

Holiday Facts & Fun: Memorial Day



Teacher's Guide

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Produced
by
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HOLIDAY FACTS & FUN: Memorial Day

Grades 2-5

Viewing Time: 14:51

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Intended Audience and Uses

Holiday Facts & Fun: Memorial Day has been produced for students in grades 2-5. Its primary purposes are to help youngsters appreciate the sacrifices and contributions of our nation's veterans and to understand why and how Memorial Day is celebrated. It also can deepen student understanding of U.S. history in the 19th century. This video helps students achieve McREL Level II (Grades K-4) History Standard 1, Benchmark 5 ("Understands ...cultural heritage through ...celebrations"); History Standard 4, Level I, Benchmark 7 ("Understands the reasons that Americans celebrate certain national holidays"); Level II, Benchmark 8 ("Understands the historical events...commemorated by major national holidays..."); and Level II, Benchmark 5 ("Knows how various American holidays reflect the shared values, principles and beliefs of Americans...").



Program Synopsis

The program is divided into six sections. The first shows the Lorenson family as they venture to the Indianapolis 500

Speedway to watch the famous Memorial Day race. The second shows how Memorial Day is typically celebrated throughout the United States -- with parents sharing stories about family members, pursuing outdoor activities and attending Memorial Day events (which help us appreciate the sacrifices members of the military have made to preserve our many freedoms.)



The history of Memorial Day is then covered, tracing the holiday back to the Civil War Days, when it was called "Decoration Day." The next section takes viewers to Waterloo, NY, which lays claim to being the "Birthplace of Memorial Day." During the big Memorial Day weekend, visitors go to the National Memorial Day Museum found the small upstate New York community and attend the town's celebration in a downtown park and on Oak Island, where a Civil War era living museum is set up each Memorial Day. Also shown is a traditional ceremony honoring the town's fallen heroes. The fifth section shows other ceremonies around the country -- parades and wreath laying ceremonies

in small towns, big cities, Arlington National Cemetery and the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in Washington, DC. The sixth and final section is a review of the program.



VIEWER OBJECTIVES

After viewing this video and participating in the suggested activities, viewers should be able to do the following:

1. Tell at least five ways people celebrate the holiday.
2. Briefly review the history of Memorial Day.
3. Name at least five freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of rights.

The producers encourage you to make adaptations and changes to the following lesson plan whenever you feel it will enhance your students' learning experiences. Only by tailoring the material to your unique classroom situation will you be able to maximize the educational experience afforded by these materials.

SUGGESTED LESSON PLAN

Viewing Strategies

Various strategies may be employed when showing *Memorial Day* to your class. If you wish to use the video as a way to give general information about this holiday, you may find it useful to show the entire program in one screening, then follow up with appropriate questions (see the *Suggested Discussion Questions* blackline master) and/or activities suggested in this guide. Alternately, the second section can be used as a brief introduction to the Civil War.

Introduce the Program

The producers encourage you to prescreen the program to familiarize yourself with its content.

Ask the class if anyone knows what a memorial is. Help your student understand that memorial is a *reminder* -- often a structure. Does anyone know a word that is



similar to memorial? (Remember) Explain that Memorial Day is a day set aside for us to remember people who have done important things in their lives, especially people in the military who have

given up their lives so we can live as free people.

Pre-Viewing Activities

Ask if anyone remembers what he or she did on the last Memorial Day. Explain that the class will now see a video that explains what people do on Memorial Day and its history.

Post-Viewing Activities

Discuss the program, using the *Suggested Discussion Questions* if you prefer. Finally, review the ways in which students shown in the program support America's military – listening to presentations given by present and former soldiers, visiting veterans in hospitals, gathering and sending small presents to military personnel overseas, participating in poster contests. What is your school's policy regarding those activities?



Description of Blackline Masters

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – Gives questions that may be asked after each segment is viewed.

Our Military Services – Gives students an opportunity to increase their knowledge of our country's five military services.

ANSWER KEY

Video Quiz: 1. False 2. a., worship 3. 19th 4. c., neither a.norb. 5. False 6. Lyndon Johnson 7. b., Seneca 8. A system of waving flags to send signals 9. Arlington National Cemetery 10. False

TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

NARRATOR: It's a rainy day in May -- perfect for some indoor activities, such as building model race cars.

But for Brett Lorenson...

DAD: It's almost on, Brett!

...it's also a good time to watch the "Memorial Day 500" auto race at the Indianapolis Speedway race track.

As with many other fans, the Lorensons enjoy watching the event, especially since last year, when they saw it in person.

Even more, the day before the big event, Brett and his parents went to a special program at the track, where they saw the official pace car that began the competition.

They also saw winning autos from years past and midget race cars.

These tiny wonders were the Lorenson's favorites.

This year, Brett's mother has decided to work on the family's picture collection during the race -- an appropriate activity given that it's going to be Memorial Day tomorrow.

In fact, before the race each year, a special Memorial Day program is held to honor our country's military men and women.

Memorial Day is when people take time to remember relatives who have passed away.

Remembering family members is just one way people celebrate the holiday.

Another is by sharing stories about grandparents, great grandparents. and other relatives.

Sometimes pictures are used to jog memories.

Other times, online albums or social network sites help people recall special times with loved ones long ago.

Outdoor activities, such as grilling burgers in the park, having a big barbecue at home, going fishing or boating, or attending an outdoor celebration -- all are typical ways people celebrate Memorial Day.

In fact, the holiday is generally seen as the beginning of the outdoor summer season.

Besides having fun, there's a more serious side to the holiday.

Around the country people gather to recall the brave deeds and recite the names of fallen heroes and heroines who gave all they could for their country -- indeed who sacrificed their very lives to defend our precious freedoms, such as the freedom to speak our minds, as long as it doesn't hurt anyone; the freedom to worship as we wish; the freedom to write whatever we want -- again, as long as it doesn't hurt anyone.

Other freedoms we enjoy allow us to select our government officials in honest elections; have a trial by jury; and gather in groups of our own choosing.

Memorial Day began long ago, in the 1860s, when our country was in danger of being destroyed in a terrible Civil War.

More than 600,000 soldiers died in the conflict.

After the war, it became customary to lay flowers at the soldiers' graves.

In time, a special day called "Decoration Day" was established.

On that day, people would decorate the graves of fallen soldiers with flowers.

Many towns claim to have held the first Decoration Day event.

But most likely, many of them held the holiday at about the same time, including a memorial service in 1865 organized by African-American soldiers at a prison camp in Charleston, SC.

Nevertheless, Waterloo, New York, is generally given credit for holding the first Decoration Day ceremonies, in 1866.

Decoration Day was renamed "Memorial Day" in 1882. And Congress, in the National Holiday Act of 1971, made it an official federal holiday.

By that time, President Lyndon Johnson had already proclaimed Waterloo as the official location of the first Memorial Day.

And so, this normally quiet community in upstate New York calls itself "The Birthplace of Memorial Day."

Every year, the village holds a large number of events over the holiday weekend.

During the three-day observance, many visitors tour the National Memorial Day Museum.

There, sightseers find a large number of paintings, displays, artifacts, clothing and rooms as they would have appeared in the 1860s.

A dining room and a living room have mid-19th century furniture -- including a bookcase and a desk with writing instruments.

Civil War documents, as well as books and pictures are also on display at the museum.

During the Memorial Day weekend, on the museum's front porch, actors portray famous Civil War personalities.

One is Clara Barton, a nurse who saved many lives on the battlefield.

And, of course, President Abraham Lincoln makes an appearance. Not far away, next to downtown Waterloo, a large number of booths are set up in a park during the celebration.

There, people browse and shop -- for craft and art objects and refreshments, such as ice cream and other snacks.

Children may fill bottles with colored sand and then take home sand and bottle art -- a favorite activity.

Another favorite is "panning" for gold.

Of course, nobody finds real gold when sifting sand, just like miners did some 150 years ago.

But it's fun to pretend!

It's apparently fun to act very silly, also!

About a block south of the park, locks are found on the Seneca River, which runs through Waterloo.

On nearby Oak Island, located in the river, a Civil War living museum is set up each Memorial Day weekend.

There, visitors may find women in mid-19th century clothing.

They can see a large number of demonstrations, too, and hear explanations.

For example, a surgeon talks about operating in the field with 19th century surgical tools, bandages and various kinds of medicine.

One exhibition visitors find particularly interesting demonstrates how Civil War canons were prepared for firing.

The semaphore demonstration is a favorite among boys.

Semaphore is a system of waving flags to send signals and was used extensively during the Civil War.

Visitors also enjoy looking at and touching antique objects, such as a Civil War canteen.

Guests see how Confederate soldiers prepared for and listen to 19th century American folk songs.

It's early morning on Memorial Day, and a small group of veterans, former soldiers, march through Waterloo on their way to a local cemetery, where the American flag is raised and wreaths are laid to honor the town's fallen heroes.

Later in the day, the town holds its big Memorial Day parade.

Local politicians make an appearance, as does the Waterloo High School band.

Men in Union Army uniforms march along with the village's firefighters and police officers.

Of course, Memorial Day parades are held elsewhere in the country -- in small towns and big cities.

Wreath laying ceremonies are also held around the country on Memorial Day.

The most famous of these is the presidential wreath laying ceremony at the tomb of the unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery, where thousands of American service men and women are buried.

On Memorial Day, friends and family members visit there to pay homage to their loved ones.

At the Vietnam War Memorial in nearby Washington, DC, people also come to remember relatives and friends.

There are also at the Indianapolis 500 Speedway to remember those lost at war and to honor them.

Soon after, the big race is on!

When the event is over, the Lorensens talk about what they've seen.

Brett remarks that the race was everything he had hoped for -- fast and exciting!

And Mr. Lorensen thinks about the soldiers at the opening ceremonies, and about how Memorial Day is a time to remember and honor the heroes and heroines who have sacrificed their lives so that all of us can live in a country with so many freedoms.

It's also a holiday with a long history.

And it's celebrated in towns and cities throughout the country.

Memorial Day -- a holiday on which we show our appreciation for those who have sacrificed so much to keep our country safe, strong and free!

Web Resources

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Memorial Day
Home Page

<http://www.va.gov/opa/speceven/memday/>

Pictures, historical data and more about Memorial Day

Time and Date Memorial Day Site

<http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/us/memorial-day>

An concise review of Memorial Day

The U.S. Army Articles on Memorial Day

<http://www.army.mil/search/index.php?search=memorial+day>

A list of articles on Memorial Day from the U.S. Army

Discussion Questions – Memorial Day

1. Where does the "Speedway 500" take place? (Indianapolis, IN)
2. Name three ways people celebrate Memorial Day? (talk about deceased relatives, participate in outdoor activities, go to community celebrations, etc.)
3. Name six freedoms Americans enjoy. (freedom of worship, speech, elections, trial by jury, press, gather in groups)
4. When did Memorial Day begin? (in the 1860s)
5. What was Memorial Day first called? (Decoration Day)
6. What became customary after the Civil War? (lay flowers at soldiers' graves)
7. What town is generally given credit for holding the first Decoration Day ceremonies? (Waterloo, NY)
8. What year was the first Decoration Day ceremony held in Waterloo? (1866)
9. What year was Decoration Day changed to Memorial Day? (1882)
10. What president proclaimed that Waterloo was the official location of the first Memorial Day? (Lyndon Johnson)
11. Name three things visitors find the National Memorial Day Museum. (paintings, displays, artifacts, clothing and rooms as they would appear in the 1860s, books, photographs)
12. Name two persons that actors portray on the steps of the National Memorial Day Museum. (Clara Barton, Abraham Lincoln)
13. Name six things visitors may see on Oak Island during the Memorial Day weekend. (women in mid-19th century clothing, a battlefield surgeon, demonstration of a Civil War canon being fired, semaphore, singing American folk songs, touching antique objects)
14. What happens early Memorial Day morning in Waterloo? (A small group of veterans march to a cemetery and hold a ceremony there.)
15. Where is the most famous laying of the wreath ceremony held? (Arlington National Cemetery)

Name _____

Our Military Services

Our country has five military services -- the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force and Coast Guard. Conduct an Internet search on one of the services, Then write several paragraphs in the space below that tell what the members of that organization do, when it was founded, and how many members it has.