

The History of Poppy Day

The Great War broke out over a century ago. It lasted four years and cost the lives of millions. When peace was finally achieved, the humble red corn poppy became a symbol of remembrance.



- ① Sit down with the children and show them the story.
- ② Ask the children some questions and discuss:
What part of the story did you like and why?
Which pictures did you like or dislike and why?
- ③ The story mentions the 'Allied nations'. Discuss who these are with the children.
- ④ This story is all about remembering the sacrifice of others. How does this make the children feel and why?
- ⑤ Sadly, there have been other wars since the Great War. Discuss these with the children.
- ⑥ The iChild website has several poppy crafts. Perhaps the children would like to make their own for Poppy Day.



Please remember to recycle this activity

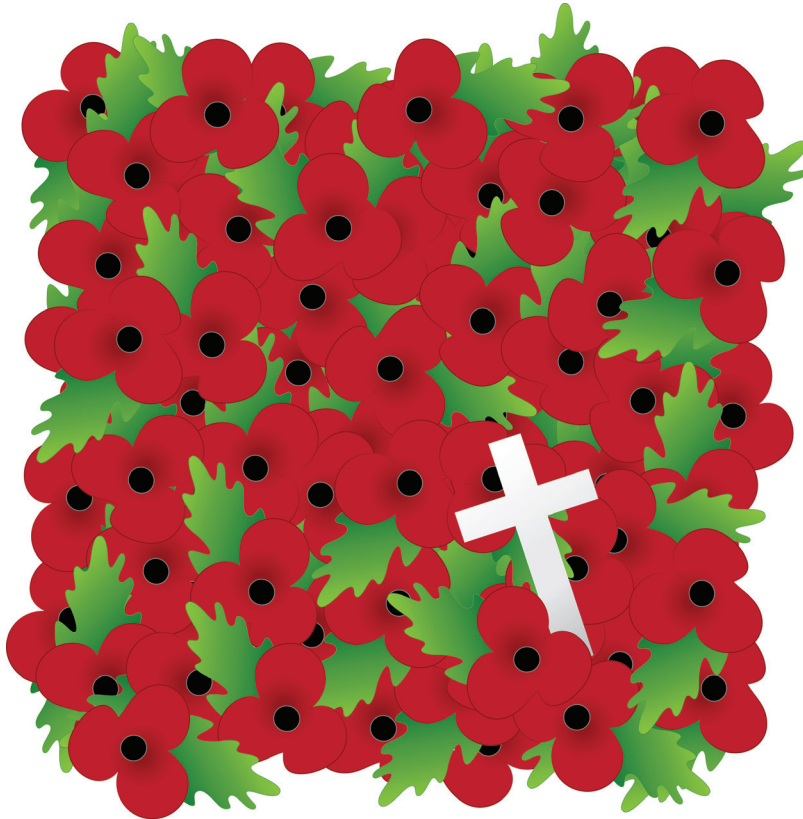
The History of Poppy Day



*In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row...*

During the Second Battle of Ypres, in May 1915, doctor John McCrae conducted the burial service for his friend, Lieutenant Alexis Helmer. He later composed his now famous poem, *In Flanders fields*.

Punch magazine published the poem in December 1915.



The poem inspired Moina Belle Michael, an American woman who worked with injured servicemen. She thought they could make poppies, and believed that their Memorial Poppy was a way to “keep the faith” with those who had died.

She also wanted to widen the scope of the Memorial Poppy idea.



Anna Guérin, a French woman, was inspired by Moina Michael's idea. She thought Memorial Poppies could be sold to raise money in France, especially for French children orphaned by the war.

She founded the American and French Children's League, and asked the Allied nations to join in with the Memorial Poppy.



The Royal British Legion was formed on 15 May 1921. Its aim was to provide support to all those who had suffered during their service in the Armed Forces, and to support their families.

The Royal British Legion decided to use the Memorial Poppy to raise money for the war wounded. The first Poppy Appeal was held that year, and the first Poppy Day was held on 11th November 1921.



The first anniversary of the Armistice, 11th November 1919, was declared "Peace Day".

When the church bells struck 11 o'clock, people all over the country stood up and bowed their heads.

Ever since the first Remembrance Day we hold a two minute silence on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month.



The Cenotaph (which means 'empty tomb' in Greek) was built out of wood and plaster for Peace Day in 1919. People laid flowers in remembrance.

The Cenotaph was so popular that it was re-built out of Portland Stone for Armistice Day, 1920. Ever since, we lay flowers on Remembrance Day as a memorial to the 'Glorious Dead'.



**A soldier whose name and rank
no one knows is buried at
Westminster Abbey.**

**Since 1920 people have visited the
Tomb of the Unknown Warrior.**

**We pay our respects to all the
soldiers who never knew us, but
who gave their lives for us.**



In 1922, Major George Arthur Hanson founded the British Legion Poppy Factory.

That year, it employed five disabled servicemen to create Memorial Poppies to sell on Armistice Day.

Major Hawson said, "I do not think it can be a great success but it is worth trying."



Nowadays, the Poppy Factory produces nearly 40 million poppies for wreaths, sprays and buttonholes.

It still raises money for the British Legion and supports injured servicemen and servicewomen.

Today, in honour of those who sacrificed so much, we wear our poppy with pride.