

Materials Needed:

- Computer with internet access
 - Notebook or paper
 - Pen or pencil
 - Optional: Red, white, and blue construction paper, scissors, glue
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Introduction: Remembering and Honoring

Memorial Day is a special day observed in the United States, but what is it really about? It's more than just the unofficial start of summer or a day off school. It's a solemn day of remembrance. Today, we'll dive into the history and meaning behind this important American holiday.

Think about this: Why do countries set aside specific days to remember historical events or people? What makes remembering important?

Activity 1: Journey Back in Time - The Origins

Memorial Day wasn't always called Memorial Day, and it didn't start as a national holiday. Its roots are deep in the aftermath of the American Civil War, a time of immense loss for the nation.

Let's investigate:

1. **Decoration Day:** Research the origins of 'Decoration Day'. When and where did the earliest observances take place? (Hint: Look up places like Waterloo, NY, Charleston, SC, and Columbus, GA). Write down a few key facts about how people first started honoring fallen soldiers.
2. **General John A. Logan:** Who was General John A. Logan, and what role did he play in establishing Decoration Day?
3. **Becoming Official:** When did Memorial Day become an official federal holiday in the United States?

Activity 2: Symbols and Traditions

Memorial Day is marked by specific traditions and symbols. Let's explore some common ones:

- **Flying the Flag:** How should the American flag be displayed on Memorial Day? (Hint: It's unique!) Research the proper flag etiquette for this day.
- **The National Moment of Remembrance:** What is the National Moment of Remembrance, and when does it occur? Why was this specific time chosen?
- **Poppies:** Red poppies are often associated with remembrance, particularly around Memorial Day. Research the connection between poppies and remembering fallen soldiers. Read the poem "In Flanders Fields" by John McCrae. How does this poem connect to the symbol of the poppy?

Activity 3: Memorial Day vs. Veterans Day

People sometimes confuse Memorial Day and Veterans Day. While both honor military personnel, they have distinct purposes. Create a simple chart or Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the two holidays. Focus on:

- Who is honored on each day?
- What is the main purpose of each day?
- When did each holiday originate?

Conclusion and Reflection

Memorial Day is a time to pause and remember the brave men and women who gave their lives in service to the United States. It's a day for gratitude, reflection, and honoring sacrifice.

Think about:

- Why is it important for us today to remember soldiers who died in wars long ago?
- What are some ways families and communities observe Memorial Day?
- How can you personally show respect and remembrance on Memorial Day?

Optional Craft: Create a small remembrance display using red, white, and blue paper. You could cut out stars, make a small flag (following proper etiquette!), or write down a fact you learned or a short reflection.