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**GREAT WAR, FLAWED PEACE,  
AND THE LASTING LEGACY  
OF WORLD WAR I**

★



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# FROM ARMISTICE DAY TO VETERANS DAY

## AMERICA'S DECISION TO CHANGE A WORLDWIDE HOLIDAY

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**GUIDING QUESTION:** How did President Eisenhower rationalize his decision to rename Armistice Day?

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### WHY?

Many nations take Armistice Day seriously. Whole countries pause whatever they are doing, even pizza delivery, to stand for a moment of silence on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. In America, it is simply a day when we are supposed to thank all Veterans for their past and present service. According to our history books, we used to recognize November 11 as Armistice Day. Why did America stop celebrating Armistice Day and make a change to Veterans Day?

### OVERVIEW

Using presidential proclamations and newspaper articles, students will learn the history of Armistice Day and Veterans Day and argue for or against changing Veterans Day back to Armistice Day.

### OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this activity, students will be able to

- > Describe the rationale for changing Armistice Day to Veterans Day; and
- > Argue whether the current administration should consider changing Veterans Day back to Armistice Day.

### STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

#### CONNECTIONS TO COMMON CORE

- > CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
- > CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
- > CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.3 Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

### DOCUMENTS USED

#### PRIMARY SOURCES

Woodrow Wilson, Armistice Day Proclamation, 1919  
Library of Congress  
[www.loc.gov/item/2004540423/1919-11-01/ed-1/](http://www.loc.gov/item/2004540423/1919-11-01/ed-1/)

Dwight D. Eisenhower, Veterans Day Proclamation, 1954  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
[https://www.va.gov/opa/vetsday/docs/proclamation\\_1954.pdf](https://www.va.gov/opa/vetsday/docs/proclamation_1954.pdf)

#### SECONDARY SOURCES

Matt Schiavenza, "Veterans Day's Other Name," November 11, 2014  
*The Atlantic*  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/11/veterans-day-Armistice-day-Remembrance-day-kurt-vonnegut/382646/>

Katie Mettler, "How Veterans Day went from celebrating world peace to thanking armed forces," November 11, 2017  
*The Washington Post*  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2017/11/11/how-veterans-day-went-from-celebrating-world-peace-to-thanking-armed-forces/>

Katie Mettler, "Veterans Day 99-year evolution," October 31, 2018  
*The Washington Post*  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2017/local/veterans-day/>

## MATERIALS

- > Writing Assessment Rubric
- > Loose-leaf paper or other lined paper for response

## ACTIVITY PREPARATION

- > Make one copy of President Woodrow Wilson's Armistice Day Proclamation for each student.
- > Make one copy of President Dwight Eisenhower's Veterans Day Proclamation for each student.
- > Make enough copies of "Veterans Day's Other Name" from *The Atlantic* for half of the class.
- > Make enough copies of "How Veterans Day went from celebrating world peace to thanking the armed forces" from *The Washington Post* for half the class.
- > Set up classroom technology, if necessary.
- > Test all online resources before class.

## PROCEDURE

### ACTIVITY ONE: EVOLUTION OF VETERANS DAY (10 MINUTES)

- > Project some of the photographs from *The Washington Post* slideshow, "Veteran's Day 99-year evolution." Ask students to think-pair-share their thoughts about Veterans Day based on the photographs.
- > Ask students to share out about how Americans view Veterans Day in modern society.

### ACTIVITY TWO: WORLD WAR I AND ARMISTICE DAY (15 MINUTES)

- > Highlight information about the end of World War I and Armistice Day to students:
  - » Armistice Day is commemorated on November 11. It recognizes the cessation of hostilities on the Western Front of World War I and marks the armistice (formal agreement to stop fighting) signed between the Allies and Germany.
  - » Armistice Day is celebrated as a national holiday in many different countries.
  - » Armistice Day was celebrated as a national holiday in the United States until 1954.
  - » Ask students to discuss with their elbow partner: *Why do you think the United States stopped celebrating Armistice Day?*

### ACTIVITY THREE: STUDENT EXAMINATION OF ARMISTICE DAY AND VETERANS DAY (30 MINUTES)

- > Divide the class into two groups. Give one group "Veterans Day's Other Name" from *The Atlantic* and the other group "How Veterans Day went from celebrating world peace to thanking armed forces" from *The Washington Post*. Give students five to seven minutes to read the articles and annotate for rationale.
- > Allow five minutes for students to discuss in their groups what they read in their articles.
- > Have each student pair up with another student who read the other article and discuss the rationale for creating Armistice Day in America and the eventual change to Veterans Day.
- > Give students copies of the presidential proclamations from Woodrow Wilson (naming Armistice Day) and Dwight D. Eisenhower (changing the name of Armistice Day). Ask them to read and annotate for rationale.
- > Give students four or five minutes to discuss Wilson's rationale for proclaiming Armistice Day and Eisenhower's rationale for proclaiming Veterans Day with their elbow partner.

### ASSESSMENT

- > Ask students to consider their thoughts about changing Veterans Day back to Armistice Day and write an argumentative essay based on the following prompt:
  - » Using evidence from the proclamations and articles, argue whether the current administration should change Veterans Day back to Armistice Day.
- > The Writing Assessment Rubric can be used to score the essay.

### METHODS FOR EXTENSION

- > Students with more interest in Armistice Day can visit the National Museum of American History (or website) for information about the anniversary.
- > Substitute a Socratic seminar for students who are not strong in writing or need more practice in public speaking.

## WOODROW WILSON, ARMISTICE DAY PROCLAMATION, 1919

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

### President Proclaims Day One of Pride in Heroes

"A year ago today our enemies laid down their arms in accordance with an armistice which rendered them impotent to renew hostilities and gave to the world an assured opportunity to reconstruct its shattered order and to work out in peace a new and juster set of international relations. The soldiers and people of the European Allies had fought and endured for more than four years to uphold the barrier of civilization against the aggressions of armed force. We ourselves had been in the conflict something more than a year and a half.

"With splendid forgetfulness of mere personal concerns we remodelled our industries, concentrated our financial resources, increased our agricultural output and assembled a great army so that at the last our power was a decisive factor in the victory. We were able to bring the vast resources, material and moral, of a great people to the assistance of our associates in Europe who had suffered and sacrificed without limit in the cause for which we fought.

"Out of this victory there arose new possibilities of political freedom and economic concert. The war showed us the strength of great nations acting together for high purposes, and the victory of arms foretells the enduring conquests which can be made in peace when nations act justly and in furtherance of the common interests of men. To us in America the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of nations."


  
**FEDERAL REGISTER**

VOLUME 19                      NUMBER 198

Washington, Tuesday, October 12, 1954

**TITLE 3—THE PRESIDENT**

**PROCLAMATION 3071**

**VETERANS DAY, 1954**

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES  
 OF AMERICA  
 A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS it has long been our custom to commemorate November 11, the anniversary of the ending of World War I, by paying tribute to the heroes of that tragic struggle and by rededicating ourselves to the cause of peace; and

WHEREAS in the intervening years the United States has been involved in two other great military conflicts, which have added millions of veterans living and dead to the honor rolls of this Nation; and

WHEREAS the Congress passed a concurrent resolution on June 4, 1926 (44 Stat. 1962), calling for the observance of November 11 with appropriate ceremonies, and later provided in an act approved May 13, 1938 (52 Stat. 351), that the eleventh of November should be a legal holiday and should be known as Armistice Day; and

WHEREAS, in order to expand the significance of that commemoration and in order that a grateful Nation might pay appropriate homage to the veterans of all its wars who have contributed so much to the preservation of this Nation, the Congress, by an act approved June 1, 1954 (68 Stat. 188), changed the name of the holiday to Veterans Day;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER, President of the United States of America, do hereby call upon all of our citizens to observe Thursday, November 11, 1954, as Veterans Day. On that day let us solemnly remember the sacrifices of all those who fought so valiantly, on the seas, in the air, and on foreign shores, to preserve our heritage of freedom, and let us reconsecrate ourselves to the task of promoting an enduring peace so that their efforts shall not have been in vain. I also direct the appropriate officials of the Government to arrange for the display of the flag of the United States on all public buildings on Veterans Day.

In order to insure proper and widespread observance of this anniversary, all veterans, all veterans' organizations, and the entire citizenry will wish to join hands in the common purpose. Toward this end, I am designating the Administrator of Veterans Affairs as Chairman of a Veterans Day National Committee, which shall include such other persons as the Chairman may select, and which will coordinate at the national level necessary planning for the observance. I am also requesting the heads of all departments and agencies of the Executive branch of the Government to assist the National Committee in every way possible.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the United States of America to be affixed.

DONE at the City of Washington this eighth day of October in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and (SEAL) fifty-four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred and seventy-ninth.

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

By the President:

JOHN FOSTER DULLES,  
 Secretary of State.

[F. R. Doc. 54-8056; Filed, Oct. 11, 1954; 10:43 a. m.]

**PROCLAMATION 3072**

**NATIONAL NURSE WEEK**

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES  
 OF AMERICA  
 A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS this autumn marks the one hundredth anniversary of Florence Nightingale's historic contribution to the cause of nursing; by her heroic leadership in alleviating human suffering in the Crimea; and

WHEREAS a continuing renewal and extension of the ranks of nurses, through the attraction of young people to the nursing profession, is of grave impor-

(Continued on next page)

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## MATT SCHIAVENZA, "VETERANS DAY'S OTHER NAME," NOVEMBER 11, 2014

THE ATLANTIC

Until 1954, the holiday was called Armistice Day. What else has changed?

Today is Veterans Day. You've probably seen this Kurt Vonnegut quote, from *Breakfast of Champions*, his celebrated 1973 novel, floating around social media.

*So this book is a sidewalk strewn with junk, trash which I throw over my shoulders as I travel in time back to November eleventh, nineteen hundred and twenty-two.*

*It was during that minute in nineteen hundred and eighteen, that millions upon millions of human beings stopped butchering one another. I have talked to old men who were on battlefields during that minute. They have told me in one way or another that the sudden silence was the Voice of God. So we still have among us some men who can remember when God spoke clearly to mankind.*

*Armistice Day has become Veterans' Day. Armistice Day was sacred. Veterans' Day is not.*

*So I will throw Veterans' Day over my shoulder. Armistice Day I will keep. I don't want to throw away any sacred things.*

*What else is sacred? Oh, Romeo and Juliet, for instance.*

*And all music is.*

It is, as Wonkette notes, a lovely passage. And with its brisk, clipped sentences, allusions to time travel, and heavy nostalgia, pure Vonnegut. But more than 40 years after *Breakfast of Champions* was published, and 60 since Armistice Day's end, the sentiment of the quote has surprising currency. Veterans for Peace, for instance, an anti-war group, has organized Armistice Day rallies across American cities. Rory Fanning, a conscientious objector and veteran of the Iraq War, explained his preference for Armistice Day in a recent *Guardian* column.

*Armistice Day was a hallowed anniversary because it was supposed to protect future life from future wars. Veterans Day, instead, celebrates "heroes" and encourages others to dream of playing the hero themselves, covering themselves in valor.*

The origins of the holiday belies this interpretation. President Woodrow Wilson called for the creation of Armistice Day in 1919, one year after World War I concluded, and the day became a federal holiday in 1938. But after the the Second World War in 1945—part of which Vonnegut famously endured as a Nazi prisoner of war in Dresden, Germany—a veteran named Raymond Weeks petitioned General Dwight D. Eisenhower to change the holiday to honor all veterans. The idea made sense. World War II involved a far greater mobilization of the country's resources than World War I, and in the end nearly four times as many Americans lost their lives in the conflict. Nine years and the Korean War later Eisenhower, then president, signed Veterans Day into law.

(According to Stars and Stripes, a competing explanation—that the stalemate in the Korean War sullied the word "armistice"—is untrue.)

Curiously, the United States was alone in making this switch. Armistice Day, also known as Remembrance Day, is still a big deal in the United Kingdom, where citizens pin poppy flowers to their clothing in homage to the John McCrae's iconic "In Flanders Field" poem. Few Americans follow this trend. Indeed, some argue that Veterans Day is often confused in the United States with Memorial Day, and that the holiday, which was only codified as federal law in 1978, has little of the pomp and circumstance evident in the U.K.

But even in the U.K. the remembrance causes mixed feelings. Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, a prominent English musician, explained why he doesn't wear a poppy. "I feel Remembrance Day and the whole poppy appeal has been hijacked by politicians for propaganda purposes to support the unjustified wars in Afghanistan and Iraq."

## **KATIE METTLER, “HOW VETERANS DAY WENT FROM CELEBRATING WORLD PEACE TO THANKING ARMED FORCES,” NOVEMBER 11, 2017**

*THE WASHINGTON POST*

On Nov. 11, we celebrate Veterans Day with parades and Old Glory T-shirts, with salutes to those who served and prayers for those who fell.

But the version of Veterans Day we know now wasn't always so. It wasn't always a holiday, it wasn't always on Nov. 11 and, at first, it wasn't even called Veterans Day. The original intent, established in the wake of World War I, was to celebrate world peace. Then the wars never ended, so Veterans Day changed.

Let's start from the beginning.

### **Nov. 11, 1918**

At the eleventh hour on the eleventh day of the eleventh month, fighting between the Allied Forces and Germany stopped, putting an end to the bloodshed of World War I per the terms of an armistice agreement signed in France that same day.

But World War I — the “War to end all wars” — did not officially end until seven months later.

### **Nov. 11, 1919**

On the one-year anniversary of the armistice agreement, President Woodrow Wilson signed a proclamation commemorating Nov. 11 as Armistice Day. The celebrations were to include parades, public meetings and a two-minute suspension of business at 11 a.m.

The proclamation read: “... Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations ...”

### **June 4, 1926**

Congress passed a resolution urging state governors to observe Armistice Day with “thanksgiving and prayer and exercises designed to perpetuate peace through goodwill and mutual understanding between nations.”

At the time, 27 states had already made Nov. 11 a legal holiday.

### **May 13, 1938**

More than a decade later, Congress made Armistice Day an official holiday dedicated to world peace.

### **June 1, 1954**

World War I was not the war to end all wars, and lawmakers believed that veterans from World War II and the Korean War also deserved their own day of remembrance. So President Eisenhower signed a bill changing the name of Armistice Day to the more inclusive Veterans Day, a holiday to thank all who had served the United States of America.

### **Oct. 12, 1954**

Eisenhower published a proclamation in the Federal Register, instructing citizens to recognize Veterans Day on Nov. 11.

He wrote: “On that day, let us solemnly remember the sacrifices of all those who fought so valiantly, on the seas, in the air, and on foreign shores, to preserve our heritage of freedom, and let us reconsecrate ourselves to the task of promoting an enduring peace so that their efforts shall not have been in vain.”

## **KATIE METTLER, “HOW VETERANS DAY WENT FROM CELEBRATING WORLD PEACE TO THANKING ARMED FORCES,” NOVEMBER 11, 2017 (CON'T)**

*THE WASHINGTON POST*

### **June 28, 1968**

Fifty years after the armistice agreement, Congress passed the Uniform Monday Holiday Act of 1968, which moved Veterans Day from its original Nov. 11 date to the fourth Monday in October. The act also declared that Memorial Day, Columbus Day and Washington’s Birthday would be observed on Mondays throughout the year.

The new dates were meant to take effect in 1971.

### **Oct. 25, 1971**

Veterans Day, federally recognized for the first time on a day other than Nov. 11, is celebrated with much confusion. Many states and most veterans organizations disagreed with the date change and continued to celebrate Veterans Day on Nov. 11, which held historic and patriotic importance.

### **Sept. 18, 1975**

Congress passed a bill changing the observation of Veterans Day back to Nov. 11, where it has remained for the 42 years since.

Much has changed in the 98 years since Armistice Day was first observed.

Now we honor not just servicemen, but servicewomen. Our wars are not fought with cannons, but with drones. The war to end all wars didn’t end war at all. Soldiers have fought and died all over the globe.

But through the past century, despite its different names and dates, the purpose of Veterans Day has remained the same — to say thanks.



## WRITING ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

	Advanced	Proficient	Basic	Emerging
<b>Content: Accuracy</b>	Uses specific and accurate evidence that includes precise details and/or quotations from text(s), while establishing cause and effect relationships; uses vocabulary appropriate to the discipline.	Uses some specific and mostly accurate evidence that may include precise details and/or quotations from text(s), while establishing cause and effect relationships; uses some vocabulary appropriate to the discipline.	Uses somewhat accurate evidence that includes general details and/or quotations from text(s); cause and effect relationships may be inaccurate; uses little vocabulary appropriate to the discipline.	Uses little or inaccurate evidence and may not reference text(s); cause and effect relationships are absent or incorrect; does not use vocabulary appropriate to the discipline.
<b>Content: Real World Connections</b>	Makes strong connections between past situations/concepts and present day situations/concepts, to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the past and the present.	Makes some connections between past situations/ concepts and present day situations/concepts, to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the past and the present.	Makes flawed or few connections between past situations/concepts and present day situations/concepts, to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the past and the present.	Makes inaccurate or no connections between past situations/ concepts and present day situations/concepts, to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the past and the present.
<b>Social Studies Skills: Sourcing</b>	Recognizes the impact of authors or creators on evidence from text(s); uses evidence that is balanced and credible.	Somewhat recognizes the impact of authors or creators on evidence from text(s); uses evidence that is mostly balanced and credible.	Slightly recognizes the impact of authors or creators on evidence from text(s); uses some evidence that is not balanced and/or not credible.	Rarely or never recognizes the impact of authors or creators on evidence from text(s); uses little or no evidence that is balanced and/or credible.
<b>Social Studies Skills: Contextualization</b>	Thoroughly establishes civic, economic, geographic, or historical context and references perspectives relevant to the topic; meaningfully connects the text(s) to the context.	Somewhat establishes civic, economic, geographic, or historical context and references perspectives relevant to the topic; somewhat connects the text(s) to the context.	Slightly establishes civic, economic, geographic, or historical context; makes passing or flawed reference to perspectives relevant to the topic; slightly connects the text(s) to the context.	Establishes little or no civic, economic, geographic, or historical context; references to relevant perspectives are absent or significantly flawed; does not connect the text(s) to the context.
<b>Social Studies Skills: Corroboration</b>	Corroborates claims by synthesizing available evidence from multiple texts; addresses claims and counterclaims thoroughly.	Corroborates claims by synthesizing some evidence from multiple texts; addresses some claims and counterclaims.	Makes an attempt at corroborating claims using evidence from multiple texts, but may misinterpret evidence; slightly addresses claims and/or counterclaims.	Does not corroborates claims by synthesizing some evidence from multiple texts or draws significantly flawed conclusions from the attempt; does not address claims or counterclaims.
<b>Common Core Skills: Development of Claim</b>	Addresses the prompt and provides effective, comprehensive development of the claim or topic that is consistently appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	Addresses the prompt and provides mostly effective, comprehensive development of the claim or topic that is mostly appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	Addresses the prompt and provides some development of the claim or topic that is somewhat appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	Addresses the prompt and provides minimal development of the claim or topic that is limited in its appropriateness to task, purpose, and audience.
<b>Common Core Skills: Organization/Style</b>	Uses intentional and effective organizational structure(s) to develop the claim; establishes and maintains an effective style that is clear and coherent.	Uses appropriate organizational structure(s) to develop the claim; establishes and maintains a mostly effective style that is mostly clear and coherent.	Uses some organizational structure(s) to develop the claim; uses a somewhat effective style that is somewhat clear and coherent.	Attempts to uses organizational structure(s) to develop the claim, but lacks control of structure; uses an inappropriate or ineffective style that lacks clarity and coherence.
<b>Common Core Skills: Conventions</b>	Uses standard English conventions with full command and at an appropriate level of complexity; may contain a few minor errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage, but meaning is clear.	Uses standard English conventions with some command and at an appropriate level of complexity; may contain errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage that occasionally impede understanding, but meaning is generally clear.	Uses standard English conventions with limited command and at an appropriate level of complexity; may contain errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage that often impede understanding.	Does not uses standard English conventions with command and/or at an appropriate level of complexity; frequent and varied errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage impede understanding.



# THE UNITED STATES WORLD WAR ONE CENTENNIAL COMMISSION



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