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# Veterans & Veterans Day

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## Teacher's Guide

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Produced  
by  
Colman Communications Corp.

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# VETERANS & VETERANS DAY

Grades 6-8

Viewing Time: 13:20

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### Intended Audience and Uses

*Veterans & Veterans Day* has been produced for students in grades 6-8. Its primary purposes are to help youngsters appreciate the sacrifices and contributions of our nation's veterans and to understand why and how Veterans Day is celebrated. It also can deepen student understanding of U.S. history in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. This video helps students achieve McREL Level III (Grades 6-8) History Standard 1 ("Understands and knows how to analyze chronological relationships and patterns..."); World History Standards, Era 8, topic 40 (Understands the search for peace and stability throughout the world in the 1920s and 1930s; topic 42 (Understands major global trends from 1900 to the end of World War II); and Era 9, topic 45 (Understands major global trends since World War II).

### Program Synopsis

The program is divided into four sections. The first discusses major freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights and how those freedoms have contributed to the success of

the United States as a social, economic and political entity. The second section gives a brief overview of tyrannical despots who, throughout history, have not shared (and do not share) our country's commitment to human rights and the dignity of the individual. The third part explains that our country's military services have met the challenge of those who would destroy our freedoms and the fourth tells about Veterans Day – its historical development and the ways it is celebrated. Several ways students can support our military personnel overseas are included in the final section. This program uses extensive archival footage, as well as contemporary video shot throughout the United States and in foreign countries, to give an accurate overview of the many sacrifices our military personnel have made through the years to protect our freedoms – and to show how Americans honor them on Veterans Day.

## **VIEWER OBJECTIVES**

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

1. Enumerate at least five major freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights.
2. Name at least five tyrants in world history who did not, or do not, share America's commitment to freedom and the dignity of the individual.
3. Name the five branches of America's military.
4. Explain the development of Veterans Day and tell why it is celebrated.
5. Name at least five ways Veterans Day is celebrated and several ways students can support our military personnel overseas.

*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 *Veterans & Veterans Day* to your class. If you wish to use the video as a way to give general information about Veterans Day, 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 first three sections can be used as an overview of American military engagements from World War I through the Korean Conflict.

### **Introduce the Program**

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

Tell the class that soldiers always have been part of history. The earliest historical records mention military forces. Why have there always been military forces? Help your students understand that in some instances, the military has been used to gain access to natural resources, slave labor and increased tax revenue; in other cases, the military is used for defensive purposes. Explore the complex issue of why countries go to war. Ask your students to offer some theories. Are humans genetically predisposed to fight?

Ask what a pre-emptive war is, and whether or not it can be a legitimate way to protect a country. Has warfare changed through the ages? If so, how? Given that wars always entail death and suffering of innocent people, is a war ever justified? If so, under what circumstances?

## Pre-Viewing Activities

Ask if anyone has a relative in the military. In which branch of the military does he or she serve? What is her or his particular job? Help your students understand that when people finish their military service, they are called “veterans.” Pass out *Famous Veterans*. Have the class read the information silently or aloud, then discuss whether military service can help a person in his or her career. If so, how? As extra credit, students may delve further into the lives of these individuals and prepare a short written report on one of them. Tell the class that many of these people have served in the armed forces during conflicts mentioned in the video they are about to see, and are among the millions of veterans who are honored every November 11<sup>th</sup>.

## Post-Viewing Activities

Discuss the program, using the *Suggested Discussion Questions* if you prefer. Now turn your attention to the role of national leaders in establishing foreign policy. Do soldiers declare war? Why is it so important in a democracy that the electorate be well informed? If a country’s leaders do not establish a balanced, informed foreign policy, whose fault is it in a democratic country? Help your students understand that an informed vote can be enormously important because lives can depend on it. Finally, review the ways in which students shown in the program support America’s military – writing emails to relatives in the armed services, listening to presentations given by present and

former soldiers, visiting veterans in hospitals, gathering and sending small presents to military personnel overseas. 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.

**FAMOUS VETERANS** – Names and gives brief backgrounds of veterans who have made significant contributions to American society.

## ANSWER KEY

**Video Quiz:** 1. True 2. c., Freedom from poverty. 3. b., Tyrants to not respect the dignity of the individual. 4. 11<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> 5. a., Germany invaded Poland. 6. President Dwight D. Eisenhower 7. Go to programs at military museums, go to Veterans Day Parades, visit war memorials, listen to soldiers give speeches, visit veterans in hospitals, write emails to members of the military, gather small gifts for military personnel overseas, attend ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery. 8. b., Arlington National Cemetery 9. Tracing of a fallen soldier's name made by rubbing a pencil on paper held over the soldier's name; at Vietnam War Memorial (and other similar memorials that have soldiers' names on them) 10. Air Force, Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard.

## TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

The year was 1787, a time when the American people undertook a noble experiment with their new constitution.

In the document's first ten amendments, known as the "Bill of Rights," U.S. citizens were guaranteed a collection of far-reaching freedoms never before officially recognized by a government – freedoms we still enjoy to this very day.

Among them were freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press and the right to a fair trial.

For the most part, the experiment was an unqualified success.

For, in time, the United States became a nation without equal – one with not only picturesque towns that stood as reminders of America’s rural past, but also towering cities with busy offices and productive factories.

The United States also became a land of great universities where the freedom to pursue new ideas was actively encouraged.

And it became a country where great works of creative genius could be performed and produced, free from the censor’s stifling hand.

The United States became the most powerful and influential country on earth – indeed, the most powerful and influential nation in the history of the world, a beacon of freedom and justice for people everywhere.

Yet, in a sometimes-dangerous world, freedom and justice cannot be guaranteed to last forever.

Indeed, throughout our nation’s history, there have been times when our freedoms have been tested.

For there has never been a shortage of tyrants who do not share our country’s commitment to human rights and to the dignity of the individual.

Often, these despots have been responsible for the deaths of millions.

When left unchecked, the destructive power of these dictators has been horrible and has thrown countless numbers of people into lives of abject misery.

Regrettably, these ruthless fanatics have not disappeared in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Yet, America – more often than not with the help of its armed forces – has always met the challenge.

The men and women of the Air Force, Navy, Marines, Army and

Coast Guard provide a protective shield for the United States of America.

One day each year, on Veterans Day, we hold ceremonies to honor those heroes and heroines.

It is one way our country shows its appreciation for the sacrifices our military personnel have made to protect the United States and its friends.

Veterans Day traces its beginnings to World War I, which began in 1914.

When the troops came home victorious four years later, a day was set aside to honor all the Americans who had fought in that terrible conflict.

The peace came on the heels of an agreement to stop the fighting – an “armistice – signed at 11 o’clock in the morning on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month, November, 1918.

One year later, in Washington, D.C., President Woodrow Wilson declared that November 11<sup>th</sup> would be called “Armistice Day,” to honor all World War I veterans.

The holiday was celebrated every year after that, although it didn’t become an official federal holiday until 1938.

For more than two decades, it was hoped that a worldwide conflict would never again break out.

But in 1939, World War II began when German troops invaded Poland.

Several years later, Germany’s ally, Japan, bombed Pearl Harbor in Hawaii and the United States entered the war.

Soon, U.S. troops sailed overseas to fight a determined enemy.

More than 670,000 wounded American soldiers were treated in hospitals during and after the conflict, and more than 400,000 U.S. military personnel died in the war: in all, more than a million casualties so that Americans could live their lives free from tyranny and oppression.

Finally, in 1945, Japan surrendered. The United States and its allies won the war – and celebrated!

But another conflict erupted five years later, in Korea, a country in eastern Asia.

Once more, our country's men and women in uniform found themselves far from home, thousands of miles from their loved ones.

Once again, they faced a determined enemy. But eventually they were able to stop the aggression.

When the fighting ended, in 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower changed the name of "Armistice Day" to "Veterans Day" to honor *all* veteran, not just those who had served in World War I.

Today, programs that stress military history are held around the country as November 11<sup>th</sup> approaches.

At some places, such as this military museum in Chicago, Illinois, former and present members of our armed forces share their experiences.

OFFICER: I just felt like I had accomplished the world. There was nothing I couldn't do. It was the greatest feeling I really have ever had.

NARR: Besides military museums, schools are another place where present and former members of the armed services give presentations as Veteran's Day nears.

This student, after hearing one of those presentations, decided to send regular emails to her aunt, a nurse on a Navy hospital ship.

Giving military personnel news from home is an important way to show support for those who do the often-dangerous work of protecting our country.

Gathering, packing and sending small presents to members of the military overseas are still other Veteran's Day activities in which school children often participate, especially when our country is at war.

However, it is the Veteran's Day ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C. that is undoubtedly the most widely recognized event that takes place on the holiday.

On that day, a wreath is placed at the "Tomb of the Unknowns," a burial site where a small number of unidentified soldiers from various wars are buried.

People also gather at war memorials on November 11<sup>th</sup> to honor our country's fallen heroes and heroines.

The World War II Memorial and Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C. are two of the most well known.

For the people who gather there, it's a time to pay homage to, and remember, the brave military men and women of bygone years.

Many make a tracing – or "rubbing" – of the name of fallen comrades.

Of course, there are also Veteran's Day parades in many communities around the country.

Typically, patriotic music, floats and marching soldiers are seen at these events. Of course, veterans participate, too.

And as you might expect, speeches are given.

SPEAKER: I encourage all Americans to recognize with appreciation the sacrifice and service of all our patriotic veterans.

NARR: At Veterans Day events, held in both small towns and large cities, veterans have an opportunity to reacquaint themselves with old comrades, exchange greetings and relive their experiences as members of the military, long ago.

At veterans' hospitals – medical facilities where injured or sick veterans receive healthcare services – something else takes place on or near November 11<sup>th</sup>.

That's when family members, friends and volunteers often make a special point to visit those who have served in the armed forces.

Making hospital visits to veterans is still one more way to say “thank you” to the people who have done so much to preserve our freedom and well-being.

In short, Americans are fortunate to enjoy freedom and prosperity in unequalled measure.

Yet, throughout our history, our good fortune has been challenged by those who do not share our beliefs in the freedom and dignity of each individual.

Whenever these tyrants have challenged our country, it has been the men and women of our armed services who have met that challenge with bravery and resolve.

And so we honor and thank them officially each November 11<sup>th</sup>.

Yet, perhaps it would be appropriate to honor and thank them on the other days of the year, as well!

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### Web Resources

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

**<http://www1.va.gov/opa/vetsday/>**

Pictures, historical data and more about Veterans Day

Kids Domain Salute to Veterans

**[http://www.kidsdomain.com/kids/links/Salute\\_to\\_Veterans.html](http://www.kidsdomain.com/kids/links/Salute_to_Veterans.html)**

An excellent source of links to pertinent information on Veterans, conflicts and more.

The U.S. Army History of Veterans Day Page

**<http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/faq/vetsday/vetshist.htm>**

Gives key dates and explanations of Veterans Day history

VA Kids, 6-12<sup>th</sup> Grade

**<http://www.va.gov/KIDS/6-12/index.asp>**

The Veterans Administration website for students

## Discussion Questions – Veterans & Veterans Day

### For Segment One

1. When was the U.S. Constitution written? (1787)
2. What are the first 10 Amendments of the Constitution called? (Bill of Rights)
3. Name five freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights. (Freedom of religion, press, assembly, speech, right to a fair trial)
4. What proofs did the program give for the success of the Constitution? (Economically viable cities, universities where freedom to pursue new ideas actively pursued, place where works of art could be performed without censorship)
2. When did Armistice Day begin? (One year after World War I, in 1919)
3. Who declared that November 11<sup>th</sup> would be Armistice Day? (President Woodrow Wilson)
4. When was the armistice signed that ended World War I? (On the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month at 11 o'clock in the morning)
5. When did Armistice Day become an official federal holiday? (1938)
6. When did World War begin? (In 1939, when Germany invaded Poland)
7. Who many total American military casualties were there during World War II? (One million)

### For Segment Two

1. Name eight tyrants who did not, or do not, share America's commitment to human rights and the dignity of the individual. (Ivan the Terrible, Joseph Stalin, Kim Jung Il, Pol Pot, Adi Amin, Adolph Hitler, Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein)
2. Why are political despots so dangerous? (They are often responsible for the deaths of thousands – sometimes millions – of people and throw many into lives of abject misery.)
8. What conflict followed World War II? (The Korean Conflict)
9. Who changed the name of "Armistice Day" to "Veterans Day?" (President Dwight D. Eisenhower)

### For Segment Three

1. What institution has been charged with protecting our country against fanatical tyrants? (U.S. military)
2. Name the five branches of the U.S. military. (Air Force, Navy, Marines, Army, Coast Guard)
10. In what year was the name of the holiday changed? (1953)
11. Name five activities commonly seen on or near Veterans Day? (Speeches at veterans' museums, soldiers speaking to youngsters in school, parades, visits to war memorials, ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery).
12. Name three things youngsters often do on or near Veterans Day. (Email soldiers overseas; visit wounded veterans at Veterans Hospitals; gather, pack and send small gifts to soldiers overseas)

### For Segment Four

1. What was Veterans Day first called? (Armistice Day)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Famous Veterans

Many of our country's leading citizens are (or were) veterans. A few are listed below, by occupation.

### Entertainment and media

- Alan Alda – Actor, director, screenwriter
- Drew Carey – Comedian, actor
- Bill Cosby – Comedian, actor
- Clint Eastwood – Actor, director
- Gene Hackman – Actor, author
- Ernest Hemingway – Author
- Jimi Hendrix – Musician
- Jim Lehrer – PBS News anchor
- Elvis Presley – Singer
- Pat Sajak – Television personality
- Dr. Seuss -- Author
- Montel Williams – Actor, television personality

### Sports

- Roberto Clemente – Baseball
- Rocky Marciano – Boxing
- David Robinson -- Basketball
- Jackie Robinson – Baseball
- Ted Williams – Baseball

### Business

- Malcolm Forbes – Publisher
- Fred Smith – CEO, FedEx
- George Steinbrenner – Baseball executive
- Dave Thomas – Founder, Wendy's

### Science, Medicine

- Jocelyn Elders – Former Surgeon General
- Buckminster Fuller – Inventor, engineer

### Politics

- George Herbert Walker Bush – President
- Jesse Brown – Governor
- Bob Dole – U.S. Senator
- John F. Kennedy – President
- Colin Powell – Secretary of State