

Two American Holidays

The fighting in World War I stopped on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 1918. The next year, President Woodrow Wilson said that November 11, 1919, would be a day of public celebration and parades to remember the end of the war. In 1938, it became a national holiday and was called Armistice Day. In 1954, the name of the holiday was changed to Veterans Day. It is now a day that has been set aside to thank all members of the American armed forces for their service.

Many people today celebrate Memorial Day, the last Monday in May, with family picnics, parties, and lake trips. The day is often thought of as the beginning of summer. On May 5, 1868, General John Logan set the first official Memorial Day as May 30, 1868. Flowers were placed on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers in Arlington National Cemetery. Soon after the end of World War I, Memorial Day became a day for America to honor those who had served bravely in any war, not just the Civil War.

Moina Michael

Moina Michael was born in 1869 in Good Hope, Georgia. She studied in Georgia and New York City and spent the next fifty years as a teacher. After the United States entered World War I, she left her job at the University of Georgia and volunteered to teach people who were going to help the soldiers in Europe.

After reading a poem titled "In Flanders Fields," Moina Michael decided to write her own poem in honor of American soldiers. Her poem was called "We Shall Keep the Faith." Moina Michael cared about the soldiers. She worked hard to raise money for their needs after they came home. Some of her ideas spread to England, France, and Australia, as well as several other countries.

In 1948, the U.S. Postal Service issued a stamp in honor of Moina Michael's life-long work for American soldiers and their care. She was also remembered by her home state of Georgia. In 1969, a section of highway was named the Moina Michael Highway.

Writing situation:

Your class is studying American celebrations when a new student from another country joins the class. The new student speaks English but knows very little about American celebrations. To help the new student, the teacher asks the class to create a notebook with articles about celebrations in the United States. You have read the passage about the two celebrations and the article about Moina Michael. You decide you want to tell the new student about Memorial Day and Veterans Day.

Writing directions:

Write an article for the new student's notebook about the two celebrations that honor past and present members of the American armed forces. Include information about why the celebrations are held. Describe the activities that some people might enjoy on these days.