Westminster Abbey
Learning

Remembrance lesson activities – KS3

Thank you for downloading this resource. We hope that it will be a useful teaching tool in your classroom.

As we continue to grow our free catalogue of teaching resources, we'd really appreciate a few minutes of your time to let us know what you liked and what could be improved. Please complete this five-question survey.

Transcript of inscription on the Grave of the Unknown Warrior

BENEATH THIS STONE RESTS THE BODY
OF A BRITISH WARRIOR
UNKNOWN BY NAME OR RANK
BROUGHT FROM FRANCE TO LIE AMONG
THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS OF THE LAND
AND BURIED HERE ON ARMISTICE DAY
11 NOV: 1920, IN THE PRESENCE OF
HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE V
HIS MINISTERS OF STATE
THE CHIEFS OF HIS FORCES
AND A VAST CONCOURSE OF THE NATION
THUS ARE COMMEMORATED THE MANY
MULTITUDES WHO DURING THE GREAT
WAR OF 1914-1918 GAVE THE MOST THAT
MAN CAN GIVE LIFE ITSELF
FOR GOD
FOR KING AND COUNTRY
FOR LOVED ONES HOME AND EMPIRE
FOR THE SACRED CAUSE OF JUSTICE AND
THE FREEDOM OF THE WORLD
THEY BURIED HIM AMONG THE KINGS BECAUSE HE
HAD DONE GOOD TOWARD GOD AND TOWARD
HIS HOUSE Around the main inscription are four texts:

(top) THE LORD KNOWETH THEM THAT ARE HIS, (sides) GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS

UNKNOWN AND YET WELL KNOWN, DYING AND BEHOLD WE LIVE,

(base) IN CHRIST SHALL ALL BE MADE ALIVE.

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Suggested activities

1. Write a paragraph about the Grave of the Unknown Warrior explaining
    - Where it is
    - Who he was
    - How it helps us to remember those who have died fighting for their country

Use some of these words to help you.

WAR	WARRIOR	COUNTRY
FREEDOM	KINGS	SYMBOL
BURIED	GOD	SACRIFICE
HOME	FRANCE	THANKS

2. Create a leaflet for a visitor to London who is interested in the way countries remember the First World War. Explain the similarities and differences between the Cenotaph and the Grave of the Unknown Warrior.

3. Modern scientific techniques could probably now find out who the Unknown Warrior was. Do you think this should be done? Consider both sides of the argument.

4. Visit your local War Memorial. Sketch it. What symbols can you see? What other text can you see? Do you recognise any names of the fallen? What do you notice about the way the names are arranged?

5. Design a Grave of the Unknown Warrior for today. What symbols would you use? How could you make it multi-faith? What words could you use?

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Further material

1. Explore the Grave of the Unknown Warrior in situ within the Abbey's nave using the Virtual Tour. Click on the icons for futher activities: https://www.westminster-abbey.org/learning/virtual-tour
2. Teachers may find it helpful to read more information about Reverend David Railton, including his own account of the origin of the burial, on the Westminster Abbey website. https://www.westminster-abbey.org/abbey-commemorations/commemorations/reverend-david-railton
3. Read through these FAQs about the Grave of the Unknown Warrior.

Who is he?

We really don't know. All we know is that he died fighting for Britain in the First World War. He could be from any part of the British Isles or those parts of the world which formed the old British Empire and whose soldiers fought for Britain. For example, the Indian Army fought in France and Belgium from 1914 in the areas where the Unknown Warrior was found.

Who had the idea for the Unknown Warrior?

Reverend David Railton, who was an Army chaplain looking after soldiers during the war, had seen a simple grave in France, with a cross bearing the words 'An Unknown British Soldier'. He felt very sorry for the family of this man who would never know where he was buried. After the war, he wrote to the Dean of Westminster asking if one of these unknown comrades could be buried in the Abbey. The Dean, the King and the government agreed that it would honour all the very many who had died without singling out any one person.

How was he chosen?

On 7th November 1920 four unknown bodies were dug up from four different battle areas. Only their boots and uniform buttons identified them as having fought for Britain. At midnight General L. J. Wyatt entered the chapel in France where the four bodies lay, covered by Union Jack flags. Some say he was blind-folded. He touched one of the bodies which was then placed in a coffin and the others were reburied.

Why this man?

What was special about this man? The answer is 'nothing' and that is the point. He could be anyone's father, brother or son who fought, went missing and was never found. He represents all the more than 800,000 men who fought and died for Britain, especially the approximately 400,000 with no known grave.

What is he buried in?

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The Unknown Warrior was placed in a plain coffin, and then in one made from oak grown on the King's land at Hampton Court Palace. It was wrapped in iron bands, with a 16th century sword from the Tower of London placed on top. On a shield on the coffin were the words: A British Warrior who fell in the Great War 1914-1918 for King and Country. An ambulance took this coffin to the French coast at Boulogne, along with 100 bags of soil from battlefields so that he could be buried in soil where so many of his comrades had fallen.

Why is he called a 'warrior'?

A warrior is a person who has experience and skill in fighting. Calling him a warrior shows respect and that he could be from any of the armed services, a soldier, a sailor or an airman.

Why does the Abbey have a big bell hanging on a pillar?

Find this on the virtual tour by navigating to The Nave and rotating anti-clockwise until you see a gold painting on a pillar. Keep rotating until you see a red-gowned marshal and above his head is the bell.

This bell hung on the ship HMS Verdun which brought the body of the Unknown Warrior back to Britain. The coffin was followed down to the port at Boulogne by a mile long procession made up of important French and British people, French soldiers, including those disabled in war, and lots of children. HMS Verdun was waiting, with its flag flying at half-mast. The British National Anthem played and guns were fired 19 times as the coffin, wreaths and 100 bags of soil came aboard. Six British ships met HMS Verdun half way across the channel and guided the ship to dock in Dover. Again the guns were fired 19 times, a military band played 'Land of Hope and Glory' and thousands watched, paying their respects as the Warrior came ashore. From there, the coffin was taken on a special train to Victoria Station where it rested overnight. The wreaths were placed with the coffin in its carriage – some were so big it took four or five men to carry them. The top of the carriage was painted white so that the crowds waiting on bridges and at stations along the line would know where the Warrior lay.

What part did the Padre's flag play?

Find this on the virtual tour by navigating to The Nave then Coronation Chair then using the navigation tool centre bottom to zoom out as far as possible.

The Padre's flag was a Union Jack belonging to Reverend David Railton, who was an Army chaplain looking after soldiers in France during the war. He flew the flag outside broken-down barns to show the men that he was inside and ready for a chat, a prayer or simply to listen. Many times he made an altar for his 'church' services by covering a box with the flag and sometimes he hung it up to decorate those barns for a boxing match or a party. On the morning of 11th November 1920, it was placed over the coffin of the Unknown Warrior for his last journey.

What happened on 11th November 1920?

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Draped in the Padre's flag, the coffin was taken on a gun carriage drawn by six black horses, first to Whitehall and the Cenotaph, where King George V placed a wreath on the coffin with a hand-written card. Then, followed by the King, members of the Royal Family and politicians and military leaders, it was taken to the Abbey. The route of this last journey was lined ten deep with men, women and children, many of them carrying white flowers to remember their lost loved ones.

How was he buried?

Just after 11o'clock, a short service of burial was held at the west end of the Abbey. The congregation included many women, including a hundred women who had lost their husbands and all their sons in the war. The coffin was lowered into the empty grave and the King threw in some battlefields soil and placed his wreath. The Grave was then covered with an embroidered silk cloth and the Padre's flag. People slowly filed past as they left the Abbey, some laying wreaths and flowers. After the Abbey had closed for the night some of the choirboys went back into the nave and one later wrote "The Abbey was empty save for the guard of honour stiffly to attention, arms (rifles) reversed, heads bowed and quite still - the whole scene illuminated by just four candles".

Why is the Warrior buried in this spot?

The Grave of the Unknown Warrior lies where everyone can see it. It is near the Great West Door where Royals enter the Abbey, but no one, not even kings and queens, walks over it. It is surrounded by poppies symbolising remembrance. In 1923 a royal bride who had lost her brother in the First World War laid her bridal bouquet on the Grave as she left the Abbey and this mark of respect has been followed by royal brides since, including the Duchess of Cambridge and the Duchess of Sussex.

Why is the Grave important now?

The brass lettering on the black marble gravestone is made from the melted down ammunition cases which were once used to kill. The writing includes four verses from the Bible which talk about God's love, about the sacrifice of those that died in the war and the hope of eternal life. During state visits, world leaders are invited to lay a wreath at the Grave and prayers are said for peace. The Grave was marked with a single candle at a special service to remember the beginning of the First World War and surrounded by fresh flowers at the service in 2018 to mark one hundred years since its end. During the centenary services, prayers were said from the faith traditions of all those involved in the conflict. In November 2020 a service will be held to mark the centenary of the burial of the Unknown Warrior. What prayers should be said for our times, do you think?

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