

Veterans Day is celebrated in the U.S. on November 11, and here's why

By Washington Post, adapted by Newsela staff on 11.09.18

Word Count **546**

Level **660L**



Royal Air Force veteran Tom Weatherill, 84, walks with Maraki Tewdros, 5, after he showed her the 8-foot-tall and 52-foot-wide "Thank You" sign by artist Sarah Arnett on the bank of the River Thames in London, England, August 3, 2018. The Royal British Legion is commemorating all who served during the First World War, which ended on November 11, 1918. Photo by: Kirsty Wigglesworth/AP Photo

Sunday is Veterans Day. It is celebrated every year, but people often don't remember it. Veterans Day is on the calendar right before Thanksgiving and the December holidays. This Veterans Day is special, though. It's the 100th anniversary of the unofficial end of World War I.

World War I was one of history's largest wars. It was fought between July 1914 and November 1918. Most of the fighting was in Europe. More than 30 countries took part, including the United States.

More than 29 million soldiers worldwide died or were wounded. About 13 million civilians died. Because of this, World War I was named "the war to end all wars."

On November 11, 1918, an armistice (pronounced ARM-iss-tiss) was signed and the fighting stopped. An armistice is an agreement to put down weapons. It was signed at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. The peace treaty wasn't signed until later.

One year later, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson declared November 11 Armistice Day. Other countries did the same. Some called it Remembrance Day. In the United States, Armistice Day was renamed Veterans Day in 1954.

Veterans Day Poster Contest Runs Every Year

Each year, a contest is held to design a poster for Veterans Day. The winning picture appears on pins. It is also on the cover of the program for a ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery. The ceremony honors and thanks all who served in the United States Armed Forces. Arlington is the country's national military cemetery. It is in Virginia.

About 80 people sent in designs. This year's theme was "The War to End All Wars." Adam Grimm's design won. He kept it simple. His poster shows a large red poppy. The poppy is the worldwide symbol for remembering World War I. There is barbed wire to show the violence of the war. The picture also includes the color pink. It represents the rising or setting sun to show that time has passed.

Many Americans confuse Veterans Day with Memorial Day. Memorial Day is another U.S. holiday related to the military.

Memorial Day began as Decoration Day in the 1860s after the Civil War. The Civil War was fought between the Northern and Southern states more than 150 years ago. It was caused mainly by a disagreement over slavery.

A Day To Honor All American Soldiers

After World War I, its meaning changed. Now it honors U.S. soldiers who died in any conflict. It is observed on the last Monday in May.

Veterans Day's meaning has also changed. Armistice Day honored everyone who served in World War I, but especially those who died. By 1954, the United States had fought in two more wars. Lawmakers decided to rename the day to honor all American soldiers. It didn't matter whether they served in war or during peace.

In the 1970s, Veterans Day was observed on the fourth Monday in October. It gave workers a three-day weekend. The change was not popular. Many people liked the holiday's connection to the armistice. Since 1978, U.S. Veterans Day is November 11.

