At 11:00 am on 11 November each year, people from countries around the world pause to commemorate Remembrance Day, the anniversary of the day that the fighting ended in the First World War. Towards the conclusion of the ceremonies, after wreaths have been laid and before the sounding of the Last Post and the minute’s silence, The Ode of Remembrance is read.

Background

The Ode of Remembrance may be the most well-known part of Remembrance Day ceremonies. It is the fourth stanza of the poem *For the Fallen* by Laurence Binyon, who before the war had been an assistant keeper of prints and drawings at the British Museum. The stanza which forms the Ode of Remembrance reads:

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:*
*Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.*
*At the going down of the sun and in the morning We will remember them.*

The Ode of Remembrance was selected in 1919 to accompany the unveiling of the London Cenotaph and soon passed into common use across the British Commonwealth. In Australia it is recited on Anzac Day and Remembrance Day.

Written just a few weeks after the war began, *For the Fallen* anticipated much about the war on the Western Front – not least the vast numbers of dead and the symbolism that came to be associated with the red poppies which grew in profusion in northern France and Flanders.

For soldiers who fought on the Western Front, the Ode of Remembrance also called to mind two of the most important moments of the day in the trenches – dawn and dusk, the time of the ‘stand-to’. This was the favoured time of attack by armies on both sides and all eyes at sunrise and sunset were focused on the enemy line.

Though it was written more than a century ago, in its remembrance of the dead and its sorrowful evocation of the future they were denied, the Ode of Remembrance remains relevant to the present day.

Sources

anzacday.org.au/words-of-remembrance

Wartime snapshot – The Ode of Remembrance

1. Look at the Remembrance Day poster.
   A. What do you see?
   B. What is the soldier doing? Who might he be?
   C. How do you think he is feeling?
   D. Do you recognise the words? Where have you heard them before?

2. At 11.00am on 11 November each year people from countries around the world pause for a minute's silence to commemorate Remembrance Day, the anniversary of the day that the fighting ended in the First World War. Use the link below to read more about the story of Remembrance Day.
   A. Why do we observe a minute's silence at 11.00am each year on Remembrance Day?
   B. Use the link below to read more about the story of the poppy in the First World War. Why do we use poppies as symbols of remembrance?
   C. What other symbols of commemoration do we associate with Remembrance Day?

3. Read the poem For The Fallen by Laurence Binyon
   A. What types of people are mentioned in the poem? Do you think they would have a significant connection to Remembrance Day?
   B. Thinking about the lives of the soldiers, how does the poem make you feel?

4. Read the background information
   A. When is the Ode of Remembrance read during Remembrance Day ceremonies?
   B. What significant memorial opening was the Ode of Remembrance first used to commemorate World War I?
   C. Which two most important moments of the day did the Ode call to mind for soldiers who fought on the Western Front?
   D. Why does the Ode of Remembrance remain relevant to the present day?

5. The First World War, 1914–1918, was called the ‘Great War’, and the ‘war to end all wars’. In that conflict, the most important battleground was the Western Front. Between March 1916 and November 1918, Australian soldiers served in six great battles that were once household names in Australia during the war.
   A. Using the link below, name the major battles Australian soldiers fought in on the Western Front.
   B. What were the Australian armed forces called during World War I?
   C. How many Australians served on the Western Front between March 1916 and November 1918?

6. Do you think that remembering and commemorating Australians who served in all war, conflicts and peace operations is still important today? What things can we do to remember their service?

Activity Websites

Q4. anzaportal.dva.gov.au/history/conflicts/australians-western-front
Q5. sjmc.gov.au