



MEMORIAL DAY

Lesson Plan for Museum Educators

*Published by **Raising Citizens** – a partnership between Freedom’s Feast and the Children’s Museum of Manhattan*

Project Overview

- Children will learn about the history and significance of Memorial Day. They will create thank you cards for active service men and women and /or veterans to acknowledge their contributions for serving our country.
- Theme: Honoring Those Who Serve Our Country
- Ages: 5 – 10
- Session Length: 30-45 minutes

Introductory Information

- Memorial Day observances began after the Civil War to honor the Union soldiers who gave their lives in the conflict. General John Logan established the first Memorial Day service at Arlington National Cemetery on May 30, 1868 requesting that flowers to be placed on the graves of both Union and Confederate soldiers. After World War I, Memorial Day become a time to honor those who lost their lives in any of the nation's wars.
- For decades, Americans celebrated this holiday with parades, tributes at local war memorials and visits to military cemeteries to decorate the graves of those who served and sacrificed their lives in war.



President George W. Bush lays a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery to commemorate Memorial Day.

Introductory Information (cont'd)

- The National Moment of Remembrance, established by Congress, invites Americans, wherever they are at 3:00pm local time, to pause for one minute to honor those who died for our freedom.
- Memorial Day is also a time to acknowledge that whole families make sacrifices when a family member serves in the armed forces.



Background Resources

- Freedom's Feast: online resources to get the most out of your American holiday celebrations (<http://freedomfeast.us/memorial-day/index.html>) a four minute ceremony, opportunities for taking action on Memorial Day, and a military trivia quiz.
- <http://www.history.com/topics/memorial-day-history>: a Memorial Day background history.
- [Memorial Day Surprise](#) by Theresa Martin Golding: a book to help children understand the purpose of Memorial Day

Images for Discussion



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Seals of the branches of the Military

(from left to right): Air Force, Army, Navy, Coast Guard, and Marines.

Standards of the branches of the Military

(from left to right): top: Army, Navy, and Coast Guard. bottom: Air Force, Marines

Images for Discussion



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Discussion Points

- The image shows family members visiting the gravesite of a deceased loved one who served in the military.
- Do/did you have family members who served in the military? What do you do on Memorial Day to honor their memory and those individuals who have died while serving in the military?

Images for Discussion



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The image shows the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Background Info on the Memorial:

- The memorial honors the 16 million who served in the armed forces of the U.S. during World War II, the more than 400,000 who died, and the millions who supported the war effort from home. Symbolic of the defining event of the 20th Century, the memorial is a monument to the spirit, sacrifice, and commitment of the American people to the common defense of the nation and to the broader causes of peace and freedom from tyranny throughout the world. Above all, the memorial stands as an important symbol of American national unity, a timeless reminder of the moral strength and awesome power that can flow when a free people are at once united and bonded together in a common and just cause. <http://bit.ly/ez7t6m>

Images for Discussion



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The image shows the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Background Info on the Memorial:

- The Vietnam Veterans Memorial honors U.S. service members who fought in the Vietnam War, service members who died in service in Vietnam/South East Asia, and those service members who were unaccounted for (Missing In Action) during the War.
- The memorial currently consists of three separate parts: the Three Soldiers statue, the Vietnam Women's Memorial, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall, which is the best-known part of the memorial.
- The main part of the memorial, which was completed in 1982, is in Constitution Gardens adjacent to the National Mall, just northeast of the Lincoln Memorial. The memorial is maintained by the U.S. National Park Service, and receives around 3 million visitors each year. There are 58,195 names on the wall, honoring those who perished during the Vietnam War.

Discussion Questions

- Do you know what holiday we are celebrating?
- Do you know the different branches of the military? Do you know anyone who has served in any of them? (Use selected military images to help with discussion here)
- What does memorial mean? Why do you think we build memorials?
- How do we honor people who are no longer with us? Do you have to be a relative to pay tribute? How can we honor those who are currently serving our country?

Hands-on Activity

- Children will create cards to be sent to veterans and active military men and women thanking them for their service.
- **Suggested Materials:** Card templates, crayons/markers, pre-cut collage materials, Memorial Day Surprise by Theresa Martin Golding
CLICK HERE FOR THANK YOU CARD TEMPLATE (RULEFOR ALL PROJECT PLANS)
- **Step 1** Pass out Card templates
- **Step 2** Brainstorm ideas of how you want to express thanks to service people
- **Step 3** Pass out art materials
- **Step 4** Children decorate their cards
- **Step 5** Collect the cards and send them to your local Veteran's Association or to A Million Thanks, a non-profit organization who will distribute them to either veterans or active service men and women <http://www.amillionthanks.org/>

Possible extended activity (if applicable)

- If available, invite veterans or service men and women to share their experiences.
- Have children participate in a “mini boot camp” where they will try exercises similar to those done in the military. Children will learn how to salute, do push ups, jumping jacks, and other physical activities. Create your own Memorial Day Autograph Book where children ask service men and women to sign their names and write down their title. This is a simple and fun way to encourage informal interactions between children and military personnel when they visit.

Questions to include in the autograph book or to ask of service men and women:

- What do you like most about being in the military?
- How many years have you served?
- What’s your favorite place to visit?
- Where will you be traveling to next?
- What do you like to do for fun?

Credits

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