

Teacher's Notes & Answer Key

Level	Intermediate +
Lesson Aims	Learners will develop reading skills and review/expand their knowledge of Memorial Day vocabulary. Learners will also develop their speaking fluency through creating a poster about how Memorial day might be celebrated around the world.
Note to the teacher	This lesson works best with multi-lingual and multi-cultural groups wanting to learn more about this American Holiday. It starts off with a quick quiz about their familiarity with Memorial Day. If they don't have any idea, they get to read about it! The lesson then moves on to students reading a brief history of Memorial Day and creating a timeline of events. In the final activity, the students create a poster and share how Memorial day might be celebrated around the world.
Text adapted from the following sources:	http://americanhistory.about.com/od/holidays/a/memorial.htm http://www.pbs.org/memorialdayconcert/meaning/

A Brief History of Memorial Day

1) Pre-reading:

Have students discuss these questions in pairs:

- When is Memorial Day?
- Do you know why the United States celebrates this day?
- What holidays do you have in your country that were created around historic events?

2) Reading (scanning):

- **Task A. on Worksheet:** Students read and place the underlined events on a timeline.
- For a further scanning activity, note the numbers and what they represent.
- In pairs, students compare their answers.

Answer Key/Timeline:

- **May 5th 1868** – General John Logan officially declared Memorial Day a public holiday.
- **May 30th 1868** – Memorial Day was first observed on this day.
- **1873** – Waterloo, New York is the first city to officially recognize the holiday.
- **May 1966** – President Lyndon Johnson declares Waterloo, New York as the birthplace of Memorial Day.
- **1971** – Congress put into law that the holiday would be celebrated on the last Monday in May.
- **5000** – Number of participants that helped to decorate soldiers' graves.
- **20,000** – Number of soldiers buried at Arlington Cemetery.
- **World War I** – After this, Memorial Day became a day to remember all who died in America's wars.

3) Vocabulary Post-teaching:

- **(B)** Using the text, students work in pairs to try to infer the meanings of the vocabulary.
- Check students' understanding of the vocabulary and practice pronunciation.

Answer Key:

1. Armed forces – b) the army, navy, and/or the marines
2. Cemetery – d) a place to bury the dead
3. Tomb – h) a place where a dead person is buried, usually with a big stone structure
4. Remembrance – e) showing respect for someone who has died
5. Parade – f) a group of people marching and bands playing music
6. Patriotism – a) love for one's own country
7. Unknown – c) not known
8. Wreath – g) round arrangement of flowers or greenery

4) Post-reading Speaking Task:

- **(C)** Tell students that President Obama has decided "Memorial Day" is a terrible name for a holiday because it's not very "memorable" – what are we meant to be remembering? How is this holiday different from Veteran's Day in November?
- Considering what your students know about Memorial Day now, President Obama would like their help in coming up with a new name for the holiday, which more accurately reflects what the holiday is meant to celebrate.
- Tell students to work in pairs to come up with a new and better name for the holiday "Memorial Day" and discuss why their new name is better.
- Next, students should present their new holiday names to the class along with an explanation of why it's better and more "memorable."
- Students vote on the best new holiday name (and the teacher promises to propose the name change to President Obama).

Reading: A Brief History of Memorial Day



The last Monday in May is the day when the United States celebrates Memorial Day. This holiday was originally called “Decoration Day” due to the practice of decorating soldiers’ graves. It is a day of **remembrance** for those in the **Armed Forces** who died serving America.

President Lyndon Johnson officially declared Waterloo, New York the birthplace of Memorial Day in May 1966. However, the origins of the day are not quite so clear.

On May 5, 1868 General John Logan, national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, officially declared Memorial Day a holiday. It was first observed later that month on May 30th when the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers were decorated at Arlington National **Cemetery**.

The reason why President Johnson declared Waterloo, New York as the birthplace of Memorial Day was because it was the first place to officially recognize the holiday in 1873. The Southern states that seceded to start the Civil War refused to acknowledge the holiday until after World War I. That was because until that point, the holiday honored only those who fought and died in the Civil War.

In 1971, Congress put into law that the holiday would be celebrated on the last Monday in May. This was done in order to ensure the holiday would result in a three-day weekend.

During the first national celebration, General James Garfield made a speech at Arlington National Cemetery, after which 5,000 participants helped decorate the graves of the more than 20,000 Union and Confederate soldiers who were buried there.

This event was inspired by local observances of the day that had taken place in several towns throughout America in the three years following the Civil War. By the late 1800s, many more cities and communities observed Memorial Day, and after World War I, it became an occasion for honoring those who died in all of America’s wars.

Memorial Day is celebrated at Arlington National Cemetery each year with a ceremony in which a small American flag is placed on each grave. Traditionally, the President or Vice President gives a speech and lays a **wreath** at the **Tomb** of the **Unknown Soldier**. Americans also show their **patriotism** by placing flags, wreaths or flowers on the graves of soldiers.

While it was a tradition in the past for many cities to hold Memorial Day **Parades**, today the numbers of those parades are dwindling. Memorial Day also marks the start of the summer season in America.

Student Worksheet

A. Events Timeline: Place the dates underlined in the text in order from the earliest to the most recent and write brief notes on what happened.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

6) Note down what these other numbers/words represent.

- a) **5,000** _____
- b) **20,000** _____
- c) **World War I** _____

B. Match the word/phrase to the definitions. Refer to the text for help.

Word / Phrase	Definitions
1. Armed forces	_____ a) love for one's own country
2. Cemetery	_____ b) the army, navy, and/or the marines
3. Tomb	_____ c) not known
4. Remembrance	_____ d) a place to bury the dead
5. Parade	_____ e) showing respect for someone who has died
6. Patriotism	_____ f) a group of people marching and bands playing music
7. Unknown	_____ g) round arrangement of flowers or greenery
8. Wreath	_____ h) a place where a dead person is buried, usually with a big stone structure

C. President Obama has decided "Memorial Day" is not a good name for a holiday – it's not very **memorable**. It needs a better name to reflect what the holiday is all about. With a partner, decide what the new holiday name should be and why and present your idea to the class.