



R S L N S W

Commemoration Hymns, Prayers and Readings

Hymns

Music can have a profound effect on the atmosphere of any commemorative ceremony. For Anzac Day and Remembrance Day ceremonies the music selected is usually serious yet inspiring.

Hymns

Three hymns that may be chosen for commemorative ceremonies include:

- O Valiant Hearts;
- Abide With Me; and
- O God, Our Help in Ages Past

Prayers and Readings

Prayers, readings and poetry often form a part of commemorative ceremonies. While prayers are often included in traditional ceremonies, readings and poetry can substitute or complement this religious aspect of the ceremony.

Prayers

Prayers which are often included in ceremonies include:

- The Lord's Prayer
- Psalm 23: 1-6 – The Lord Is My Shepherd
- John 15: 10-13
- Micah 4: 3-5
- Ephesians 6: 13-15

The Prayer of Remembrance is also a popular inclusion in ceremonies:

Today we remember with thanksgiving those who made the supreme sacrifice for us in time of war. We pray that the offering of their lives may not have been in vain. Today we dedicate ourselves to the cause of justice, freedom and peace; and for the wisdom and strength to build a better world.

Readings

Readings of epitaphs, wartime letters written by soldiers or those on the home front can also have a powerful effect in the setting of a commemorative ceremony.

Students may find it enriching to spend time discovering and researching these letters in the lead-up to the commemorative ceremony.

Poetry

Several famous and moving First World War poems have been commonly used in commemorative ceremonies. These include;

- For the Fallen by Laurence Binyon (1914);
- In Flanders Fields by Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae MD (1915); and
- We Shall Keep the Faith (written in reply to Lt Col McCrae) by Moina Michael (1918).



These poems have been reproduced below for convenience.

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***For the Fallen* by Laurence Binyon (1914)**

With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,
England mourns for her dead across the sea.
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,
Fallen in the cause of the free.

Solemn the drums thrill: Death August and royal
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres.
There is music in the midst of desolation
And a glory that shines upon our tears.

They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted;
They fell with their faces to the foe.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;
They sit no more at familiar tables of home;
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;
They sleep beyond England's foam.

But where our desires are and our hopes profound,
Felt as well-spring that is hidden from sight,
To the innermost heart of their own land they are known
As the stars are known to the Night;

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain;
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain.

See further: The Ode of Remembrance



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In Flanders Fields by Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae (1915)

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe;
To you, from failing hands, we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

We Shall Keep The Faith by Moina Michael (1918)

Oh! you who sleep in Flanders Fields,
Sleep sweet - to rise anew!
We caught the torch you threw
And holding high, we keep the Faith
With All who died.

We cherish, too, the poppy red
That grows on fields where valour led;
It seems to signal to the skies
That blood of heroes never dies,
But lends a lustre to the red
Of the flower that blooms above the dead
In Flanders Fields.

And now the Torch and Poppy Red
We wear in honour of our dead.
Fear not that ye have died for naught;
We'll teach the lesson that ye wrought
In Flanders Fields.