



Fallen Heroes

Key Ideas: Memorial Day/Gratitude for the freedoms we enjoy as Americans

Character Traits: Respect/Gratitude

Level: Elementary

Good morning, name of school . This is name of narrator with a few words of wisdom.

This Monday is Memorial Day, which is much more than a three-day weekend. It's an important reminder of the brave men and women in the military who gave their lives to protect our freedom. It's a chance for us to show our gratitude for their sacrifice. Memorial Day is a day to remember how fortunate we are to live in a nation where we have the freedom of speech and the freedom to choose where we will live, work, and worship. In some parts of the world, people do not have these freedoms.

Recording artist Lee Greenwood wrote these famous words:

***I'm proud to be an American,
where at least I know I'm free.
And I won't forget the men who died,
who gave that right to me.***

This Memorial Day, remember those who gave a most precious gift and be grateful for the freedoms you enjoy as an American.

With something to think about, this is _____. Make it a great day . . . or not. The choice is yours.



Fallen Heroes

- Key Ideas:** Memorial Day/Gratitude for the freedoms we enjoy as Americans
- Character Traits:** Respect/Gratitude
- Concept:** Students discuss the meaning of the Memorial Day holiday and how they can honor our fallen heroes.
- Materials:** Suggested activities for art classes may require materials for creating a drawing, painting, or poster.
- Directions:** Read or ask a student to read aloud the Project Wisdom message that accompanies this lesson plan. Ask for volunteers to share responses to the following questions.

Discussion Generators

1. What does it mean to memorialize someone? What are some ways that we honor individuals who have passed away? Why do you think our country has set aside a special day to honor fallen veterans?
2. What do you respect most about people who serve in our military and risk their lives for their country? What character traits come to mind?
3. If you could, what would you say to those who have died to protect our freedoms? What would you say to the loved ones left behind?
4. How many of you have seen people wear a red poppy on or before Memorial Day? Do you know what it means? (Most people wearing red poppies have contributed to the VFW's Buddy Poppy program which has raised millions of dollars in support of veterans and their dependents.)
5. What can you do to honor our fallen heroes this Memorial Day (e.g., fly an American flag, wear an American flag pin, attend a Memorial Day parade, wear a red poppy, write a note or letter to the relatives of a fallen hero)?
6. (Optional for 4th and 5th graders) How many of you have lost an ancestor, relative, or loved one serving in the military? How many of you know of someone who has? For volunteers only: Can you share about these fallen heroes?

Closing Comments – The Memorial Day weekend is much more than just a three-day weekend or the weekend that marks the beginning of the summer season. It's an important national holiday set aside so Americans can honor all the fallen heroes who have died to help keep us free. Find a way to honor these fallen heroes this Monday, and take time to be grateful for the freedoms you enjoy because of their sacrifices. These are important things to remember.



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Follow-up Activities

Schoolwide

- Hold a schoolwide Memorial Day observance. Ask parents of younger students and the older students for names of ancestors, relatives, or loved ones that have been lost serving in the military. Have classes make wreaths with names of those heroes and hang them throughout the school. Try to include the branch of the military and what war or conflict in which this veteran was involved. (Wreaths can be made by tracing the hands of the children and arranging them in a circle and gluing them together.) Children can participate in a parade honoring veterans, our currently serving soldiers, and those that have passed on. Read the age appropriate Memorial Day books listed in the reading list to the class to see what ideas the students can come up with to observe the day.
- Show either pictures, or if possible, real examples of medals that are awarded to service men and women. Discuss the meaning of each one and have students create their own medal. The medal can highlight a character trait that they believe a veteran possesses (courage, patience, tolerance, hardworking). Have students first generate a list of traits to be posted at the front of class for students to refer to when creating their medals.
- Listen to any of the songs listed below and have the words posted so that children can follow along as they are listening. After listening to the song, have the students locate words in the songs that they feel describe the heroes that are currently or formerly in the military. Invite family members or community members that have served in the military for a special sing along or parade. Serve treats that are patriotic – red, white, and blue cupcakes or cookies would make it a festive celebration to honor these individuals.

Grades 3-5

- Read *America's White Table*, by M. T. Raven. Draw attention to the symbols used to remember the service and heroism of a loved one. In observance of Memorial Day, set a “white table” in your class. Invite another class or if possible the family of a service man or woman currently serving. Have some students read and explain the symbolism and some set the table. Have the class make cards of gratitude for the family.

Grades K-2

- Read any of the books that explain Memorial Day from the reading list. Allow the students to make connections with other celebrations and ask questions about the observances. Ask children what they would do to show the families how thankful they are for the service of the heroes. Make a list and choose which one or two would be practical for your individual class.



Reading List

K-2

- *H is for Honor: A Military Family Alphabet*, D. Scillian
- *Let's Get Ready for Memorial Day*, L. Douglas
- *Memorial Day*, J. S. Cotton
- *Memorial Day*, R. Nelson
- *Memorial Day Surprise*, T. M. Golding
- *They Were Strong and Good*, R. Lawson

3-5

- *America's White Table*, M. T. Raven
- *Lily Hates Goodbyes*, J. Marler
- *Memorial Day*, C. Ditchfield
- *Memorial Day*, T. S. Trueit
- *The Wall*, E. Bunting
- *Where Poppies Grow*, L. Granfield

Music

- *Our America: 15 Patriotic Songs by Our Children*, Young American All-Stars
- *Patriotic Music of America*, The American Military Band
- *Sing America*, Various Artists
- *Songs of America*, Cedarhurst Kids