

Teach Peace Pack

Assembly: Remembering for peace

Aim: To encourage children to think about the impact of war and to consider ways of remembering for peace.

Planning/Preparation: You will need the 'Remembering for peace' PowerPoint presentation from the Peace Education Network website: www.peace-education.org.uk.

The orange squares ■ in the text refer to these slides.

* This is a useful assembly for upper primary and lower secondary school students.

1 Remembering war

■ Slide 1: Picture of red and white poppies

Today we're going to be talking about how we remember war, and remembering for peace.

■ Slide 2: In 1918...

World War I came to an end at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month (11 November 1918). This is when the guns fell silent. This is known today as Remembrance Day. On the very first Remembrance Day in 1919, people gathered in cities, towns and villages to remember all those who had fought in World War I.

■ Slide 3: Picture of a clock face

At 11am on 11 November, over one hundred years later, there is still a two-minute silence. Ask the children: has anyone here ever taken part in this silence?



There is not much silence in our world. There is noise all around us. So silence is special. Silence can help us to stop thinking about what is going on right now and give us time to reflect. Ask the children: but what are we thinking about? How do we feel?

■ Slide 4: 17,000,000 people died in World War I

Around 17 million people died in World War I. It is hard to imagine this number of people. Can you picture 17 million people? (This could be related to the size of the students' school, or the number of people in their town or village, or a local sports stadium.) Ask all students to count aloud with the seconds on the clock. After ten seconds tell them to stop. Tell children that if they were to count like that to 17 million it would take them 187 days. (Link this to their school calendar, i.e. next Christmas or summer holiday.)

■ Slide 5: Picture of street with houses boarded up

Look at this slide of an empty street with houses boarded up. If another war happened on this scale, all the streets, towns and cities in the UK would look like this – deserted of their civilians.

■ Slide 6: Memorials to soldiers

Ask children what these pictures are. Who are in these photos? Did anyone else die in World War I? (Women, children, animals...)

2 Military and civilians

Ask approximately 40 per cent of the children in the assembly to stand up. Explain to the children that of the 17 million deaths, this percentage were civilians (non-military people). The children can then sit back down.

People hoped that World War I would be the "war

to end all wars". But a few years later World War II began. Ask the children who were standing up to stand again, then ask another 25 per cent of children to stand up as well. In World War II this was the proportion of civilians that died (65 per cent).

Ernest Brooks [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons



Ask another 25 per cent of the children to stand up (90 per cent should now be standing). By the 1990s, more than 90 per cent of those dying in armed conflict were civilians (source: www.unicef.org/graca/patterns.htm).

■ Slide 7: Pie charts showing percentage of military/civilian wartime fatalities

Civilian fatalities in wartime climbed from 5 per cent at the turn of the century to more than 90 per cent in the wars of the 1990s.

■ Slide 8: Do the war memorials you have seen represent everyone who has died in war?

Many of our war memorials commemorate the soldiers who are killed in war, but there are other types of memorials.

3 Remembering for peace

■ Slide 9: Hands across the divide, Northern Ireland

What do you think this is? When you enter a town in Northern Ireland called Craigavon, a place affected by years of violent conflict, across the bridge the first thing you see is this memorial of two men reaching out to each other. Ask the children: what do you think this is trying to show? It symbolises the spirit of reconciliation and hope for the future.

■ Slide 10: Memorial to conscientious objectors

In the UK during World War I, some people (over 10,000) believed that, at whatever risk to themselves, they must not resort to violence. They were called conscientious objectors. They refused to kill other human beings. The right to refuse to kill was recognised in Britain, but many conscientious objectors suffered for their beliefs in peace and nonviolence. Many were sent to prison, and some were tortured. Many conscientious objectors were called cowards and were never given jobs again. Families and friends of conscientious objectors were threatened. It takes a lot of courage to hold out against violence when you are being called a coward and a traitor. This memorial stone in Tavistock Square, London, recognises them. It says: "To all those who have established and are maintaining the right to refuse to kill. Their foresight and courage gives us hope".

■ Slide 11: Show statue of Sadako and cherry tree

This is a memorial statue of Sadako Sasaki. Sadako was a girl who died at the age of 12 from radiation caused by the atomic bomb that was



By Lisa Norwood from Portland, USA (A zillion origami cranes for peace) [CC BY 2.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>)], via Wikimedia Commons.

dropped on her home city of Hiroshima in Japan when she was two years old. Schoolchildren from all over Japan raised money for this memorial statue. Written on Sadako's statue are the words "This is our cry. This is our prayer: To create peace in the world."

This cherry tree in Tavistock Square in London was planted from seeds from cherry trees in Hiroshima. It was planted in memory of the thousands who were killed by the first nuclear bomb dropped in a war.

Ask the children: can anyone think of something else that people do to remember those lost in war? Something that is worn around Remembrance Day on 11 November?

■ Slide 12: Red poppies

Show the picture of the red poppy. Ask the children if they know what the red poppy represents? It became the symbol of those who died in World War I because the disturbed earth on the battlefields provided ideal conditions for the flower to grow. Does anyone know of any other coloured poppies?

■ Slide 13: White poppies

There is another poppy: the white poppy. Does anyone know what the white poppy represents? People who wear the white poppy do so because they reject war as a way of solving problems between people, and call for a commitment to work for peace.

The organisation 'Wales for peace' has a logo that incorporates the red and the white poppy.

■ Slide 14: Purple poppy

Show the purple poppy. Does anyone know what this represents? Some people wear the purple poppy to remember the animals lost in war. This monument is a tribute to all the animals who suffered and died in the wars and conflicts of the 20th century. A small



inscription on the monument simply reads "They had no choice."

4 Conclusion

■ Slide 15: How will you remember?

Remembrance Day is a time to be sad, but it is also a time of hope – the hope of a better, more peaceful world for everyone. Some people wear more than one of these poppies. It is up to you to decide which one, if any, you choose to wear. What is important is that we remember the many victims of war, and that together we try to work towards a world without war.

Ask the children to join you in a two-minute silence.

Follow up activities/resources:

- Discuss with your class who/what about war should be remembered. Make your own poppy, peace symbol or memorial.
- Order white poppies for your school and learn more about conscientious objectors at: www.ppu.org.uk.
- Learn more about the Purple poppy and Animal Victims of War at: <http://animalaid.org.uk/h/n/CAMPAIGNS/living//2256>.
- Find out more about the different choices people made during WWI using 'Conscience: A World War I critical thinking project' at <http://old.quaker.org.uk/conscience-and-conviction>.
- To find out more about Wales for Peace visit: www.walesforpeace.org.
- Follow the lives of young people in WWI who refused to kill at: www.whitefeatherdiaries.org.uk.

