



A Hundred Years of Healing: source-based enquiry for primary

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](#).

11th November 2020 marked 100 years since the Unknown Warrior was buried in Westminster Abbey during a funeral service attended by King George V, along with a thousand mourners, including widows and mothers of soldiers with no known grave. Featuring photographs from Westminster Abbey and its archive, these activities provide a variety of approaches to help pupils understand and reflect upon the significance of the Grave of the Unknown Warrior.

Activities can be taught in isolation or as part of teaching Remembrance using Westminster Abbey's collection. These include a [Grave of the Unknown Warrior assembly](#), a [RE-focused lesson on Remembrance](#), an [image bank](#) and a [reflective article](#) about remembrance written by The Very Reverend Dr David Hoyle, Dean of Westminster. Designed for teachers of all key stages, [this list of frequently asked questions](#) provides a comprehensive background of the creation and significance of the Unknown Warrior.

These activities could provide a starting point for investigating other local, national or international memorials to lead into teaching Remembrance at KS1 or the First World War as a post 1066 topic at KS2.

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What can I see and what does this tell me?

Look at the images of the Grave of the Unknown Warrior and the Padre's flag.





What questions should we ask?

Virtual tours

For further visuals and media content, visit the Grave of the Unknown Warrior in the Abbey Nave:

<https://www.westminster-abbey.org/learning/virtual-tours>

<https://www.westminster-abbey.org/learning/virtual-tours/the-abbey-and-national-memory>

Click on the icons for KS2 activities.

Grave of the Unknown Warrior FAQs

This could be 'chunked' to form information cards.

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 at random 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 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?

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?

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 11 o'clock, a short service of burial was held at the west end of the Abbey. The congregation included 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 battlefield 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 Queen Elizabeth II and the Princess of Wales.

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 was held to mark the centenary of the burial of the Unknown Warrior. What prayers should be said for our times, do you think?

What is the significance of the Unknown Warrior from 1920 to the 21st century?

Look at these images of mourners at the 1920 funeral and of the late Queen Elizabeth II and the President of Germany at the 2018 Armistice Centenary Service.

Document 1: Burial of the Unknown Warrior, drawing by Mantania

Identify King George V (holding his service booklet), the Dean of Westminster in his long-embroidered cope and women who had lost husbands or sons, sometimes both.



Document 2: Armistice Centenary Service in 2018

Identify Queen Elizabeth II and the President of Germany. British and German soldiers are laying wreaths at the Grave of the Unknown Warrior. Instead of poppies, fresh flowers surround the grave – why do you think this might be?



What are the similarities and differences between these two ceremonies almost 100 years apart?

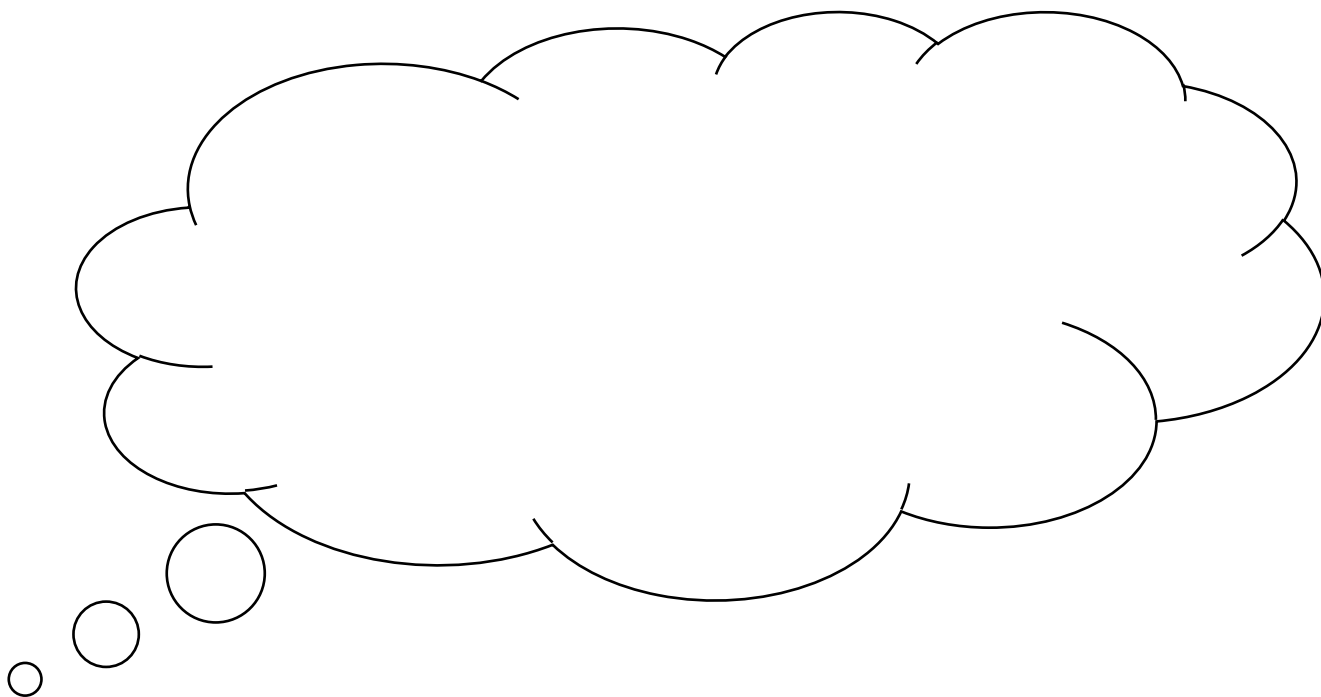
Choose one person from Document 1 and one person from Document 2.

What might that person have been feeling or thinking as they stood beside the Grave of the Unknown Warrior?

Write down their thoughts. Talk about your thought bubbles with a partner or share them with your group.

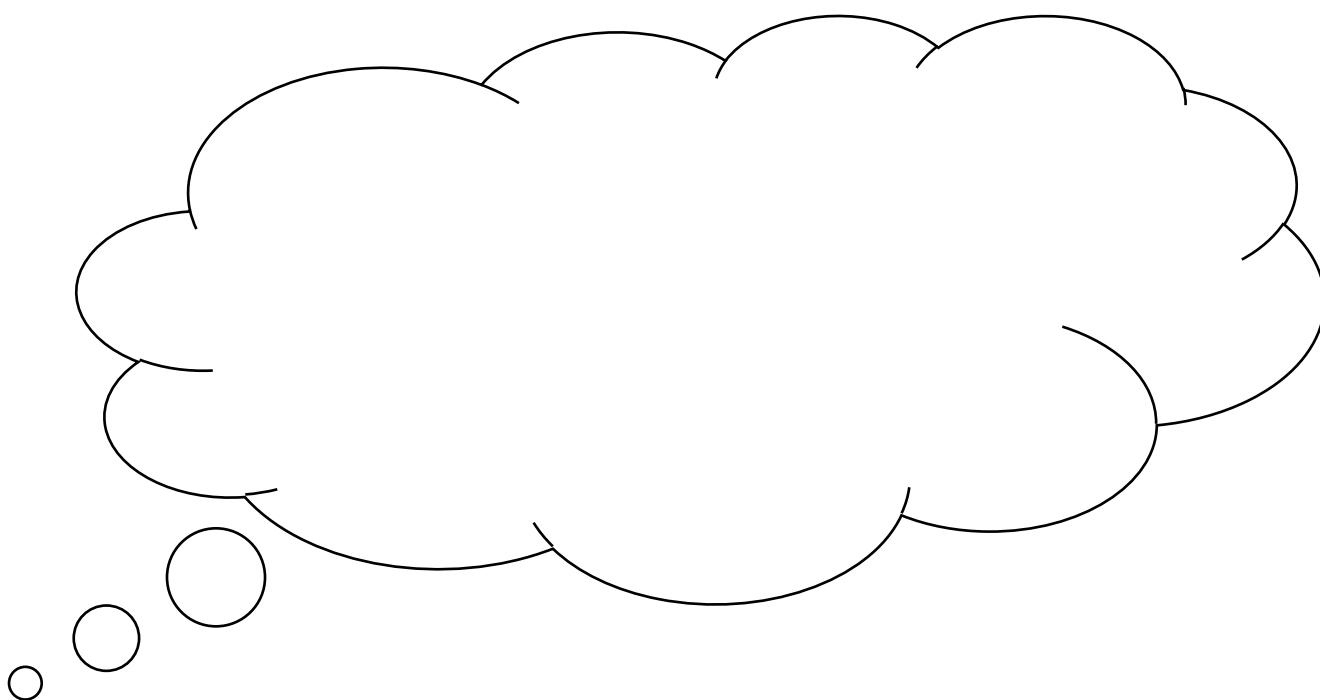
1920 image of the burial of the Unknown Warrior

I am imagining the thoughts of.....



2018 image of Queen Elizabeth II with the President of Germany

I am imagining the thoughts of.....



Background information

Document 1 is an artist's impression, made in 1920. It records the moment that the Unknown Warrior was buried in Westminster Abbey on November 11th 1920. King George V can be seen facing the grave. He was the chief mourner. The Dean of Westminster, Dr Herbert Ryle, who conducted the service and had expedited the burial, can be seen wearing a cope in the foreground. The women wearing black were specially invited because each one had lost her sons and husband in the First World War.

Document 2 is a photograph of Queen Elizabeth II with the President of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, at the Armistice Centenary Service in 2018 with British and German soldiers placing wreaths at the Grave of the Unknown Warrior.

Further suggestions

1. Westminster Abbey provides a remembrance-themed virtual classroom session featuring a costumed interpreter as Reverend David Railton for primary students.
<https://www.westminster-abbey.org/learning/schools/primary/virtual-classrooms>
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>