Memorial Day

MEMORIAL DAY

WHEN CAN THEIR GLORY FADE

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For the Homeschool Classroom
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Sheila Carroll
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Three years after the Civil War ended, on May 5, 1868, the head of an organization of Union veterans — the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) — established Decoration Day as a time for the nation to decorate the graves of the war dead with flowers. Maj. Gen. John A. Logan declared that Decoration Day should be observed on May 30. It is believed that date was chosen because flowers would be in bloom all over the country.

The first large observance was held that year at Arlington National Cemetery, across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C.

The ceremonies centered around the mourning-draped veranda of the Arlington mansion, once the home of Gen. Robert E. Lee. Various Washington officials, including Gen. and Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant, presided over the ceremonies. After speeches, children from the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Orphan Home and members of the GAR made their way through the cemetery, strewing flowers on both Union and Confederate graves, reciting prayers and singing hymns.

Local Observances Claim To Be First Local springtime tributes to the Civil War dead already had been held in various places. One of the first occurred in Columbus, Miss., April 25, 1866, when a group of women visited a cemetery to decorate the graves of Confederate soldiers who had fallen in battle at Shiloh. Nearby were the graves of Union soldiers, neglected because they were the enemy. Disturbed at the sight of the bare graves, the women placed some of their flowers on those graves, as well.

Today, cities in the North and the South claim to be the birthplace of Memorial Day in 1866. Both Macon and Columbus, Ga., claim the title, as well as Richmond, Va. The village of Boalsburg, Pa., claims it began there two years earlier. A stone in a Carbondale, Ill., cemetery carries the statement that the first Decoration Day ceremony took place there on April 29, 1866. Carbondale was the wartime home of Gen. Logan. Approximately 25 places have been named in connection with the origin of Memorial Day, many of them in the South where most of the war dead were buried.

Official Birthplace Declared In 1966, Congress and President Lyndon Johnson declared Waterloo, N.Y., the “birthplace” of Memorial Day. There, a ceremony on May 5, 1866, honored local veterans who had fought in the Civil War. Businesses closed and residents flew flags at half-staff. Supporters of Waterloo’s claim say earlier observances in other places were either informal, not community-wide or one-time events.
By the end of the 19th century, Memorial Day ceremonies were being held on May 30 throughout the nation. State legislatures passed proclamations designating the day, and the Army and Navy adopted regulations for proper observance at their facilities.

It was not until after World War I, however, that the day was expanded to honor those who have died in all American wars. In 1971, Memorial Day was declared a national holiday by an act of Congress, though it is still often called Decoration Day. It was then also placed on the last Monday in May, as were some other federal holidays.

**Some States Have Confederate Observances** Many Southern states also have their own days for honoring the Confederate dead. Mississippi celebrates Confederate Memorial Day on the last Monday of April, Alabama on the fourth Monday of April, and Georgia on April 26. North and South Carolina observe it on May 10, Louisiana on June 3 and Tennessee calls that date Confederate Decoration Day. Texas celebrates Confederate Heroes Day January 19 and Virginia calls the last Monday in May Confederate Memorial Day.

Gen. Logan’s order for his posts to decorate graves in 1868 “with the choicest flowers of springtime” urged: “We should guard their graves with sacred vigilance. ... Let pleasant paths invite the coming and going of reverent visitors and fond mourners. Let no neglect, no ravages of time, testify to the present or to the coming generations that we have forgotten as a people the cost of a free and undivided republic.”

The crowd attending the first Memorial Day ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery was approximately the same size as those that attend today’s observance, about 5,000 people. Then, as now, small American flags were placed on each grave — a tradition followed at many national cemeteries today. In recent years, the custom has grown in many families to decorate the graves of all departed loved ones.

The National Moment of Remembrance 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. As Moment of Remembrance founder Carmella LaSpada states: “It’s a way we can all help put the memorial back in Memorial.
HEADQUARTERS GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC
Washington D.C. May 5, 1868

General Orders No. 11

I. The 30th day of May, 1868, is designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers, or other decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village and hamlet churchyard in the land. In this observance no form of ceremony is prescribed, but Posts and comrades will, in their own way, arrange such fitting services and testimonials of respect as circumstances may permit.

We are organized, Comrades, as our regulations tell us, for the purpose among other things, “of preserving and strengthening those kind and fraternal feelings which have bound together the soldiers, sailors and marines who united to suppress the late rebellion.” What can aid more to assure this result than by cherishing tenderly the memory of our heroic dead? We should guard their graves with sacred vigilance. All that the consecrated wealth and taste of the nation can add to their adornment and security is but a fitting tribute to the memory of her slain defenders. Let pleasant paths invite the coming and going of reverent visitors and fond mourners. Let no neglect, no ravages of time, testify to the present or to the coming generations that we have forgotten as a people the cost of a free and undivided republic.

If other eyes grow dull and other hands slack, and other hearts cold in the solemn trust, ours shall keep it well as long as the light and warmth of life remain in us.

Let us, then, at the time appointed, gather around their sacred remains and garland the passionless mounds above them with choicest flowers of springtime; let us raise above them the dear old flag they saved; let us in this solemn presence renew our pledge to aid and to assist those whom they have left among us as a sacred charge upon the Nation’s gratitude – the soldier’s and sailor’s widow and orphan.

II. It is the purpose of the Commander-in-Chief to inaugurate this observance with the hope that it will be kept up from year to year, while a survivor of the war remains to honor the memory of his departed comrades. He earnestly desires the public press to call attention to this Order, and lend its friendly aid in bringing it to the notice of comrades in all parts of the country in time for simultaneous compliance therewith.

N.P. Chipman Adjutant General       John A. Logan Commander-in-Chief
The 24-note bugle call known as “taps” is thought to be a revision of a French bugle signal, called “tattoo,” that notified soldiers to cease an evening’s drinking and return to their barracks or garrisons. It was sounded one hour before the bugle call that brought the military day to an end by ordering the extinguishing of fires and lights. The last five measures of the tattoo resemble the modern day “Taps.”

The word “taps” is an alteration of the obsolete word “taptoo,” derived from the Dutch “taptoe.” Taptoe was the command -- “Tap toe!” -- to shut (“toe to”) the “tap” of a keg.

The revision that gave us present-day taps was made during America’s Civil War by Union Gen. Daniel Adams Butterfield, heading a brigade camped at Harrison Landing, Va., near Richmond. Up to that time, the U.S. Army’s infantry call to end the day was the French final call, "L’Extinction des feux." Gen. Butterfield decided the “lights out” music was too formal to signal the day’s end. One day in July 1862, he recalled the tattoo music and hummed a version of it to an aide, who wrote it down in music. Butterfield then asked the brigade bugler, Oliver W. Norton, to play the notes and, after listening, lengthened and shortened them while keeping his original melody.

He ordered Norton to play this new call at the end of each day thereafter, instead of the regulation call. The music was heard and appreciated by other brigades, who asked for copies and adopted this bugle call. It was even adopted by Confederate buglers. This music was made the official Army bugle call after the war, but not given the name “taps” until 1874.

The first time taps was played at a military funeral may also have been in Virginia soon after Butterfield composed it. Union Capt. John Tidball, head of an artillery battery, ordered it played for the burial of a cannoneer killed in action. Not wanting to reveal the battery’s position in the woods to the enemy nearby, Tidball substituted taps for the traditional three rifle volleys fired over the grave. Taps was played at the funeral of Confederate Gen. Stonewall Jackson 10 months after it was composed. Army infantry regulations by 1891 required taps to be played at military funeral ceremonies. Taps now is played by the military at burial and memorial services and is still used to signal "lights out" at day’s end.
The Poppy Flower as a Symbol of Memorial Day

The poem In Flanders Fields was written by World War I Colonel John McCrae, a surgeon with Canada’s First Brigade Artillery. It expressed McCrae's grief over the "row on row" of graves of soldiers who had died on Flanders' battlefields, located in a region of western Belgium and northern France. The poem presented a striking image of the bright red flowers blooming among the rows of white crosses and became a rallying cry to all who fought in the First World War. The first printed version of it reportedly was in December 1915, in the British magazine Punch.

McCrae's poem had a huge impact on two women, Anna E. Guerin of France and Georgia native Moina Michael. Both worked hard to initiate the sale of artificial poppies to help orphans and others left destitute by the war. By the time Guerin established the first sale in the U.S., in 1920 with the help of The American Legion, the poppy was well known in the allied countries — America, Britain, France, Canada, Australia and New Zealand — as the "Flower of Remembrance." Proceeds from that first sale went to the American and French Children's League.

Guerin had difficulty with the distribution of the poppies in early 1922 and sought out Michael for help. Michael had started a smaller-scaled Poppy Day during a YMCA conference she was attending in New York and wanted to use the poppies as a symbol of remembrance of the war. Guerin, called the "Poppy Lady of France" in her homeland, and Michael, later dubbed "The Poppy Princess" by the Georgia legislature, went to the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) for help. Following its first nationwide distribution of poppies in 1922, the VFW adopted the poppy as its official memorial flower.

However, a shortage of poppies from French manufacturers led to the idea of using unemployed and disabled veterans to produce the artificial flowers. In 1924, a poppy factory was built in Pittsburgh, Pa., providing a reliable source of poppies and a practical means of assistance to veterans. Today, veterans at Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities and veterans homes help assemble the poppies, which are distributed by veterans service organizations throughout the country.

Donations received in return for these artificial poppies have helped countless veterans and their widows, widowers and orphans over the years. The poppy itself continues to serve as a perpetual tribute to those who have given their lives for the nation's freedom.
How to Observe Memorial Day

- By visiting cemeteries and placing flags or flowers on the graves of our fallen heroes.
- By visiting memorials.
- By flying the U.S. Flag at half-staff until noon.
- By flying the ‘POW/MIA Flag’ as well (Section 1082 of the 1998 Defense Authorization Act).
- By participating in a "National Moment of Remembrance": at 3 p.m. to pause and think upon the true meaning of the day, and for Taps to be played.
- By renewing a pledge to aid the widows, widowers, and orphans of our fallen dead, and to aid the disabled veterans.
Making Memorial Day Poppies

By Betty Yerger
Used with permission

Materials:
- 3-inch red construction paper circle with center dot
- 6-inch green pipe cleaner
- 1/2 X 6-inch strip light yellow paper
- scissors
- pencil
- glue stick or white glue
- completed project example

Introduction:
Discuss what it means to be a veteran, general history of Memorial Day and why poppies are associated with remembering soldiers who died for America. (Information easy to find online.) I explain that veterans sell red poppies to raise money to help keep up cemeteries and to help disabled veterans. By making these pencil toppers we are reminded of their sacrifices that have made America free and safe.

Directions:
Draw line from center dot to edge of red circle and cut a slit. Overlap cut edges about an inch to create a shallow cone and glue; press for a silent count of 50 and set side to dry. Fold yellow paper in half; write Memorial Day on one side and Monday, May 29 (or appropriate date) on the other; set aside. Twist one end of green pipe cleaner around pencil point to create a small "knot". Keep rest of pipe cleaner straight. Poke small hole in center of poppy cone using pencil point and insert straight end of pipe cleaner, pull through until "knot" is in base of cone and forms green center. Place glue on inside of yellow paper and overlap onto green "stem" right under the poppy; press together and make sure securely glued. Poppy can be wrapped around pencil to form a pencil topper or used in other ways.

NOTE: Very popular project; many students wanted to make extras for family members, so have extra supplies available if possible.
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.

By Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, MD
Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae’s "In Flanders Fields" remains to this day one of the most memorable war poems ever written. It is a lasting legacy of the terrible battle in the Ypres salient in the spring of 1915. Here is the story of the making of that poem:

Although he had been a doctor for years and had served in the South African War, it was impossible to get used to the suffering, the screams, and the blood here, and Major John McCrae had seen and heard enough in his dressing station to last him a lifetime.

As a surgeon attached to the 1st Field Artillery Brigade, Major McCrae, who had joined the McGill faculty in 1900 after graduating from the University of Toronto, had spent seventeen days treating injured men -- Canadians, British, Indians, French, and Germans -- in the Ypres salient.

It had been an ordeal that he had hardly thought possible. McCrae later wrote of it:

"I wish I could embody on paper some of the varied sensations of that seventeen days... Seventeen days of Hades! At the end of the first day if anyone had told us we had to spend seventeen days there, we would have folded our hands and said it could not have been done."

One death particularly affected McCrae. A young friend and former student, Lieut. Alexis Helmer of Ottawa, had been killed by a shell burst on 2 May 1915. Lieutenant Helmer was buried later that day in the little cemetery outside McCrae's dressing station, and McCrae had performed the funeral ceremony in the absence of the chaplain.

The next day, sitting on the back of an ambulance parked near the dressing station beside the Canal de 'Yser, just a few hundred yards north of Ypres, McCrae vented his anguish by composing a poem. The major was no stranger to writing, having authored several medical texts besides dabbling in poetry.

In the nearby cemetery, McCrae could see the wild poppies that sprang up in the ditches in that part of Europe, and he spent twenty minutes of precious rest time scribbling fifteen lines of verse in a notebook.

A young soldier watched him write it. Cyril Allinson, a twenty-two year old sergeant-major, was delivering mail that day when he spotted McCrae. The major looked up as Allinson approached, then went on writing while the sergeant-major stood there quietly. "His face was very tired but calm as we wrote," Allinson recalled. "He looked around from time to time, his eyes
straying to Helmer’s grave."

When McCrae finished five minutes later, he took his mail from Allinson and, without saying a word, handed his pad to the young NCO. Allinson was moved by what he read:

"The poem was exactly an exact description of the scene in front of us both. He used the word blow in that line because the poppies actually were being blown that morning by a gentle east wind. It never occurred to me at that time that it would ever be published. It seemed to me just an exact description of the scene."

In fact, it was very nearly not published. Dissatisfied with it, McCrae tossed the poem away, but a fellow officer retrieved it and sent it to newspapers in England. The Spectator, in London, rejected it, but Punch published it on 8 December 1915.

*As reported on the Arlington National Cemetery Website.*

*By Mack Welford Salem, Virginia. Used with permission*
Decoration Day is the most beautiful of our national holidays.... The grim cannon have turned into palm branches, and the shell and shrapnel into peach blossoms.
Thomas Bailey Aldrich

And each man stand with his face in the light of his own drawn sword. Ready to do what a hero can.
Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Four things support the world: the learning of the wise, the justice of the great, the prayers of the good, and the valor of the brave.
Muhammad

Courage is contagious. When a brave man takes a stand, the spines of others are often stiffened.
Billy Graham

The bravest are surely those who have the clearest vision of what is before them, glory and danger alike, and yet notwithstanding, go out to meet it.
Thucydides

A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself.
Joseph Campbell

Valor grows by daring, fear by holding back.
Publilius Syrus

Heroism is latent in every human soul - However humble or unknown, they (the veterans) have renounced what are accounted pleasures and cheerfully undertaken all the self-denials - privations, toils, dangers, sufferings, sicknesses, mutilations, life-long hurts and losses, death itself - for some great good, dimly seen but dearly held.
Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain

Brave men are all vertebrates; they have their softness on the surface and their toughness in the middle.
G. K. Chesterton

A hero is one who knows how to hang on one minute longer.
Novalis

We must be prepared to make heroic sacrifices for the cause of peace that we make ungrudgingly for the cause of war. There is no task that is more important or closer to my heart.
Albert Einstein

It is surmounting difficulties that makes heroes.
Louis Pasteur
It doesn’t take a hero to order men into battle. It takes a hero to be one of those men who goes into battle.

Norman Schwarzkopf

Who kept the faith and fought the fight;
The glory theirs, the duty ours.
~Wallace Bruce

All we have of freedom, all we use or know -
This our fathers bought for us long and long ago.
~Rudyard Kipling, *The Old Issue*, 1899
About Union Soldiers Accepting a Drink

*Union Soldiers Accepting a Drink* illustrates an American artist's definition of a new genre of painting, and reveals his successful achievement of European artistic standards. To historians and Civil War scholars it offers insight into the role and inter-reliance of black and white women within slave communities during the American Civil War.

The painting, measuring a mere 10 3/4 x 15 1/4 inches ...Union Soldiers contains three distinct vignettes set in a rural area sometime around the American Civil War. The scene in the right side of the painting shows an African-American woman providing a drink to two Union soldiers resting by the building from which she emerges. A second, and perhaps more important, vignette is prominently placed in the center of the painting. An African-American girl is seen in profile intently observing the interaction among the soldiers and the black woman. The girl's role as observer and her enigmatic gaze seem to be the reasons for her central location. However, her position in the painting-in the center of the pathway, against a brilliantly lit meadow, and under a fruitful arch-suggests that she has other duties and, hence, has a more meaningful connection with the scene. In the left side of the painting, the third vignette contains an abundant wheat field, clearly separated from the pathway, structure and activities of the African-American women. Retrieved from by Nona Martin.

About First Battle of Bull Run, 1861

*The First Battle of Bull Run, also known as the First Battle of Manassas (the name used by Confederate forces and still often used in the Southern United States),* was fought July 21, 1861, near Manassas, Virginia. It was the first major land battle of the American Civil War.

Just months after the start of the war at Fort Sumter, the Northern public clamored for a march against the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia, which could bring an early end to the war. Yielding to this political pressure, unseasoned Union Army troops under Brig. Gen. Irvin McDowell advanced across Bull Run against the equally unseasoned Confederate Army under Brig. Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard near Manassas Junction. McDowell's ambitious plan for a surprise flank attack against the Confederate left was not well executed by his inexperienced officers and men, but the Confederates, who had been planning to attack the Union left flank, found themselves at an initial disadvantage.

Confederate reinforcements under the command of Brig. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston arrived from the Shenandoah Valley by railroad and the course of the battle changed. A brigade of Virginians under a relatively unknown colonel from the Virginia Military Institute, Thomas J. Jackson, stood their ground and Jackson received his famous nickname, "Stonewall". The Confederates launched a strong counterattack and as the Union troops began withdrawing under pressure, many panicked and it turned into a rout as they frantically ran in the direction of nearby Washington, D.C. Both sides were sobered by the violence and casualties of the battle, and they realized that the war would potentially be much longer and bloodier than they had originally anticipated.
First Battle of Bull Run, 1861
Movies:

**Sergeant York**

Sergeant York is a 1941 biographical film about the life of Alvin York, the most-decorated American soldier of World War I. This devout Christian was forced by the draft to enlist during WWI. The story of his heroism and faith are truly wonderful.

Books

*Remembrance: A Tribute to America's Veterans*, Robert B. Fletcher

Websites:

Forever a Soldier: Unforgettable Stories of Wartime Service contains 37 tales of servicemen and women who served…

http://www.loc.gov/vets/stories/foreverasoldier