

Poppy Day / Remembrance Day

1917 was a vital year in the course of the war. Ordinary Russian people rebelled against their leaders (they murdered their king and his entire family!) and stopped fighting the Germans. Germany now concentrated all of its soldiers, guns, gas, ships and planes on fighting the British and the French. However, by then, the USA had joined the war on the side of Britain and France.

The Germans now tried desperately to defeat the British and French before the fresh American soldiers arrived at the front lines. But, despite an all-out attack, the Germans could not break through. The German soldiers started to **retreat**. Back home in Germany, the **civilians** had reached breaking point – they were starving and there were riots in the streets. Soon, the countries on Germany's side began to surrender – and German troops were exhausted too. Eventually, Germany's King (Kaiser Wilhelm II) ran away to Holland and the government that replaced him called for a **ceasefire**. At 11:00am on 11 November 1918, the Great War was over.

- ▶ **Source A** The front page of the *Daily Mirror*, 12 November 1918. Some celebrations lasted for three days – the police had to be sent to break them up in the end. It was the same in most of the major cities all over Europe.



A FEW QUESTIONS:

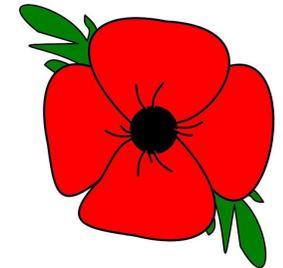
As you can see, it is little wonder that many people began calling it a World War. Soon after the end of the war, an outbreak of influenza (flu) swept across Europe and killed an estimated 25 million more people!

1. Why was 1917 such an important year in the war?
2. When exactly did the war end?
3. How do we remember the end of WW1 today?
4. What does the Poppy Day poem mean?
5. Why was the poppy used as a symbol of the Great War?
6. Have you ever bought a poppy? If not, say why not. If so, explain why you bought one?

The war did terrible damage to the land on which it was fought. In France, where most of the fighting took place, an area the size of Wales was ruined. Buildings, roads, trees and hedgerows just disappeared. Only one living thing seemed to flourish – the poppy. For many soldiers, the poppy had become a symbol of life and hope amongst all the fighting. The poppies continued to grow after the soldiers left the trenches in 1918.

- ▶ **Source D** A Remembrance Day poppy. We buy our poppy as a token, to make a personal statement that we remember those who fought for their country. A popular poem of 1918 went:

*'When you get home
Tell them of us and say
For your tomorrow
We gave our today.'*



In 1919, some of the poppies were collected and sold to raise money for war widows and injured soldiers. Soon artificial ones were being made in a factory in London and sold all over Britain. In the same year, the Government received a letter from Percy Fitzpatrick, whose son had been killed in France in 1917. Percy suggested that two minutes' silence be observed on the anniversary of the end of the war. King George V agreed. Today, the two-minute silence is held on the nearest Sunday after the anniversary of the end of the Great War – it is called Remembrance Sunday and poppies are sold to raise money to help those people affected by all wars. Some people call it 'Poppy Day'.

FACT: ▶ How many?

- ▶ Every year, over 30 million poppies are sold. The Poppy Appeal raises about £20 million a year.

