



UNDERSTANDING
SACRIFICE

Activity: War and Remembrance: An Examination of Cemeteries and Collective Memory



Guiding question:

How do cemeteries shape our collective remembrance of war and fallen heroes?

DEVELOPED BY SUZAN TURNER

Grade Level(s): 9-12

Subject(s): Social Studies, English/Language Arts, Art

Cemetery Connection: Luxembourg American Cemetery,
Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery

Fallen Hero Connection: Private First Class Harvey Eugene Wilson, Jr.



NHD
NATIONAL
HISTORY DAY

Overview

Using documents and photographs from the American Battle Monuments Commission, students will work in cooperative groups to examine design elements of American military cemeteries from World War I and World War II in order to ascertain their implied messages, to identify the differences in their messages, and to determine their role in how wars are remembered.

Historical Context

After World War I, the American government realized the need to establish control over the commemoration of American armed forces' fallen overseas. In 1923, the U.S. Congress passed legislation that established the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC), which created a protocol for the construction of monuments and memorial chapels in eight permanent military cemeteries. In 1934, the responsibility for management and maintenance of those cemeteries shifted from the War Department to the ABMC. After World War II, ABMC also assumed responsibility for the permanent interment of fallen service members whose families chose to have buried in an American military cemetery on foreign soil. Today, ABMC operates 26 American cemeteries that inter the remains of nearly 124,000 American war dead, including 30,973 from World War I and 92,958 from World War II. Over 94,000 American servicemen and women who were missing in action, lost, or buried at sea during World War I, World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War are commemorated on Tablets of the Missing at each cemetery.

Objectives

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

- Analyze design characteristics of American military cemeteries overseas; and
- Articulate and support a reasoned response concerning the influence of cemetery design on collective remembrance of war and war dead.

“People often overlook how place and design influence our collective memory of historical events. In fact, many factors shape our collective remembrance of the past. For instance, both the location and design of American military cemeteries in Europe following World War I and World War II had an intended purpose and aesthetic. These cemeteries offer a significant impact on collective memories of each war. By conducting a purposeful, guided examination of the design elements in these cemeteries, students can better understand their influence and differences in the messages they advance.”

—Suzan Turner

Turner teaches at Nashua-Plainfield High School in Nashua, Iowa.

Documents Used ★ indicates an ABMC source

Primary Sources

Map, Meuse-Argonne Region, Meuse Argonne American Cemetery ★

Wikimedia Commons

[commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Carte offensive 1918 Meuse Argonne Cimetiere
american Romagne sous Montfaucon.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Carte_offensive_1918_Meuse_Argonne_Cimetiere_american_Romagne_sous_Montfaucon.jpg)

★ Map, *Military Operations in Western Europe, 6 June 1944 - 8 May 1945*, Luxembourg
American Cemetery

American Battle Monuments Commission

★ Photograph Collection, Luxembourg American Cemetery

American Battle Monuments Commission

★ Photograph Collection, Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery

American Battle Monuments Commission

Secondary Sources

★ Map, Luxembourg American Cemetery

American Battle Monuments Commission

★ Map, Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery

American Battle Monuments Commission

Video clip, *American War Cemeteries in Europe*, May 16, 2013

Stars and Stripes

youtube.com/watch?v=TQlx6jb97-A

Materials

- Cemetery Source Packet
- Cemetery Analysis Worksheet
- Computer with projector and internet capability to show video clip
- Chalkboard or white board
- Packets of three different colored sticky notes (one of each color for each student)
- Butcher paper
- Assorted colored markers
- Scissors
- Masking tape
- Online timer

Lesson Preparation

- Make one copy of the Cemetery Source Packet for each group.
- Make one copy of the Cemetery Analysis Worksheet for each student.
- For Activity Two divide the class into small groups of three to five students each.
- Set up classroom technology and test all online resources before class.

Procedure

Activity One: Memories of World War I and World War II (15 minutes)

- Ask students to independently brainstorm three adjectives that describe World War I and three adjectives that describe World War II.
 - Ask students to compare their lists with a partner and to add to their own lists.
 - Share out adjectives in the whole class setting and list them on the board.
 - Explain to students that the adjectives on the board represent our collective memory of each event. Collective memory involves our perceptions of the past, which can evolve over time, and be shaped by many factors, including how the events in consideration have been memorialized.

Activity Two: Cemetery Design Analysis: Commemoration and Memory (45-60 minutes)

- Explain to students that they will be examining the design of American overseas World War I and World War II cemeteries to determine their influence on our collective memory of those two events.
- Show the video clip, [American War Cemeteries in Europe](#), (3:17) from *Stars and Stripes*, to introduce students to American overseas military cemeteries under the management of the American Battle Monuments Commission. This clip provides an overview of the basic design elements of the cemeteries and their purpose, which must be understood for the lesson activity.
- Divide the class into small groups of three to five students each to engage in collaborative cemetery design analysis.
 - Distribute one Cemetery Source Materials Packet to each group and one Cemetery Analysis Worksheet to each student.
 - Instruct students to follow the directions on the worksheet to guide them through the process of examining and analyzing cemetery maps, photographs, and inscriptions found in the Cemetery Source Materials Packet to help them answer the lesson's essential question and related sub-questions:
 - *How do cemeteries shape our collective remembrance of war and war dead?*
 - *In what ways do World War I and World War II cemeteries promote a similar message about war and the fallen?*
 - *In what ways do World War I and World War II cemeteries promote different messages about war and fallen?*
 - Tell students that once their group has analyzed all the source materials, each person should independently respond to the reflection questions on the last page of the Cemetery Analysis Worksheet using the indicated color of sticky notes for their response. Tell students where to submit their sticky notes when they are completed.
- Circulate about the room and prompt or assist students as they engage in collaborative inquiry.

Assessment

Big Paper, Silent Conversation Assessment Strategy

- Organize the room prior to the class period by preparing as many pieces of butcher paper as there are cooperative groups in each class. Place one or more sticky notes on each piece of butcher paper with the students' ideas related to the lesson's essential questions. The groups can respond, challenge, and elaborate on the ideas during the activity.
- Organize assorted colored markers into bundles with numbers equal to the number of students in each group so that each person in a single group has the same colored marker, but no group has the same colored marker as another group (i.e. All members of group one have blue markers, while all members of group two have red markers, etc.).
- Cut one large piece of butcher paper for each group. Attach each piece of butcher paper to the wall around the room or place on tables throughout the room so that each group will have its own designated area to work.
- Tell students that they will be engaging in a cooperative, silent discussion centered around student responses to the lesson's essential questions concerning cemetery design and collective memory. Each group will have five minutes at their first assigned station and three minutes at each additional station to write individual responses to the ideas put forth, to add supporting evidence that deepens the arguments being made, or to raise questions concerning the ideas. Tell students that it is permissible to draw lines out from ideas to connect them, to respond to someone else's response, and to even add pictures to make a point if appropriate. All of this is done without talking to others around them.
- Instruct students to organize into their cemetery design cooperative groups and move to the area of the room for their first station with their marker.
- Project an online timer on the screen and announce when students need to rotate to their next station. Tell students to return to their seats when all stations have been finished.
- Lead students in a full class debriefing session of the activity and their learning. You may ask students to comment specifically about ideas they put on the butcher paper. Finally, call on students to respond to the debriefing questions:
 - *How have your ideas concerning remembrance of wars and the fallen changed? Why?*
 - *What were your biggest takeaways from this activity and how will you apply them to your study of history as you move forward?*

Methods for Extension:

- Students with more interest in American military cemeteries, commemoration, and collective memory may wish to do further research on other ABMC cemeteries to learn about their design. Additionally, students can gain stronger historical context and understanding concerning cemetery design and memory by reading Kate Lemay's book, *Triumph of the Dead: American World War II Cemeteries, Monuments, and Diplomacy in France* (2018).
- Students with more interest in international military cemeteries, commemoration, and collective memory may wish to research the cemeteries of other countries involved in World War I and World War II, to compare and contrast them with their American counterparts
- The American Battle Monuments Commission maintains U.S. military cemeteries overseas. These cemeteries are permanent memorials to the fallen, but it is important that students know the stories of those who rest here. To learn more about the stories of Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice, visit abmc.gov/education and NHDSilentHeroes.org.
- Teachers can enhance students' interest in war and memory by exploring these related lesson plans:
 - [Analyzing How Sacrifice is Memorialized](#)
 - [Decisions in Postwar America: Remembrance of our Nation's Fallen Heroes](#)

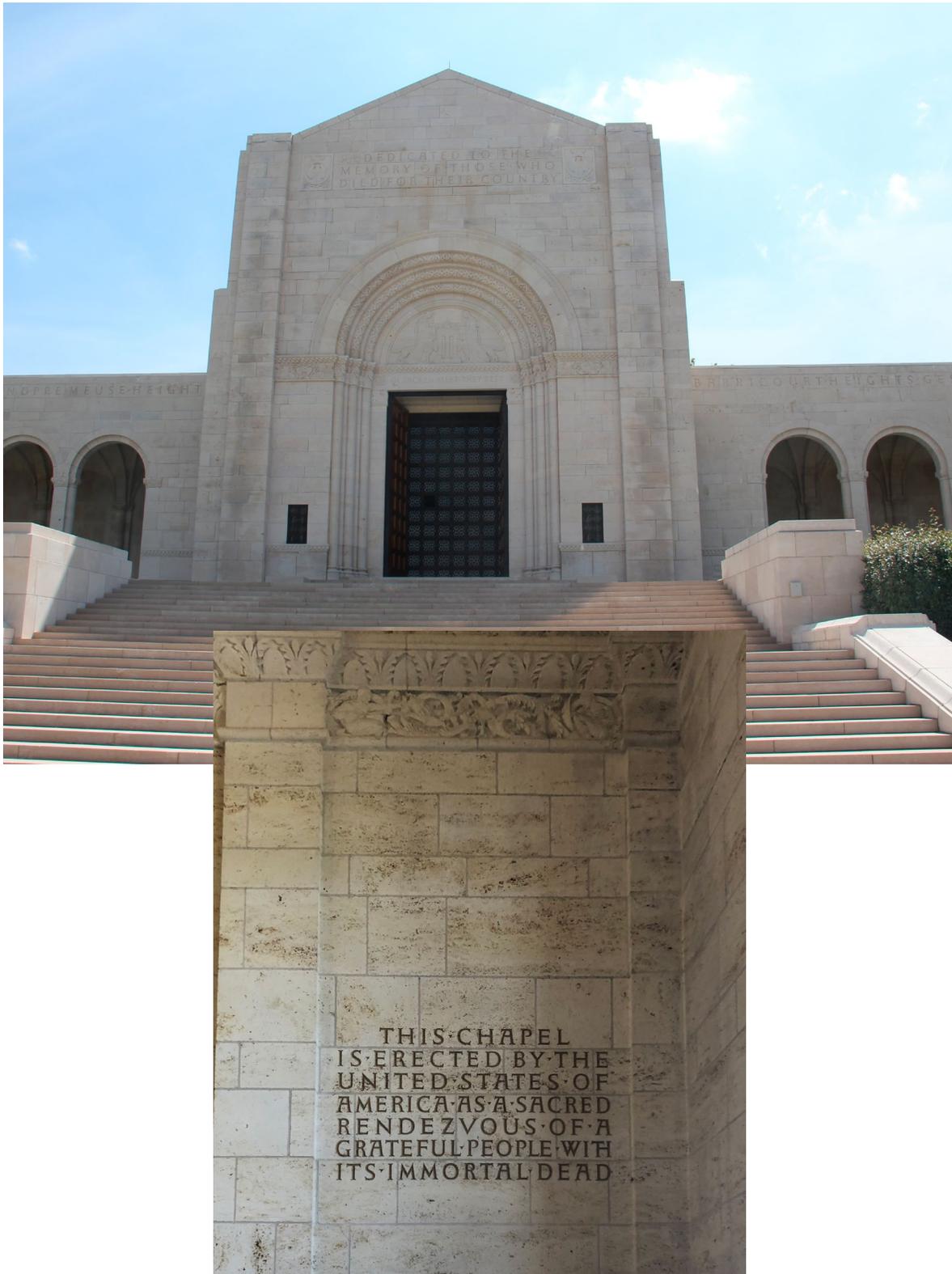
Adaptations:

- Teachers can adapt the lesson to younger students and those with special needs by lessening the number of sources analyzed during the main portion of the lesson.
- Teachers with time constraints can shorten the lesson by skipping the silent conversation portion of the assessment and jumping right to the whole group debrief.

Chapel Exterior: Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery

Photograph, *Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery Chapel*, 2015

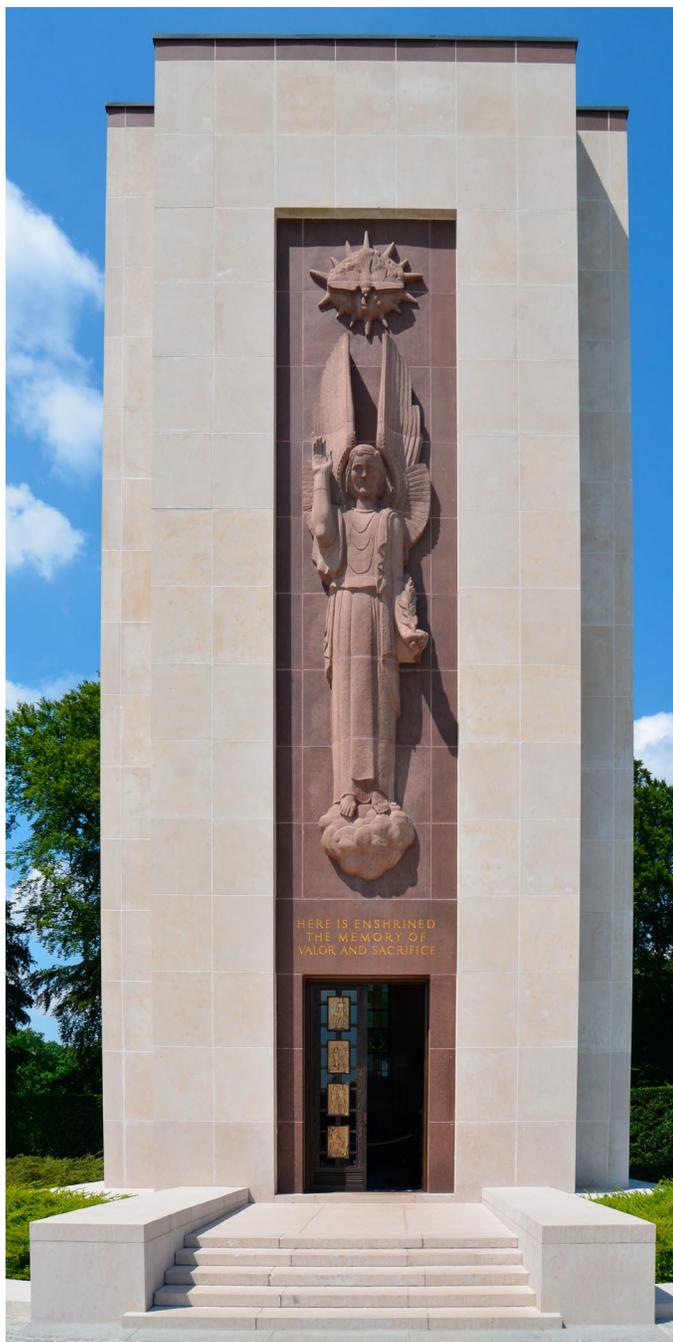
Wikimedia Commons



Chapel Exterior: Luxembourg American Cemetery

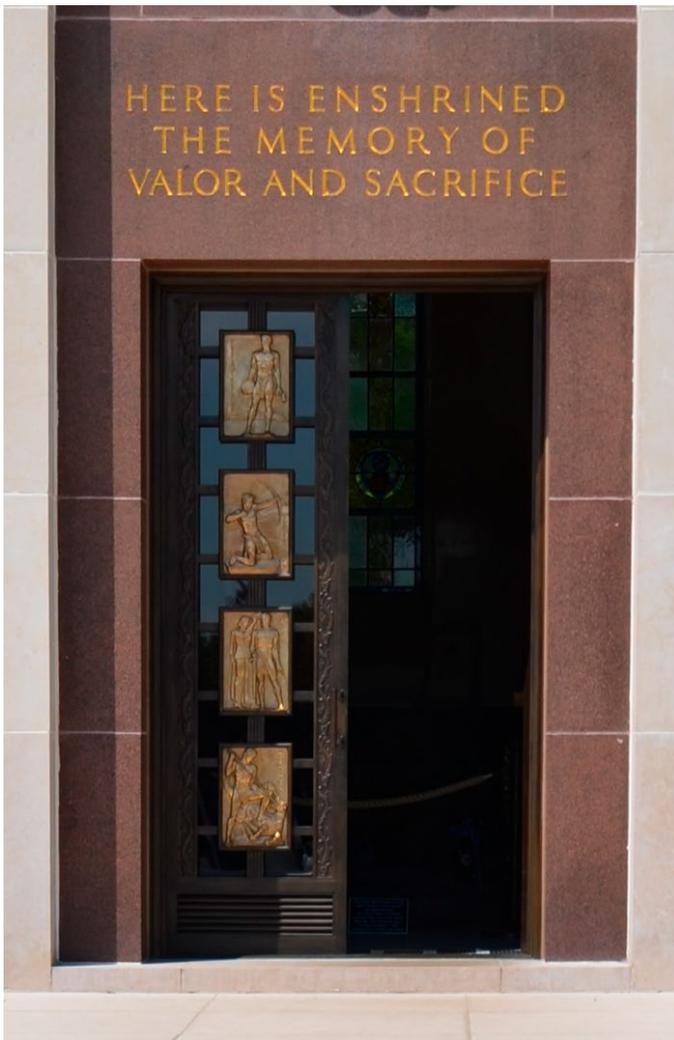
Luxembourg American Cemetery Chapel Exterior and Inscription, 2019

American Battle Monuments Commission



Chapel Exterior: Luxembourg American Cemetery cont'

Panels on the exterior door at the Luxembourg American Cemetery Chapel
American Battle Monuments Commission



Chapel Altar: Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery

Photograph, *Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery Chapel Altar*, 2019
American Battle Monuments Commission



Chapel Altar: Luxembourg American Cemetery

Photograph, *Luxembourg American Cemetery Chapel Altar*, 2019
American Battle Monuments Commission



Chapel Interior Inscriptions: Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery

Photograph, *Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery Chapel Altar*, 1986
American Battle Monuments Commission

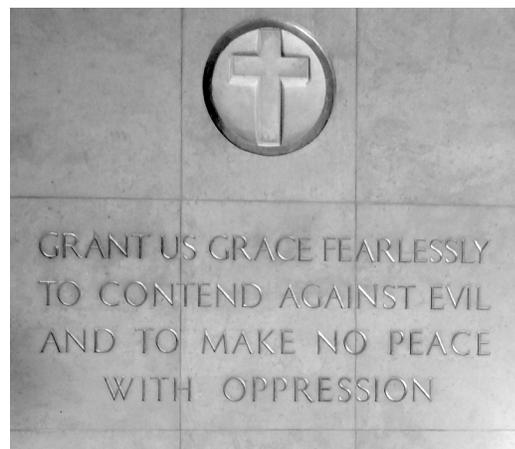
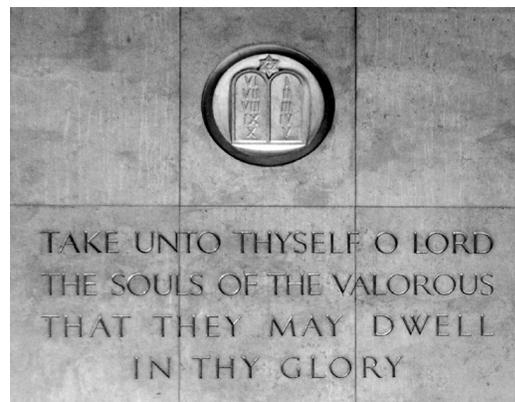
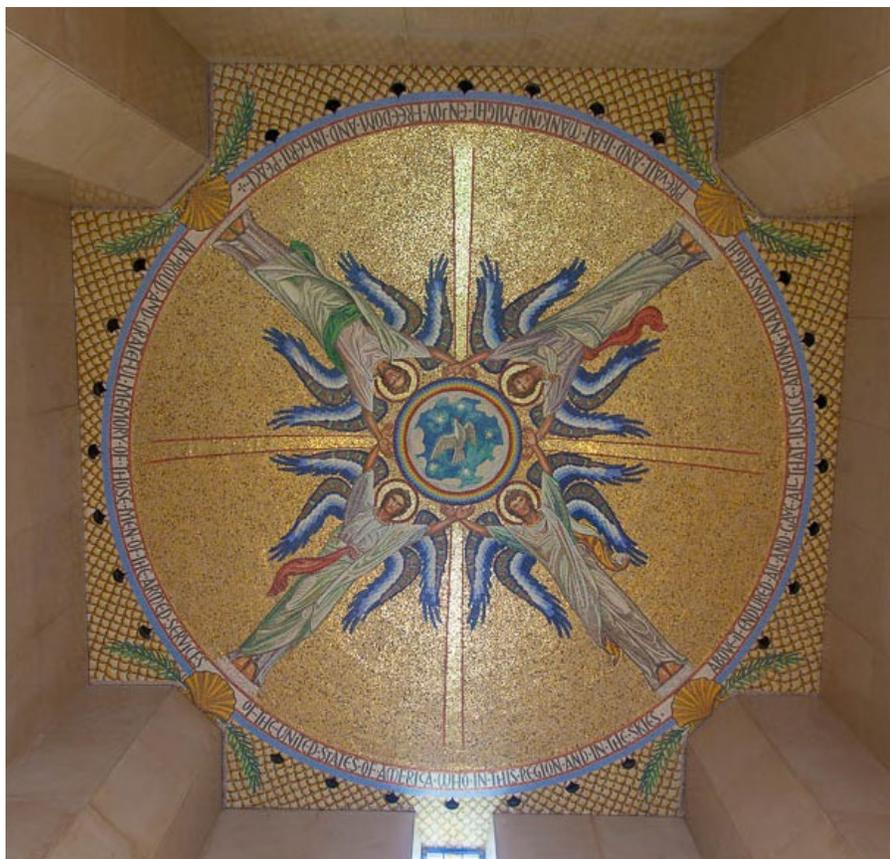


Inside the chapel on the wall above the right entryway is the inscription:
THIS CHAPEL IS ERECTED BY THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AS A SACRED RENDEZVOUS OF A GRATEFUL PEOPLE WITH ITS IMMORTAL DEAD.

On the arches over the door, apse and windows are the following inscriptions:
GOD HATH TAKEN THEM UNTO HIMSELF
THEIR NAMES WILL LIVE FOR EVERMORE
PEACEFUL IS THEIR SLEEP IN GOD
PERPETUAL LIGHT UPON THEM SHINES.

Chapel Interior Inscriptions: Luxembourg American Cemetery

Photographs, *Luxembourg American Cemetery Chapel*
American Battle Monuments Commission



In the center of the mosaic ceiling is a dove, representing the Holy Spirit, on a background of clouds within a nimbus, held by four angels, from which emanates the sun's rays. At the feet of the angels is this running inscription encircling the ceiling: IN PROUD AND GRATEFUL MEMORY OF THOSE MEN OF THE ARMED SERVICES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA WHO IN THIS REGION AND IN THE SKIES ABOVE IT ENDURED ALL AND GAVE ALL THAT JUSTICE AMONG NATIONS MIGHT PREVAIL AND THAT MANKIND MIGHT ENJOY FREEDOM AND INHERIT PEACE

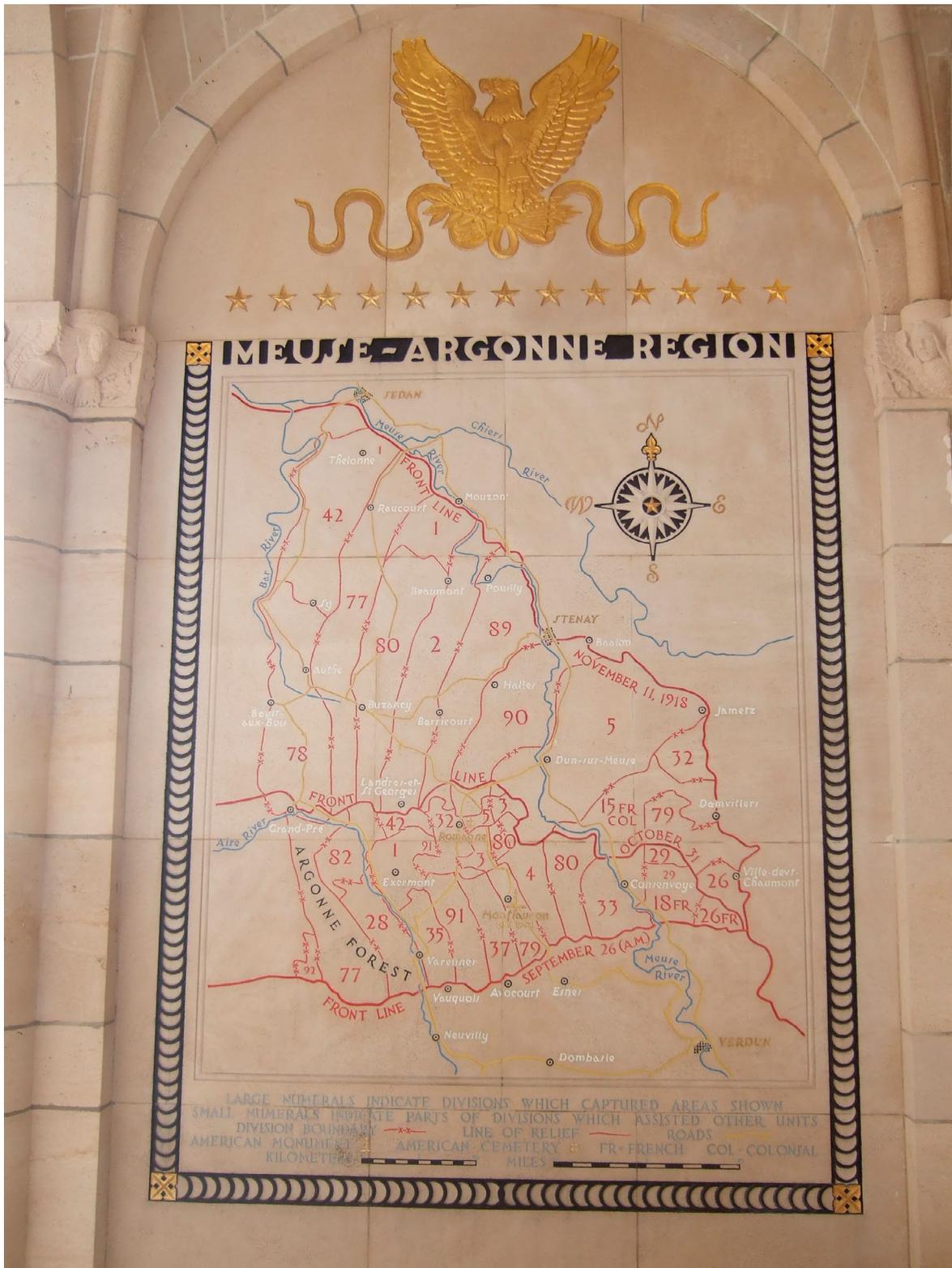
Above the door inside the chapel is the inscription: SOME THERE BE WHICH HAVE NO SEPULCHRE THEIR NAME LIVETH FOREVERMORE

On the west wall left of the entrance is the inscription: GRANT US GRACE FEARLESSLY TO CONTEND AGAINST EVIL AND TO MAKE NO PEACE WITH OPPRESSION

On the east wall to the right of the entrance is the inscription: TAKE UNTO THYSELF O LORD THE SOULS OF THE VALOROUS THAT THEY MAY DWELL IN THY GLORY

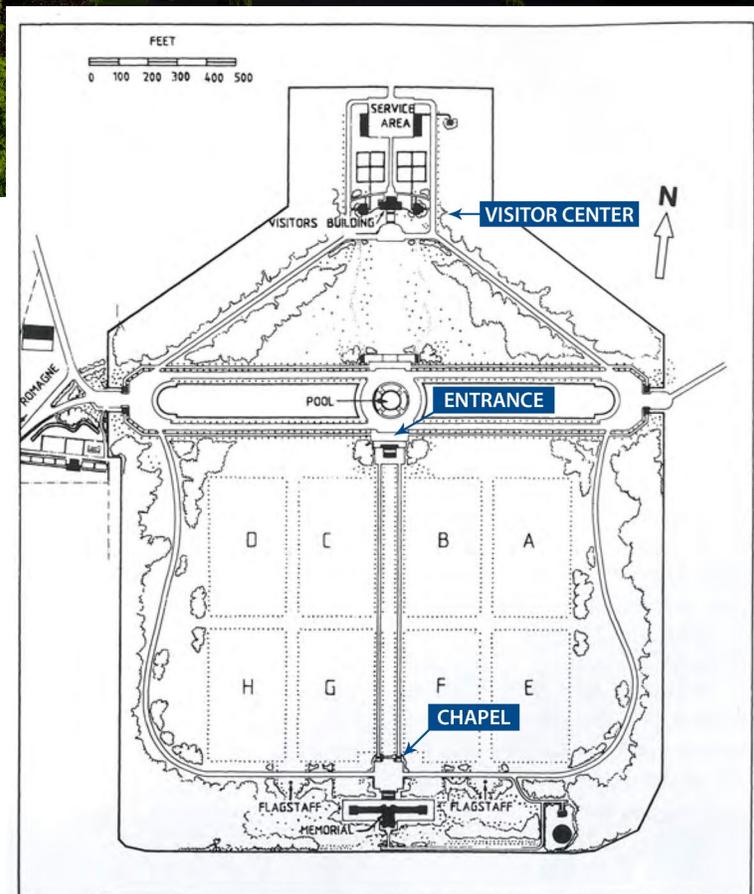
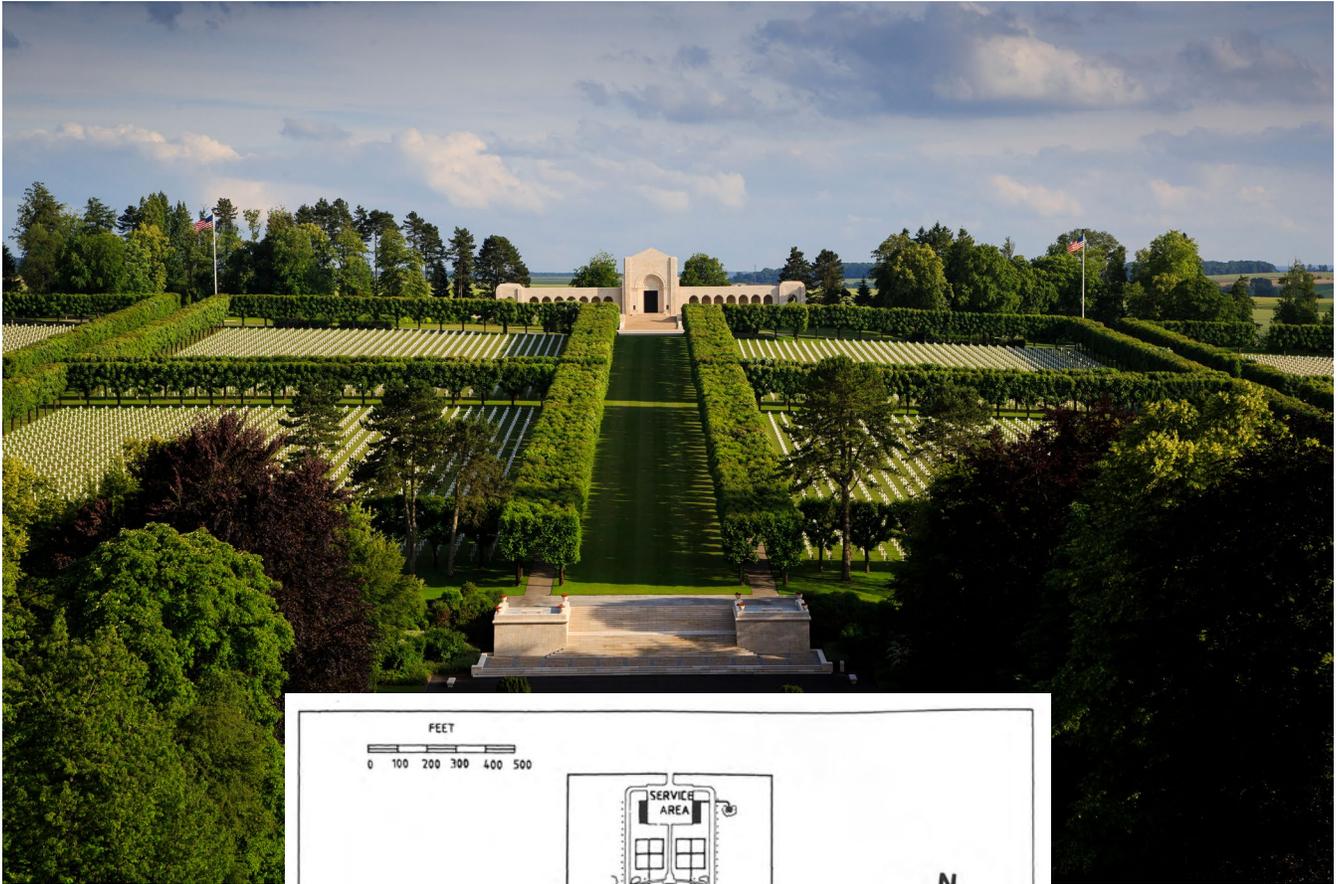
Battle Map: Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery

Map, Meuse-Argonne Region, Meuse Argonne American Cemetery
Wikimedia Commons



Cemetery Layout: Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery

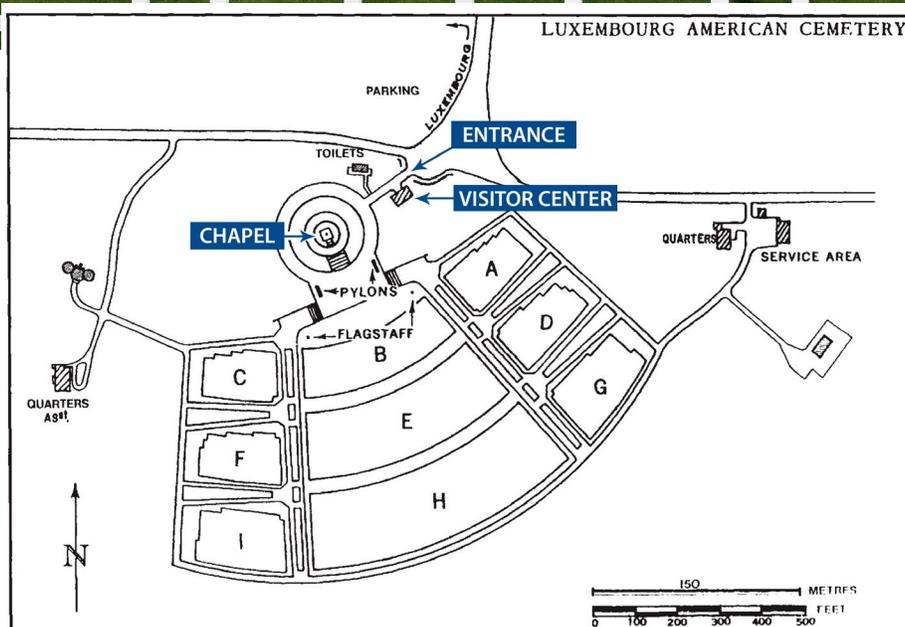
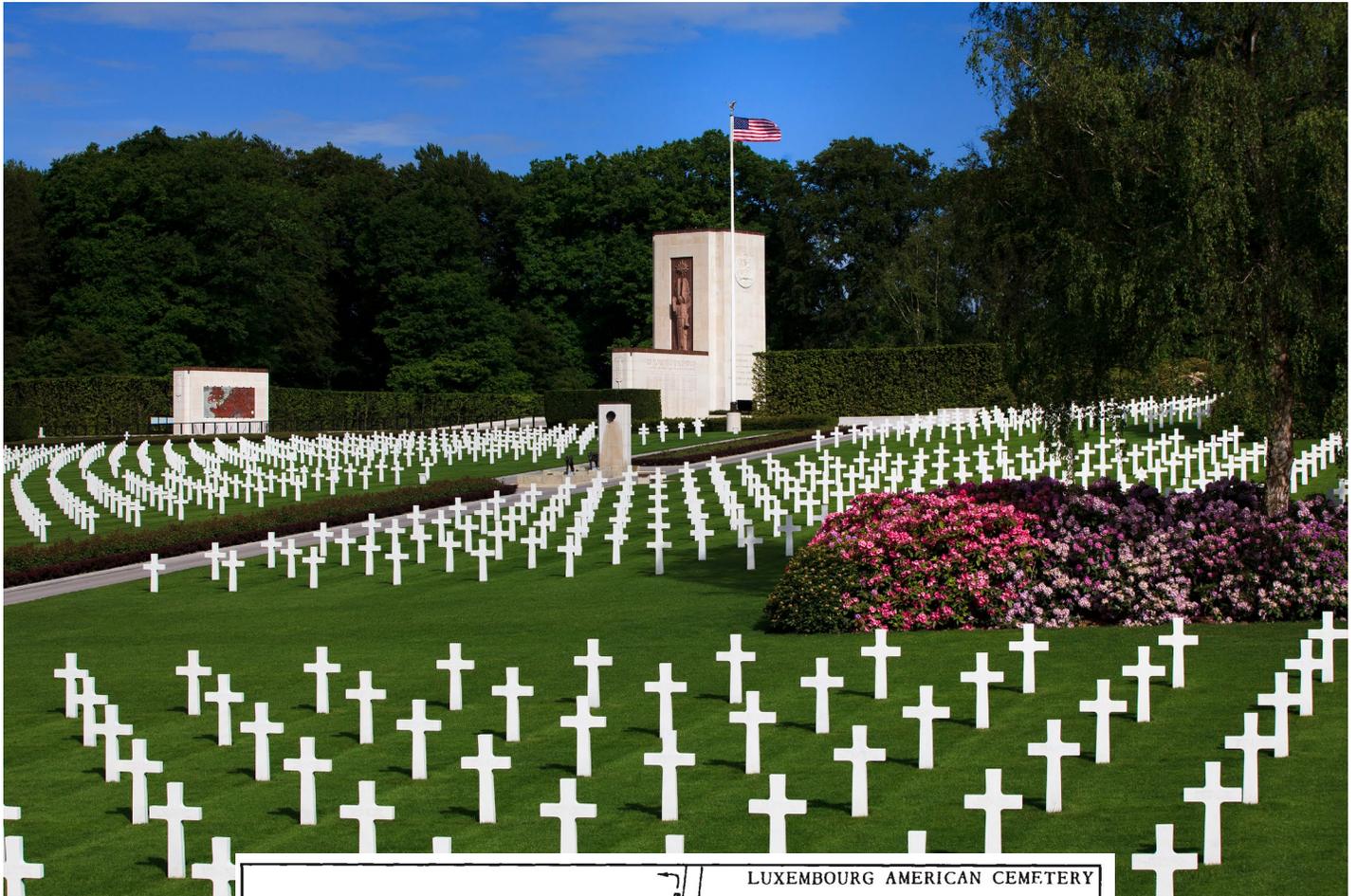
Map and Photograph, *Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery*
American Battle Monuments Commission



Cemetery Layout: Luxembourg American Cemetery

Map and Photograph, *Luxembourg American Cemetery*

American Battle Monuments Commission



Cemetery Analysis Worksheet

Guiding Question: How do cemeteries shape our collective remembrance of war and war dead?

Graphic Organizer: As you review the Cemetery Source Packet, which contains photographs, maps, and inscriptions from the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery (World War I) and the Luxembourg American Cemetery (World War II), fill out the following graphic organizer with your inferences and questions related to the lesson's guiding question. Pay careful attention to the notes and sub-questions included to help guide your analysis.

	Meuse Argonne American Cemetery (World War I)		Luxembourg American Cemetery (World War II)	
Feature	Inferences	Questions	Inferences	Questions
<p>Chapel Exterior</p> <p><i>How do the size and location of symbols, words, and images influence the message and its impact?</i></p>				
<p>Chapel Altar</p> <p><i>Pay close attention to the flags. What countries do they represent?</i></p>				

Cemetery Analysis Worksheet con't

	Meuse Argonne American Cemetery (World War I)		Luxembourg American Cemetery (World War II)	
Feature	Inferences	Questions	Inferences	Questions
<p>Chapel Interior Inscriptions</p> <p><i>What words stand out? How do they influence the message being conveyed?</i></p>				
<p>Battle Maps</p> <p><i>Pay careful attention to the difference in detail of each map. Where are the maps located in each cemetery? How do those factors affect the way people perceive the war and the fallen?</i></p>				
<p>Cemetery Layout</p> <p><i>In each cemetery, in what order do visitors experience the graves and the chapel? How does this order impact the message?</i></p>				

Reflection Questions

Based on the activity above, write your responses, with supporting evidence, on the designated colored sticky notes your teacher provided.

1. How do cemeteries shape our collective remembrance of war and fallen heroes?

2. In what ways do World War I and World War II cemeteries promote a similar message about war and the fallen?

3. In what ways do World War I and World War II cemeteries promote different messages about war and fallen?
