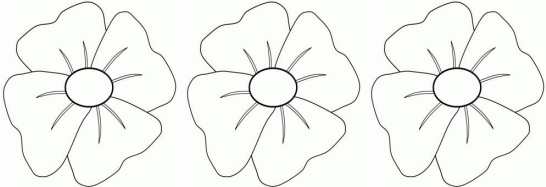
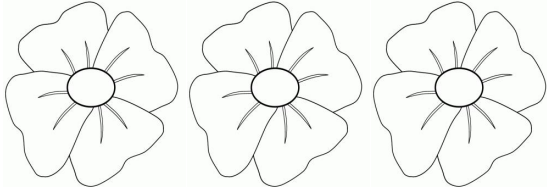
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Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

### “In Flanders Fields” and “We Shall Keep the Faith”

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| <p><b>About the Writer:</b><br/>John McCrae, a Canadian poet, soldier, and physician, wrote “In Flanders Fields” in 1915- as a memorial to those who died in a World War I battle fought in a region of Belgium known as the Ypres Salient. McCrae himself treated many of the soldiers injured in that battle and was particularly moved by the death of a close friend, Alexis Helmer. The poem describes the tragedy of the soldiers' deaths, as well as the ongoing natural beauty that surrounds their graves. It also addresses the question of the next generation's responsibility to carry on the soldiers' battle.</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> | <p style="text-align: right;"><b>“In Flanders Fields”</b><br/>John McCrae, 1915</p> <p style="text-align: center;">In Flanders fields the poppies blow<br/>Between the crosses, row on row,<br/>That mark our place; and in the sky<br/>The larks, still bravely singing, fly<br/>Scarce heard amid the guns below.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">We are the Dead. Short days ago<br/>We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,<br/>Loved and were loved, and now we lie<br/>In Flanders fields.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Take up our quarrel with the foe:<br/>To you from failing hands we throw<br/>The torch; be yours to hold it high.<br/>If ye break faith with us who die<br/>We shall not sleep, though poppies grow<br/>In Flanders fields.</p> |
| <p><b>“We Shall Keep the Faith”</b><br/>by Moina Michael, November 1918<br/>Oh! you who sleep in Flanders Fields,<br/>Sleep sweet - to rise anew!<br/>We caught the torch you threw<br/>And holding high, we keep the Faith<br/>With All who died.</p> <p>We cherish, too, the poppy red<br/>That grows on fields where valor led;<br/>It seems to signal to the skies<br/>That blood of heroes never dies,<br/>But lends a lustre to the red<br/>Of the flower that blooms above the dead<br/>In Flanders Fields.</p> <p>And now the Torch and Poppy Red<br/>We wear in honor of our dead.<br/>Fear not that ye have died for naught;<br/>We'll teach the lesson that ye wrought<br/>In Flanders Fields.</p>  | <p><b>About the Writer:</b><br/>In November 1918, Moina Michael came across the poem “<i>In Flanders Fields</i>” by John McCrae when reading a magazine. She was so moved by what she read that she made a personal pledge to “keep the faith”. She felt compelled to make a note of this pledge and hastily scribbled down a response entitled “We Shall Keep the Faith” on the back of a used envelope. From that day forward, she vowed to wear a red poppy as a sign of remembrance. She was instrumental in getting the Red Poppy recognized as the official flower of remembrance.</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>   |

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## “In Flanders Fields” & “We Shall Keep the Faith” Questions

1. Who were the dead in the poem? How old do you think they were?
2. Why did McCrae choose to write the poem as if it were spoken by the fallen soldiers?
3. Who are the fallen soldiers speaking to?
4. How many syllables are there in each line of the poem?
5. Why did McCrae choose to have a different number of syllables in each line?
6. Look at the words at the end of each line. Which words rhyme?
7. Why do you think some lines do not rhyme with the others?
8. Why do you think McCrae wrote the poem in first-person plural?
9. Compare and contrast “In Flanders Fields” and “We Shall Keep the Faith.” How are they similar? How are they different? What does the torch symbolize?

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### Answer Key: “In Flanders Fields” & “We Shall Keep the Faith” Questions

1. Who were the dead in the poem? How old do you think they were?

Allied soldiers e.g., British (along with Canadians, New Zealander, etc.), plus the French, and the Russians, etc. They are mostly young men, in their late teens/early twenties.

2. Why did McCrae choose to write the poem as if it were spoken by the fallen soldiers?

The dead no longer have a voice. It was McCrae’s way of giving them a voice and asking the living to remember them.

3. Who are the fallen soldiers speaking to?

They are speaking to us (the living) and are telling us to never forget the horrors of war or they will never rest.

4. How many syllables are there in each line of the poem?

8 syllables in every line, except line 4 in stanza 2 and line 6 in stanza 3, which have only 4 syllables.

5. Why did McCrae choose to have a different number of syllables in each line?

The lines with fewer syllables are different, the intent was to make the reader stop, think, and remember.

6. Look at the words at the end of each line. Can you see any words that rhyme?

Stanza one: blow/row, sky/fly, below

Stanza two: ago/glow, lie, fields

Stanza three: foe/throw, high/die, grow fields

7. Why do you think some lines do not rhyme with the others?

The lines that do not rhyme break the pattern and make us stop, think, and remember.

8. Why do you think McCrae wrote the poem in first-person plural?

McCrae wrote the poem in first-person plural, using *our* and *we* to indicate that the speakers are the war dead.

9. Compare and contrast “In Flanders Fields” and “We Shall Keep the Faith.” How are they similar? How are they different? What does the torch symbolize? “We Shall Keep the Faith” is a response to “In Flanders Fields,” it is a promise to remember those who died in the war. The torch represents a responsibility that has been passed on from those who have died to those who live. It represents the blood of the soldiers. “you” means the dead soldiers and “we” are the people/survivors that will remember them.

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### Memorial Day Reading

The following reading is an excerpt from: Taubenfeld, Emma. (April 19, 2023) “When Is Memorial Day 2023, and Why Do We Celebrate It?”. Retrieved from <https://www.rd.com/article/memorial-day-history/>

Memorial Day is observed each May, but how many of us actually know what Memorial Day is truly about—or its history? Some observe Memorial Day by doing things like visiting the graves of fallen soldiers and sharing meaningful Memorial Day quotes on social media, while others host a barbecue at the beach, shop sales at stores open on Memorial Day, or go out to eat at restaurants open on Memorial Day. But why do we do these activities, and how did this holiday come to be? Before the Memorial Day weekend gets here, read up on the holiday’s meaning and history (and don’t forget to brush up on the difference between Memorial Day and Veterans Day.)

#### **When is Memorial Day?**

Memorial Day was witnessed on May 30 from 1868 until 1970 but is now observed annually on the last Monday in May.

#### **Is Memorial Day always the last Monday in May?**

Yes, Memorial Day falls on the last Monday in May. In 1971, the date of the holiday was officially changed to the last Monday in May per the Uniform Monday Holiday Act.

#### **Why do we celebrate Memorial Day?**

Memorial Day is considered a federal holiday in the United States in which we honor and mourn members of the military who have passed while serving in the United States Armed Forces.

#### **The History of Memorial Day**

Originally known as Decoration Day, Memorial Day began with an idea from General John Logan as a way to honor the fallen soldiers of the Civil War. The first celebration on May 30, 1868, was held at Arlington National Cemetery with a crowd of 5,000 people decorating the graves of over 20,000 military personnel with flowers. Most experts believe General Logan planned the first Decoration Day for that day because Northern and Southern states would have flowers in bloom by then, though others believe the date was ideal because it didn’t coincide with the anniversary of any battles.

Various Washington officials, including General Ulysses S. Grant, presided over the ceremonies. After speeches, children from the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Orphan Home, among others, made their way through the cemetery, strewing flowers on both Union and Confederate graves, reciting prayers, and singing hymns. Many also came prepared with a picnic lunch.

It wasn’t until after World War I that Memorial Day was expanded to honor all veterans who died in any American war. In 1971, Decoration Day became officially known as Memorial Day and Congress passed an act declaring it a national holiday. That same year, Memorial Day was moved from May 30 to the last Monday in May by President Lyndon B. Johnson. “This will...enable families who live some distance apart to spend more time together,” President Johnson noted in his official statement regarding what is now known as the Uniform Monday Holiday Act.

New York was the first state to declare Memorial Day an official holiday, followed by other northern states, but the southern states had their own designated day to honor fallen Confederate soldiers. The observances remained separate until the completion of World War I, when Memorial Day was changed to honoring the fallen Americans who fought in any war. Some southern states continue to honor the Confederate dead: January 19 in Texas; April 26 in Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, and Georgia; May 10 in North and South Carolina; and June 3 in Louisiana, Kentucky, and Tennessee.

#### **Why don’t we say, “Happy Memorial Day”?**

While it’s tempting to say, “Happy Memorial Day”, and you may not have ill intent when saying it, it’s important to remember the meaning of the holiday before you say this. Memorial Day is a day to honor those who sacrificed their lives while serving in the military. As the Code of Support Foundation points out, it’s a deeply

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personal day for many who lost loved ones in the service. Some think saying “Happy Memorial Day” puts the holiday in a more cheerful light, as opposed to the day of honor and remembrance it’s meant to be. Instead of saying “Happy Memorial Day,” the Code of Support Foundation offers an alternative phrase: “I wish you a meaningful Memorial Day.”

### **Memorial Day traditions**

There are a number of Memorial Day activities that families enjoy participating in every year, but there are also a few meaningful Memorial Day traditions you can honor.

**Memorial Day poppies:** People wear poppies to honor America’s war dead in a Memorial Day tradition that dates back to the poem “In Flanders Fields,” written in 1915 by John McCrae. Inspired by the poem’s image of red poppies scattered through cross-shaped grave markers, American Moina Michael and France’s Anna E. Guerin started selling artificial poppies as a fundraiser for children affected by the war. Now, many Americans pin a poppy on their shirt as a sign of respect.

**National Moment of Remembrance:** To ensure the sacrifices of America’s fallen heroes are never forgotten, President Bill Clinton signed into law “The National Moment of Remembrance Act” in December of 2000. The law encourages all Americans to pause wherever they are at 3 p.m. local time on Memorial Day for a minute of silence to remember and honor those who have died in service to the nation.

**Hang your flag at half staff:** Federal guidelines say the flag should be displayed at half-staff only until noon, then go up to full-staff until sundown.

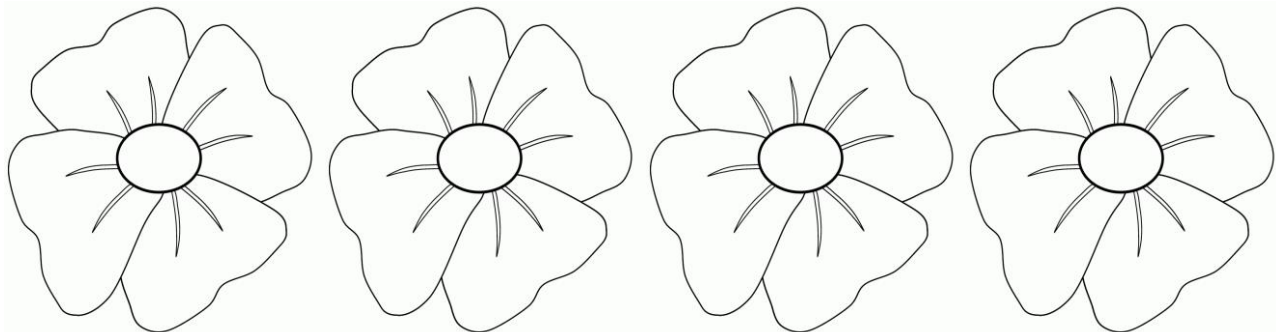
**Playing “Taps:”** During the Civil War, a U.S. general thought the bugle call signaling bedtime could use a more melodious tune, so he wrote the notes for “Taps” in 1862. Another officer later used the bugle song for a funeral, fearing the traditional firing of rifles might sound like an attack. Now, “Taps” is a traditional part of Memorial Day celebrations.

**Visit a local veterans cemetery:** Some of the graves in a veteran cemetery are well maintained and decorated by families. Bring flowers and lay them by a grave that doesn’t have any.

*Written with contribution from Kelly Kuehn*

### **Sources:**

- [Historical Army Foundation](#): “General John A. Logan, Memorial Day founder”
- [TIME](#): “Memorial Day Weekend: Why the Holiday is Always on a Monday”
- [Code of Support Foundation](#): “Why You Don’t Say “Happy Memorial Day””
- [U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs](#): “In Flanders Fields”
- [Va.gov](#): “Guidelines for Display of the Flag”
- [History](#): “How Did ‘Taps’ Originate?”



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## Create an Acrostic Poem for Memorial Day

Using “In Flanders Fields” and “We Shall Keep the Faith” as references, create an acrostic poem about the meaning of Memorial Day.

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