

This resource was created to assist schools organising activities for Remembrance Day.

What is Remembrance Day?

Remembrance Day comes out of the Armistice which ended the First World War. The Armistice came into effect at 11am on 11 November 1918 – the eleventh day of the eleventh month. Beginning in 1919, that date and time became a moment to stop, reflect and commemorate the millions who died in that war. The details of the ceremony have varied, but the importance of remembering the human cost of that war has not.

Why was this so important? Simply, the First World War was a shattering event. For four and a half years, the nations fighting in the war had demanded everything of their people, up to and including their lives. In Australia alone, a country of around five million at that time, some 60,000 were killed in action or died of illness or wound. The war left deep wounds, which never fully healed.

With the Second World War, the focus of Remembrance Day expanded – it was now about commemorating those who lost their lives in both wars. Australia has been involved in many conflicts since the end of the the Second World War and loss of life has been part of the price to be paid. And so each year, on this one day as a nation, we pause to reflect on the human cost of war and particularly to remember the men and women who lost their lives.



Crowd celebrating Armistice Day. 12 November 1918, North Terrace, Adelaide

Holding a service or school assembly

Many schools hold an assembly to mark Remembrance Day.

The centrepiece of the Remembrance Day service is the recitation of The Ode followed by one minute's silence at exactly 11am. This period of silence is for personal contemplation of those who gave their lives in their country's service.

The order of the service can vary, but these four acts normally go together, in this order:

- A speaker recites The Ode:
*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.*
- The [Last Post](#) is played (if possible)
- Minute's silence
- The [Rouse](#) is played (if possible)

Beyond these four acts, common features of Remembrance Day ceremonies include:

- Laying a wreath, perhaps at the base of a memorial or flagpole.
- One or more short speeches, perhaps about an interesting story of an Old Scholar, or perhaps relatives of students within the school or local community who died in war (see below for some examples).
- Reading or performing a song or a poem.

You may want to present the results of any in-class learning activities, like those below. You will find a surprising amount of internal expertise in your school. Most Year 9 students in Australia study World War I and most Year 10 students study World War II as part of the History curriculum. Talk to your HASS/History teachers as well as current and former Year 9 and 10 History students. Some students are very enthusiastic about this subject matter, and past class work can be an excellent source of material for assembly talks. If any students have submitted entries to state or national prizes (such as the [Premier's ANZAC School Spirit Prize](#) in South Australia or the [1-Minute Film competition](#) nationally), these can also be great sources.

If you want to book an external speaker, **get in early**. Many other schools will also be chasing speakers for their events.

You can contact [your local RSL sub-branch](#), but bear in mind some sub-branches are larger and more active than others. There is also the [Virtual War Memorial Australia](#). We are happy to provide advice on bringing together a school presentation or assisting with speaker in the Adelaide area if we can.

Also think about spreading the word and involving your local community, especially if your school is located in areas with residential aged care homes as many of them will be caring for veterans. Contact community organisations who also mark Remembrance Day.

Interesting stories

Over 100,000 Australians have died in war. The VWMA was built to commemorate their stories, and those who returned alive. Here are a few interesting stories for your students to tell at Remembrance Day. You can research more on the VWMA.

- [Mary McFarlane](#), a nurse who died when [the hospital ship *Centaur*](#) was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine.
- The [Potter brothers](#).
- The three Choat brothers: [two killed](#) and [one taken prisoner](#) in a single day.
- The [Vyner Brooke tragedy](#), in which nurses were killed by the Japanese after escaping from Singapore.
- [Walter Tanner](#): an airman from Sydney killed over the Netherlands, [whose grave is being tended](#) by Dutch school students.



Private Wesley Choat, 32nd Infantry Battalion

Student activities

Your school has many options for commemorating Remembrance Day. Apart from a school assembly, commemorative activities could be undertaken by a few students or a class. For many more, create an account and see what we have to offer on our [Resources for Teachers](#) page:

- Find (or write) a commemorative poem. *In Flanders Fields* is a popular choice. Alternatively, use works by famous war poets such as Wilfred Owen, Leon Gellert, or Kenneth Slessor.
- Find online photographs and make a collage. The [Australian War Memorial](#) and [Imperial War Museum](#) are good sources
- Visit a community war memorial and lay poppies or rosemary. You can find local war memorials on [the VWMA](#). Search for the Place name in the top right search bar; it will contain all memorials in the area. The Memorial page will also link to the names which appear on the memorial; researching these names is a good class activity.
- Chalk the names of local servicemen or women on bricks or paving stones at school.
- Create a short video sharing the names of servicemen and women who were former students of the school or from the local area.
- Use the VWMA Timeline (accessible as the blue Timeline button from our Home Page) or the [Honour Roll](#) to find those who died on a particular day or from a particular Home Town.