

Maggie's Civics Corner

Lesson #39 – Memorial Day



Today's lesson is about the MEMORIAL DAY holiday. The Memorial Day holiday in the United States honors the men and women who died while serving our country in the military. As you read through this lesson think about our heroes from past wars – like [General Dwight D. Eisenhower](#), who later became our 34th U.S. President.

Read or [listen to this read-aloud](#) of the book **The Wall** by Eve Bunting (with illustrations by Ronald Himler). Then read and think about the questions below:

1. [The Vietnam Veterans Memorial](#) is in Washington, D.C. Its design was created by an unknown 21-year-old Yale college student named [Maya Lin](#), who beat out more than 1,400 competitors for the honor. Built to honor the soldiers who died or were missing in action during the Vietnam War, there are over 58,000 names on the “Wall”. Millions of visitors stop at this memorial every year to reflect and remember.

In the book *The Wall*, a father and his young son visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to search for the name of the boy's grandfather whom he never knew. Both the father and his son take great pride in finding the grandfather's name on *The Wall*. They also feel sadness because he isn't here to share their lives today.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is a large black structure that is as shiny as a mirror. It is so shiny, that visitors can see themselves reflected in the wall. When the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was constructed, there was a great deal of discussion about how it should look. Some felt it should be filled with bright colors. Others wanted a dark surface on which all the names would be written. If you were designing a memorial today to honor soldiers who have sacrificed their lives for our country, what would it look like and why?

2. In the book, a teacher brings her class to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. She tells her students, “The names are the names of the dead. But The Wall is for all of us.” What do you think she means by this statement? Be prepared to share your answer.
3. Try to find the name of someone in your neighborhood or beyond who was a soldier in the Vietnam War. Perhaps you could ask a community leader if they know a Vietnam War veteran. Before meeting with that person, make a list of questions you would like to them about what it was like to go to war to protect our country. If you cannot find a Vietnam War veteran with whom to speak, try to find another veteran, possibly one from the Persian Gulf War, the Iraq War, or the War in Afghanistan.

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4. The boy's father in the book, *The Wall*, viewed his father (the boy's grandfather) as a hero. When we were all at home during the COVID pandemic, we saw many people who were heroes – our first responders. Do you know anyone who is one of those special heroes who helped to keep us safe and healthy during the pandemic? Consider how you might want to thank that person (or people) for the work they did. Now, think about what a memorial might look like to honor those **hero first responders** – doctors, nurses, teachers, bus drivers, grocery store workers, policemen, and many more – who were there for us throughout the COVID pandemic. 21-year-old May Lin designed an important memorial, and so can you. Share a drawing with the class of your vision for a memorial honoring first responders.

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