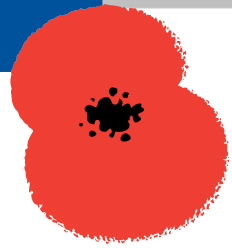


Remembrance

Five assemblies to follow the theme of Remembrance for one week
The assembly on Day five can be used as a stand-alone assembly



DAY 4: POETRY AND REMEMBRANCE

In preparation:

- The Royal British Legion CD Rom
- Screen
- In this assembly any of the poets from those featured in the First World War Section on the CD Rom can be selected and the script simply adapted. As an example, Isaac Rosenberg and Wilfred Owen have been selected here.

Start

Show the pictures of some of the poets from the section 'Soldier Poets of the First World War'

Script

Do you recognise any of these people?

These are Soldiers who fought in the First World War. They are also poets.

The First World War introduced something called 'conscription' which meant that men of a certain age could be called up to fight regardless of what their job was. The First World War was also a war where the Government encouraged all men to join the army even if they had other jobs.

Both of those things meant that there were men from lots of different backgrounds and with different skills who fought and were injured or killed.

The War affected lots of people and many of those who fought wrote about their experiences. Two of these were Isaac Rosenberg and Wilfred Owen who both fought for Britain in the War. Their poems helped the public in Britain to understand what the experience of fighting in the trenches was like.

Isaac Rosenberg

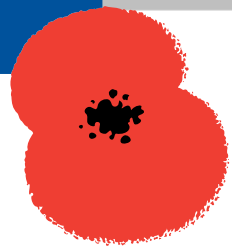
Isaac Rosenberg was born into a working-class Jewish family that had emigrated from Russia and eventually moved to the East End of London.

His working-class origins and economic circumstances prevented him from attending Oxford or Cambridge, but he was a talented artist and enrolled in evening classes in the Art School of Birkbeck College, London University. He had hoped to make his living as a portrait artist and had moved to South Africa to pursue his career when the war broke out. He returned to England in 1915, enlisted in 1916 and was killed at the front on April 3, 1918.

(choose one poem)

Remembrance

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(1) In The Trenches **by Isaac Rosenberg (1916)**

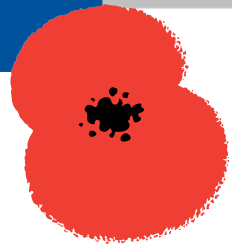
I snatched two poppies
From the parapet's ledge,
Two bright red poppies
That winked on the ledge.
Behind my ear
I stuck one through,
One blood red poppy
I gave to you.
The sandbags narrowed
And screwed out our jest,
And tore the poppy
You had on your breast ...
Down - a shell - O! Christ,
I am choked ... safe ... dust blind, I
See trench floor poppies
Strewn. Smashed you lie.

(2) Break of Day in the Trenches **by Isaac Rosenberg (1916)**

The darkness crumbles away.
It is the same old druid Time as ever,
Only a live thing leaps my hand,
A queer sardonic rat,
As I pull the parapet's poppy
To stick behind my ear.
Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew
Your cosmopolitan sympathies.
Now you have touched this English hand
You will do the same to a German
Soon, no doubt, if it be your pleasure
To cross the sleeping green between.
It seems you inwardly grin as you pass
Strong eyes, fine limbs, haughty athletes,
Less chanced than you for life,
Bonds to the whims of murder,
Sprawled in the bowels of the earth,
The torn fields of France.
What do you see in our eyes
At the shrieking iron and flame
Hurled through still heavens ?
What quaver - what heart aghast?
Poppies whose roots are in man's veins
Drop, and are ever dropping;
But mine in my ear is safe -
Just a little white with the dust.

Remembrance

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Wilfred Owen (1893-1918)

Owen was on the Continent teaching until he visited a hospital for the wounded and then decided, in September, 1915, to return to England and enlist. "I came out in order to help these boys - directly by leading them as well as an officer can; indirectly, by watching their sufferings that I may speak of them as well as a leader can. I have done the first" (October, 1918).

Owen was injured in March 1917 and sent home; he was fit for duty in August, 1918, and returned to the front on 4 November, just seven days before the Armistice, he was caught in a German machine gun attack and killed. He was twenty-five.

(choose one poem)

(1) Anthem for Doomed Youth by Wilfred Owen

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?

Only the monstrous anger of the guns.

Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle

Can patter out their hasty orisons.

No mockeries for them; no prayers nor bells,

Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, --

The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;

And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?

Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes

Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.

The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;

Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,

And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

(2) Futility by Wilfred Owen

Move him into the sun --

Gently its touch awoke him once,

At home, whispering of fields unsown.

Always it woke him, even in France,

Until this morning and this snow.

If anything might rouse him now

The kind old sun will know.

Think how it wakes the seeds --

Woke, once, the clays of a cold star.

Are limbs so dear-achieved, are sides

Full-nerved, -- still warm, -- too hard to stir?

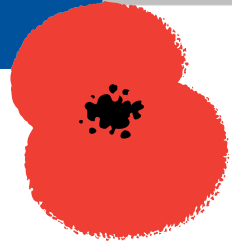
Was it for this the clay grew tall?

-- O what made fatuous sunbeams toil

To break earth's sleep at all?

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Moment of reflection

It is sometimes difficult to think of something as horrible as war producing beautiful poetry, but the poetry helps us to understand the hideous experience of war. Although the poetry is often sad it reminds us of what it must have been like to have lived in the conditions that those poets did. Poetry helps us to remember and understand the sacrifices that they made and the horrors that they witnessed and we are grateful that their words are able to reach us.

Prayer or Poem:

Select any of the poems not already used.