

REMEMBERING OCEAN COUNTY'S FALLEN

A one-period lesson on why we keep Memorial Day, built around the people from Ocean County, New Jersey, who died in service after September 11, 2001.

GRADES

6–12 (notes for grades 4–5
below)

TIME

One 45–50 minute class period,
with optional extensions

SUBJECTS

U.S. history, civics, English
language arts

YOU NEED

A projector with internet or the
memorial files, and one printed
handout per pair

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What is Memorial Day for, and how is it different from Veterans Day?
- Why do communities build memorials, and what do memorials choose to say?
- How does knowing the names of people from our own towns change how we understand national events?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

1. Explain the origins of Memorial Day and the purpose of the National Moment of Remembrance.
2. Distinguish Memorial Day, which honors those who died in military service, from Veterans Day, which honors everyone who has served.
3. Gather facts about one service member from a memorial and from a primary record, and cite where each fact came from.
4. Analyze a memorial as a source: what it records, what it leaves out, and why.

STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

New Jersey Student Learning Standards for Social Studies (2020):

- **6.1.12.HistorySE.15.b** Analyze the reasons for terrorism and the impact that terrorism has had on individuals and government policies.
- **6.1.12.HistoryCC.14.c** Evaluate the decisions to wage war in Iraq and Afghanistan after the 9/11 attacks. (*Grades 11–12 extension only; see below.*)
- **6.3.8.CivicsPD.3** Construct a claim as to why it is important for democracy that individuals are informed by facts, aware of diverse viewpoints, and willing to take action on public issues.

Standard descriptions are paraphrased from the New Jersey Department of Education. The core lesson is about remembrance and working with sources, not about whether any war was right; the policy question appears only in the optional upper-grade extension.

BEFORE YOU TEACH: A NOTE ON SENSITIVITY

- Some students have parents, siblings, or friends serving now. Some may belong to Gold Star families, or have lost someone in other ways. Tell the class ahead of time what the lesson covers, and give students a quiet way to step out if they need to.
- Make sharing personal connections optional. Never ask a student to speak about their own family's service or loss.
- Keep descriptions of how people died brief and factual. The memorial and its sources avoid graphic detail, and the lesson should too.
- Stay neutral on policy. Students can hold any view about the wars and still honor the people who died in them.
- Let your school counselor know the date of the lesson.

BACKGROUND FOR THE TEACHER

Where Memorial Day comes from

- In the spring after the Civil War, communities North and South, Black and white, decorated soldiers' graves with flowers on local "decoration days."
- On May 5, 1868, General John A. Logan, leader of the Union veterans' organization the Grand Army of the Republic, issued General Orders No. 11. It set May 30 as a day to decorate the graves of the war dead.
- The first national Decoration Day ceremony was held on May 30, 1868, at Arlington National Cemetery. Children placed flowers and small flags on the graves.
- After World War I, the day was widened to honor Americans who died in all wars.

- The Uniform Monday Holiday Act of 1968, effective in 1971, made Memorial Day a federal holiday on the last Monday in May.
- The National Moment of Remembrance Act (Public Law 106-579, December 2000) created a White House commission on the observance. Americans are asked to pause for a minute of silence at **3 p.m. local time** on Memorial Day.

The memorial's sky holds exactly 2,977 stars, one for each person killed in the attacks of September 11, 2001 (National September 11 Memorial & Museum). It is a way to show students the scale of the attacks that began these wars.

Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Cemetery Administration, Memorial Day History; text of Public Law 106-579.

Memorial Day and Veterans Day

	MEMORIAL DAY	VETERANS DAY
When	Last Monday in May	November 11
Who it honors	Those who died while serving in the U.S. armed forces	Everyone who has served, living or dead
Tone	Mourning and remembrance	Gratitude and recognition

The names on this memorial

The memorial lists service members whose home of record was in Ocean County and who died in post-9/11 operations. Each name is confirmed in the Department of Defense casualty records and in Military Times, and each person's page links to its sources.

- **Specialist Christopher M. Duffy**, U.S. Army, 26, of Brick. June 4, 2004, Baghdad, Iraq.
- **Sergeant Alan D. Sherman**, U.S. Marine Corps, 36, of Brick. June 29, 2004, Southeast of Baghdad, Iraq.
- **Private First Class Vincent M. Frassetto**, U.S. Marine Corps, 21, of Toms River. September 7, 2006, Anbar Province, Iraq.
- **Corporal Thomas E. Saba**, U.S. Marine Corps, 30, of Toms River. February 7, 2007, Anbar Province, Iraq.
- **Corporal Kareem R. Khan**, U.S. Army, 20, of Manahawkin. August 6, 2007, Baqubah, Iraq.
- **Major James M. Weis**, U.S. Marine Corps, 37, of Toms River. July 22, 2010, Helmand Province, Afghanistan.

- **Special Warfare Operator 3rd Class (SEAL) Denis C. Miranda**, U.S. Navy, 24, of Toms River. September 21, 2010, Zabul Province, Afghanistan.
- **Sergeant James W. Harvey II**, U.S. Army, 23, of Toms River. June 20, 2011, Ghazni Province, Afghanistan.
- **Corporal Nicholas S. Ott**, U.S. Marine Corps, 23, of Manchester. August 10, 2011, Helmand Province, Afghanistan.
- **Sergeant John A. Lyons**, U.S. Army, 26, of Seaside Park. October 26, 2011, Ghazni Province, Afghanistan.
- **Sergeant Jonathan A. Gollnitz**, U.S. Army, 28, of Lakehurst. September 26, 2012, Logar Province, Afghanistan.
- **Corporal Christopher M. Monahan Jr.**, U.S. Marine Corps, 25, of Island Heights. November 26, 2012, Helmand Province, Afghanistan.

LESSON SEQUENCE

5 MIN

1. Opening quick-write

Ask: *"Memorial Day is a three-day weekend. What do you think the day is actually for?"* Give students two minutes to write, then take a few answers. Use the table above to sort out Memorial Day from Veterans Day.

8 MIN

2. Where the day came from

Share the history above. Two details tend to stay with students. The first observances happened in many towns at once, because grief was everywhere after the Civil War. And the National Moment of Remembrance asks everyone in the country to stop at the same minute.

5 MIN

3. The Reading of the Names

Project the memorial and open **index.html#reading**, or press **Reading of the Names**. The camera visits each stone in the order the service members fell, shows the name on screen, and ends at the central stone with a moment of silence. It runs about two minutes.

Ask students to watch without talking. Many real memorials read names aloud at ceremonies; you may choose to read each name aloud as it appears.

15 MIN

4. Reading a stone (pairs)

Assign each pair one name; with twelve names, larger classes can double up. Pairs use the memorial on a device, or a printout of the Roll of Honor, to fill in the handout:

- Facts from the stone and the panel.
- One fact confirmed in a linked source, with the name of the source.
- What the memorial tells us, and what it leaves out.

Circulate and ask: *"How do you know that? Where did it come from?"*

7 MIN

5. Share and map

Each pair introduces their person in two sentences. Mark the hometowns on a map of Ocean County as you go. Then look at the whole roll together: how old were they, and how close to home?

5 MIN

6. Exit ticket

Students choose one prompt:

- Write a one-line inscription for the person you studied, using only facts you can source.
- Explain in two or three sentences why a town might name a road, a ball field, or a school display after someone.
- Describe what you will do, or notice, at 3 p.m. on Memorial Day.

ASSESSMENT

CRITERION	MEETS	DEVELOPING
Accuracy	Facts on the handout match the memorial and the source	Some facts missing or not matching
Sourcing	Names the source for the confirmed fact	Fact given without a source
Analysis	Explains what the memorial includes and leaves out, with a reason	Lists details without explaining them
Reflection	Exit ticket is specific and respectful	Exit ticket is general

EXTENSIONS

- **Local memorials.** Find where these names appear in your own community. In Toms River, a marker honoring Pfc. Vincent M. Frassetto and Cpl. Thomas E. Saba stands on Washington Street at the municipal building. A section of Church Road in front of American Legion Post 129 is the Sgt. James W. Harvey II Memorial Highway. Toms River High School East has a display case honoring Denis C. Miranda. Ask students to photograph a local memorial, then record what it says and who paid for it.
- **Design a memorial.** Students sketch a memorial for a place they know. What material would they use, what words, and where would visitors stand? Have them compare their choices with this one: black granite, names in the order they fell, a carved flag, an epitaph, and a sky of 2,977 stars.
- **Service learning.** Contact a local American Legion or VFW post about helping place flags before Memorial Day, or writing notes to Gold Star families through an established organization.
- **Grades 11–12: multiple perspectives.** Using sources from several viewpoints, students evaluate the decisions to go to war in Afghanistan and Iraq (6.1.12.HistoryCC.14.c). Keep this a separate class day, so the act of remembering is not mixed with debating policy.

ADAPTING FOR GRADES 4–5

- Focus on the idea of remembering, the flag carved into the central stone, and the stars in the sky: one for each person who died on September 11, 2001.
- Skip unit names and places. Use only the name, hometown, branch, and age.
- Swap the exit ticket for a drawing or a short card: "We remember ___ from ___."

SOURCES

- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Cemetery Administration. Memorial Day History (<https://www.cem.va.gov/history/Memorial-Day-history.asp>).
- National Moment of Remembrance Act, Public Law 106-579 (<https://www.congress.gov/106/plaws/publ579/PLAW-106publ579.htm>) (2000).
- U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Casualty Analysis System (<https://dcas.dmdc.osd.mil/dcas/app/conflictCasualties/oef/namesOfFallen>).
- Military Times, Honor the Fallen (<https://thefallen.militarytimes.com/>).
- New Jersey Department of Education, New Jersey Student Learning Standards for Social Studies (<https://www.nj.gov/education/standards/socst/>) (2020).
- Individual biographies and local memorials: see the source links on each person's page in the memorial.

READING A STONE

Names: _____

1. From the stone and the panel

Name and rank

Branch of service

Hometown

Age

Date and place of death

Unit

2. Check a source

Open one of the sources linked on the person's page. Write one fact that the source confirms, and name the source.

Source: _____

3. What the memorial tells, and what it leaves out

Name one thing the memorial chooses to tell you, and one thing it does not tell you. Why might the designers have made that choice?

4. A question

If you could ask someone who knew this person one question, what would it be?

Exit ticket

ROLL OF HONOR (FOR PAIRS WITHOUT A DEVICE)

#	NAME	BRANCH	AGE	HOMETOWN	DATE	PLACE
1	SPC Christopher M. Duffy	Army	26	Brick	June 4, 2004	Baghdad, Iraq
2	SGT Alan D. Sherman	Marine Corps	36	Brick	June 29, 2004	Southeast of Baghdad, Iraq
3	PFC Vincent M. Frassetto	Marine Corps	21	Toms River	September 7, 2006	Anbar Province, Iraq
4	CPL Thomas E. Saba	Marine Corps	30	Toms River	February 7, 2007	Anbar Province, Iraq
5	CPL Kareem R. Khan	Army	20	Manahawkin	August 6, 2007	Baqubah, Iraq
6	MAJ James M. Weis	Marine Corps	37	Toms River	July 22, 2010	Helmand Province, Afghanistan
7	SO3 Denis C. Miranda	Navy	24	Toms River	September 21, 2010	Zabul Province, Afghanistan
8	SGT James W. Harvey II	Army	23	Toms River	June 20, 2011	Ghazni Province, Afghanistan
9	CPL Nicholas S. Ott	Marine Corps	23	Manchester	August 10, 2011	Helmand Province, Afghanistan
10	SGT John A. Lyons	Army	26	Seaside Park	October 26, 2011	Ghazni Province, Afghanistan
11	SGT Jonathan A. Gollnitz	Army	28	Lakehurst	September 26, 2012	Logar Province, Afghanistan
12	CPL Christopher M. Monahan Jr.	Marine Corps	25	Island Heights	November 26, 2012	Helmand Province, Afghanistan