

0. WEARING RED POPPIES - Story Preface

1. POPPIES GROW in FLANDERS FIELDS

2. WEARING RED POPPIES

3. RED POPPIES at the TOWER of LONDON



Queen Elizabeth wears Remembrance-Day poppies on the left side of her coat. Many individuals wear poppies on the left side to symbolize the nearness to one's heart. This image of the Queen, [online via the BBC](#), is copyright BBC, all rights reserved. Image provided here as fair use for educational purposes.

Why do so many people wear silk (or paper) poppies during the month of November? What do those poppies signify?

The short answer is that poppies honor those who lost their lives fighting in war. The poppies pull us back to the first stanza of "In Flanders Fields," John McCrae's famous poem which he wrote during World War One:

*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.*

Who was the first person to suggest wearing of poppies to honor the dead fighters of WWI? That distinction belongs to [Moina Belle Michael](#), an American teacher, who came to be known as "The Poppy Lady."

On the 9th of November, 1918—two days before the unexpected Armistice which ended the war—she was browsing through the November issue of the "Ladies Home Journal." It contained McCrae's poem with the alternative title "We Shall Not Sleep."

Moina was particularly struck by the last stanza:

*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.*

At that moment—as Moina later recalled in her book *The Miracle Flower*—she vowed to always wear a red poppy as a sign of remembrance. To help her keep that promise to herself, she wrote a poem entitled "We Shall Keep the Faith." This is its first verse:

*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.*

Moina devoted herself to the campaign, of wearing red poppies to remember the fallen of World War I, for two years. On September 29, 1920, she was able to convince people at the National American Legion convention to use the "Flanders Fields Memorial Poppy" as America's emblem of Remembrance.

The momentum didn't stop there, however. A Frenchwoman, by the name of [Anna E. Guérin](#), was attending the September 1920 meeting of the American Legion. She recognized that artificial poppies could be made and sold to benefit the suffering children of France who'd been orphaned by the war.

Madame Guérin—who became known as the "[French Poppy Lady](#)"—formed the "American and French Children's League." During 1921, she and her colleagues spread the word throughout Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand and the U.S.

In America, members of the VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) assembled "[Buddy Poppies](#)"—as they are now called—to help aging and oft-disabled vets earn a living.

Although it was an American, who first thought of wearing poppies (to remember the dead) and selling poppies (to benefit the wounded servicemen of WWI), the U.S. is no-longer widely known for commemorating fallen

heroes with red poppies.

For that part of the story—and for the famous display of ceramic red poppies at the Tower of London during 2014—we turn to Great Britain and the Commonwealth Nations.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/WEARING-RED-POPPIES>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/WEARING-RED-POPPIES>