



Grave of the Unknown Warrior assembly for primary – teachers' notes

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Warning: Slide 10 shows a photograph of the body of a soldier wrapped in hessian. It is not identifiable as a body from the photograph.

SLIDE 3: Here's a very old church in London. Does anyone know what it's called? For hundreds of years kings and queens have been crowned in Westminster Abbey and thirty are buried there, along with many other important men and women who our country wants to remember. One grave is different from all the others.

This image shows the North Green of Westminster Abbey where the Field of Remembrance is installed annually by the British Legion.

SLIDE 4: Click to play the film. Mention that there is one grave different from all the others in Westminster Abbey.

SLIDE 5: Soon it will be Remembrance Sunday and you will see many people wearing poppies. Who are we remembering especially at this time of year? This is the Grave of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey. He's a 'warrior' which means he could be a soldier, sailor or airman. And he really is 'unknown'. All we know is that he died fighting in France in the First World War more than one hundred years ago. What does his story mean to us today?

This is an image of the Grave of the Unknown Warrior strewn with poppies after the Remembrance Sunday Service in 2014, one hundred years after the start of the First World War.

SLIDE 6: The First World War lasted from 1914 to 1918 and was fought across the world. Much of the fighting was in France and Belgium. The fighting men were supported by many who did not take up arms, such as doctors and nurses who looked after the wounded, and priests who cared for the men, whatever their faith or beliefs. The grave that chaplain David Railton found was just one of about 400,000 that were nameless by the end of the war in November 1918.

This image shows a wooden cross marking an anonymous grave at Thiepval, France. The cross reads 'R.I.P. In Memory of an Unknown British Soldier Found & Buried 25.11.15'.

SLIDE 7: As soldiers returned home after the war, families dreaded receiving the news that their loved one was dead. But imagine how you would feel if you heard only that they were 'Missing'. Would you ever give up hope, even a year after the war had ended? Would you ever be able to say goodbye?

Westminster Abbey

Learning



SLIDE 8: The Cenotaph still stands, near Westminster Abbey in the centre of London. Every year, the Royal Family joins hundreds of people from the Armed Services and their families for the two minutes silence at 11 o'clock on Remembrance Sunday. This happened for the first time in 1919.

The Cenotaph was designed by Edward Lutyens and he chose a design that deliberately did not include Christian symbols because he wanted not to exclude all those soldiers from other faiths who had fought across the world for Britain.

SLIDE 9: David Railton wanted the unknown comrade, as he called him, to be buried in Westminster Abbey where the nation remembers those who have served the country. Railton thought the word 'comrade' was 'homely and friendly' (Railton, *Our Empire*, 1931) and that it would remind survivors of their fellow soldiers. He did not want any glorification, just a burial service such as he had led many times during the war.

This image shows a view from the Cosmati Pavement where coronation ceremonies take place to the Great West Door and the site of the Grave of the Unknown Warrior.

SLIDE 10: David Railton knew well how much the men cared for and supported each other. His Union Jack flag, that he had with him throughout the war, reminded them of home and all that they were fighting for. The flag was hung out to cheer the men up at boxing matches and parties and had covered the bodies of lost soldiers at sad times when goodbyes were said.

The image on the left shows one of the four bodies exhumed in 1920 for the selection of the Unknown Warrior. The image on the right is The Padre's Flag within Westminster Abbey.

SLIDE 11: The Dean of Westminster had already decided that the only suitable way to remember the war in the Abbey 'would be to have a burial' (Dean Ryle to David Railton, 15 November 1920). Now he moved quickly, writing to the Prime Minister and the King. Both recognised the value of this simple idea.

SLIDE 12: Only his uniform buttons and boots showed that the Warrior had fought for Britain. He could have been from England, Scotland, Wales or Ireland or from other countries across the world, such as India, Canada and the West Indies, who sent many men to help win the war. The body came home to England by sea and rail. On November 11th, two years after the last gun was fired, the King laid a wreath on the coffin by the Cenotaph.

This image shows King George V following the gun carriage bearing the Unknown Warrior.

SLIDE 13: King George V joined the procession to Westminster Abbey. Thousands lined the London streets, many carrying white flowers. In the Abbey, as well as military men, were many women who had helped in the war effort. Women who had lost loved ones had especially been given tickets.

This image shows the Burial of Unknown Warrior by Matania.

SLIDE 14: King George V placed his own message and wreath by the Grave of the Unknown Warrior. He chose a verse from the Bible: 'Unknown and yet well-known' (2 Corinthians 6:9), expressing the Christian belief that God knows and loves each person.

Westminster Abbey

Learning



SLIDE 15: Above the flag are Jesus' words from the Bible: **Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.** (John 15:13)

This image shows the original stone of the Grave of the Unknown Warrior.

SLIDE 16: At last families had a place where they could come and grieve for their lost loved ones.

This image shows crowds filing past the Unknown Warrior's Grave after the funeral on November 11th 1920.

SLIDE 17: He could be an airman, soldier or sailor. He could come from England, Scotland, Wales or Ireland, or from the countries of the British Empire whose soldiers fought for Britain.

This image shows The Queen Mother's funeral in 2002, as pallbearers walk round the Grave of the Unknown Warrior with the coffin.

SLIDE 18: Because he does not belong to any particular family, he belongs to the whole nation, he belongs to the world.

The image on the left shows families remembering and bringing their own tributes one hundred years after the end of the First World War.

The image on the right was taken during a State Visit to Britain in 2011 when Barack Obama laid a wreath at the Grave of the Unknown Warrior.

SLIDE 19: Today no one who served in the First World War survives but many British servicemen and women have fought and died since. The Unknown Warrior has come to represent British servicemen from any conflict. This is the Field of Remembrance, opened with prayer every November just outside Westminster Abbey. All the crosses have been placed by families remembering their loved ones who served in the armed forces. Look carefully and among the crosses you can see a Star of David.

SLIDE 20: Originally, crosses were planted in the ground to remember war dead. Now each year at Westminster Abbey families place that Christian symbol or choose the symbol associated with their own faith, such as the Star of David representing the Jewish faith or the Crescent Moon representing Islam.

SLIDE 21: Let us remember the Unknown Warrior in our assembly today and with him all those who have died to protect us.

This is an image of the Grave of the Unknown Warrior strewn with poppies after the Remembrance Sunday Service in 2014, one hundred years after the start of the First World War.