

Remembrance

Introduction

War memorials of one sort or another have been with us as long as we have had architecture, public sculpture and public spaces.

Most of the British war memorials you can see in our cities, towns and villages were built between 1920 and 1925 following the mass slaughter of the First World War. The government decided early on in the War that, because of the cost, the bodies of dead soldiers would not be returned to Britain.

In the absence of a grave, to grieve at the name on a memorial was the next best thing.

In terms of the style of commemoration two different motifs emerged:

- Noble and uplifting
- Tragic and unendurably sad

No enduring formulae emerged, though traditional religious images were used to repeatedly try and give meaning to the *meaningless* carnage of the war.

War memorials became places where people grieved both individually and collectively and the resulting monuments provided a focus for ceremonies of public mourning as well as justification of the war from the decade following Armistice Day and continue to this day.

War memorials are fascinating cultural objects and can reveal all sorts of insights about the people who wanted them, why they wanted them, who paid for them, the people who built them and the people who used them.

For much more information that can support pupils researching the tasks below go to <http://www.ppu.org.uk/remembrance/index.html> and to the PPU publication *Remembering War Studying War Past and Present*

Task 1

Analysing a War Memorial

The first task is to locate a suitable local war memorial for analysis. It may be that a large more central memorial will give pupils a more extensive opportunity for analysis. The following website gives details of the location and composition of war memorials in the UK.

<http://www.iwm.org.uk/node/5361>

Pupils individually, in pairs or small groups, use a blank template *Reading a War Memorial* to take down notes on the information that they are able to gain from their consideration of the memorial.

READING A WAR MEMORIAL		
Elements of memorial	Things to look out for	Notes
Animal figure(s)	Make a note of any animal figures indicating why they are there.	
Cross	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a cross present? • What does this symbol mean? 	
Other religious symbols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicate if there any other religious symbols present? • Why are they there? • Are there symbols of more than one religion? • If not why might that be the case? 	
Board, tablet, plaque - words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a note of the words, apart from the names of the dead, that appear on the Memorial. • Are these words of regret and sadness or are they noble and uplifting? • What do they mean? 	
Civilians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any references to civilians in words, pictures or figures? • Are you surprised at your findings? 	
Flag or banner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any flags or banners displayed? • What sort are they and why are they there? 	
Mosaic/mural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe any mosaics, 	

	<p>murals or pictures and indicate the story that is being told.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does it mean? 	
Obelisk	<p>Sometimes you will see an obelisk, a 4 or 5-sided pillar with a pointed top, which was seen by the ancient Egyptians as a symbol of power.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why are they being used? 	
Pillar/column	<p>Pillars and columns are often associated with ancient Greece or Rome.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are they included in this Memorial? • Are there any other classical symbols? • Why are they being included? 	
Weaponry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any weapons? • What condition are they in? • Why are they there? 	
Names of the dead	<p>Note the number of names inscribed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are they all male? • Are they recorded in alphabetical order? • Are they all military personnel? • What is the relative % of sailors, soldiers, and airmen? • Is the rank of the person included? • Are medals • Are they all from the same war? • Are the ages of the 	

	<p>dead mentioned?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What if anything strikes you about the names themselves? 	
<p>Sculptured/Cast figure or figures of servicemen and women</p>	<p>Describe the figure (s) and what they are doing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are they prone or active? Are they armed? • Are they smart or are they dishevelled? • What's the message? 	
<p>Other Sculptured/cast figure(s)</p>	<p>Describe any other figures that are present. Are they angels or other religious figures? What are they doing? Are they sad or celebrating? Why are they there and what do they mean?</p>	
<p>Other symbols or features</p>	<p>Describe any other elements of the Memorial indicating why you think they are there</p>	

Location and surroundings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there anything significant about the location of the memorial? • What surrounds it? • Are there flowerbeds, trees or grass and are they well kept? • Does this mean anything? 	
<p>Overview Having described and analysed the memorial. Write down your overall impression and what it is that the memorial is trying to say? Do you agree with its sentiments and is there, in your view, something missing?</p>	Pupils own words	

Task 2

Initial written report

On their return to school pupils will now be expected to convert their original notes and subsequent research and discussion into a piece of detailed written work that presents an analysis of the memorial but remember this is only the first part of the work that pupils should be undertaking.

The following guidelines for writing a report may be useful.

Writing a Report	
Title	Use a simple title that clearly tells the reader what your report is about.
First sentence:	Your first sentence needs to introduce your topic and summarise what the report is

	going to be about.
Paragraphs and subheadings	Break your report into paragraphs. Introduce the subject of each paragraph with a subheading and a simple first sentence. This will help the reader to scan the report to find the information they need quickly.
Write clearly	Make sure that your writing is clear and doesn't confuse the reader with unnecessary information or opinions.
Style	Make your writing formal and back up your explanations with facts. Add comments and questions to interest your reader.
Check it through	Re-read your report once you have finished to be sure it is interesting, informative and not too long.

Task 3

Further research

In order to gain a proper understanding of war memorials and what they represent it is appropriate to now examine the wider social context in which war memorials were conceived. Pupils could undertake the following investigations and research:

- Look at newspapers of the time and research to see what was the nature of those debates that were taking place. Were there debates occurring about the form the memorial should take?
- Reports of planning committees and minutes of local council meetings can also be rich sources of information
- Find out who was paying for the memorials and the significance of that finding.

Task 4

Questions and answers

The following questions and activities could also be informing pupils' analysis:

What kinds of war memorials have been constructed in other countries like France, Germany, Russia, Argentina, Canada , Japan and the USA? What if any are the differences?

Link to an exemplar very brief PowerPoint here indicating some of the difference in relation to remembrance in Germany and the clear correlation between politics and how Wars are remembered.

What does a war memorial tell you about the attitudes of the people who had it built?

How are war memorials used today? How do you feel about that?

If the war dead returned to see the memorial that commemorates them, what do you think they would feel about it? Proud? Ashamed? Sad?

What was the condition of ex soldiers when these memorials were being built?

What opposition was there to the building of these war memorials?

Task 5

Putting on an Exhibition

Final activities could include creating an exhibition or presentation that would include sketches and photographs to illustrate all the written findings.

How to put on an exhibition.

http://www.museumonmainstreet.org/education/How_To_Create_An_Exhibition.pdf

Task 6

Alternative Remembrance and Peace Memorials

In Britain after World War 1 many of the memorials that were built were called “peace memorials” but have, over time, become almost universally known as “war memorials”. They were not commemorating peace as much as expressing a hope that a better, “peaceful” world would result from all that carnage. We know what happened to that hope.

There have been a number of peace memorials constructed in recent years albeit some of them are ephemeral but what they have in common is a desire to express the urgent need for new approaches to the problem of war and a broader view of what peace means – or can mean.

Memorials are about preserving memory – beliefs and values – but they are also about promoting values and visions for the future.

Pupils can consider the images and descriptions of a range of different peace memorials at

http://www.ppu.org.uk/remembrance/memorials/peace_memorials/mempeace.html

And determine if there are any common features and styles and what beliefs, values and visions for the future are being suggested here.

Another question that pupils may wish to consider here is how do these memorials differ from more traditional memorials.

READING A WAR MEMORIAL WITH NOTES

READING A WAR MEMORIAL		
Elements of memorial	Things to look out for	Notes
Animal figure(s)	Make a note of any animal figures indicating why they are there.	Lions, Eagles: Empire, strength, victory Snakes, serpents, dragons: represent enemies usually being crushed underfoot
Cross	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a cross present? • What does this symbol mean? 	Cross: This is the principal Christian symbol and is often present with a sword of valour superimposed (“Cross of Sacrifice”) and means “God is on our side” and that this was a “Just War” and you can suspend the 6 th Commandment <i>Thou shalt not kill</i> under these circumstances
Other religious symbols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicate if there any other religious symbols present? • Why are they there? • Are there symbols of more than one religion? • If not why might that be the case? 	Angels: Angels of one sort or another are often found on memorials supporting and watching over the victims thereby providing justification and validation and confirming that all the indiscriminate slaughter was not wasted or that the individual sacrifice was in vain. Rarely are there references to other religions, Britain was a much less diverse country in 1914 although people from other parts of the Empire who had different religions were killed their memorials lie elsewhere or don't exist
Board, tablet, plaque -	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a note of the words, apart from the 	Texts vary but there are often references to the

words	<p>names of the dead, that appear on the Memorial.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are these words of regret and sadness or are they noble and uplifting? • What do they mean? 	<p>heroic or glorious dead making sacrifice for God, King and Country and that their sacrifice, Lest we Forget was not in vain and they will be remembered. Again justification for the slaughter is being articulated with words like The Supreme Sacrifice and For Your Tomorrow we Gave our Today. Sometimes words are in Latin to provide sombre yet uplifting classical reference and transcendence of the horrors of the war</p>
Civilians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any references to civilians in words, pictures or figures? • Are you surprised at your findings? 	<p>Grieving mothers and children appear sometimes but sometimes they can also be seen celebrating heroism and soldiers going off to fight. Generally images of civilians are sparse which is perhaps not so surprising in 1914-18 though in WW2 there were more civilian deaths than in the armed forces (something missing from the Memorials).</p>
Flag or banner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any flags or banners displayed? • What sort are they and why are they there? 	<p>The Union Jack, as the primary national and patriotic symbol of a unified and grateful kingdom is probably the most likely flag to be seen. It would be rare to see any other national flag or international symbol Other flags and banners are usually military symbols and are indications of the victims inherently positive relationship with the armed services</p>

Mosaic/mural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe any mosaics, murals or pictures and indicate the story that is being told. What does it mean? 	Tableau or pictures can vary significantly and may include representations of heroic events; these may sometimes be classical mythologies; whatever the context they are usually meant to convey heroic sacrifice for a just cause that is securing freedom for future generations
Obelisk	<p>Sometimes you will see an obelisk, a 4 or 5-sided pillar with a pointed top, which was seen by the ancient Egyptians as a symbol of power.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why are they being used? 	Obelisks with their origins in ancient Egyptian sun worship also signify fertility. Obelisks are used to link mankind's noblest deeds with the soldiers self sacrifice and embedding that within the traditions of the past yet as a that sacrifice for the benefit of future generations – search for immortality
Pillar/column	<p>Pillars and columns are often associated with ancient Greece or Rome.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are they included in this Memorial? Are there any other classical symbols? Why are they being included? 	Wreaths, urns, broken columns (representing lives cut short) and funeral shrouds signify death and mourning.
Weaponry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there any weapons? What condition are they in? Why are they there? 	Military symbols such as swords, shields, pikes, helmets, rifles, bayonets, machine guns, cannons, drums, field & naval guns are often present. Again juxtaposition of modern weapons with old fashioned weaponry emphasises timelessness and link to ancient traditions and history to be up-held, maintained and glorified
Names of the	Note the number of names	Usually all male , if women

<p>dead</p>	<p>inscribed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are they all male? • Are they recorded in alphabetical order? • Are they all military personnel? • What is the relative % of sailors, soldiers, and airmen? • Is the rank of the person included? • Are medals • Are they all from the same war? • Are the ages of the dead mentioned? • What if anything strikes you about the names themselves? 	<p>from nurses or auxiliary services often come last. Usually in alphabetical order and all military in order to stress equality, egalitarianism (all in it together) but sometimes in rank order. Often initially built to commemorate the War to end all Wars but added to especially World War 2 but others as well, including Korea, Malaya, Iraq and Afghanistan. Traditional names representing a much less diverse society. Significant that more civilians than military killed in WW2 but not included on memorials</p>
<p>Sculptured/Cast figure or figures of servicemen and women</p>	<p>Describe the figure (s) and what they are doing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are they prone or active? Are they armed? • Are they smart or are they dishevelled? • What's the message? 	<p>Figure(s) of personnel from the armed services are usually in one way or another being displayed in a heroic fashion. Sometimes portrayed as glorious victims drawing attention to their self-sacrifice made for future generations never highlighting futility of war</p>

<p>Other Sculptured/cast figure(s)</p>	<p>Describe any other figures that are present. Are they angels or other religious figures? What are they doing? Are they sad or celebrating? Why are they there and what do they mean?</p>	<p>Winged figures, which can be angels or other allegorical representations of St George (patron saint) or Victory sometimes blowing a horn, wielding or breaking swords or other implements. Or vanquishing evil (the enemy). Again these representations provide a link to Christian or classical allusions that enable justification for the sacrifice for transcendental principles of God, King and Country</p>
<p>Other symbols or features</p>	<p>Describe any other elements of the Memorial indicating why you think they are there</p>	<p>Sometimes triumphal arches, windows, towers, water fountains, lamps, shelters, sundials, books of honour and memorial gates & walls may be present.</p> <p>Sometimes a relic of the War is incorporated into the Memorial</p>
<p>Location and surroundings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there anything significant about the location of the memorial? • What surrounds it? • Are there flowerbeds, trees or grass and are they well kept? • Does this mean anything? 	<p>Central location to be an every ready reminder of the sacrifice and next to a Town Hall or significant Civic Building or Church so providing the Memorial with added gravitas and authority</p>

<p>Overview Having described and analysed the memorial. Write down your overall impression and what it is that the memorial is trying to say? Do you agree with its sentiments and is there, in your view, something missing?</p>	<p>Pupils own words</p>
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