NSW GOVERNMENT Veterans Affairs

COMMEMORATING THEIR SERVICE

2026 School engagement and resources
for Kokoda Day and Remembrance Day

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The Origin and Significance of Kokoda Day

- Kokoda Day is an annual day of acknowledgement for the veterans of the Second World War and to recognise their bravery and efforts in New Guinea.
- The Battle of Kokoda was a four-month struggle which began with the Japanese landing in Papua in July 1942, with the aim to take Port Moresby.
- From July to November 1942, Australian forces fought to prevent the Japanese from reaching Port Moresby and to push them back over the Owen Stanley Range. The range was a series of rugged mountains which are crossed only by a few foot tracks, one of which is the Kokoda Track.
- From September, the Australians forced the Japanese troops slowly back along the track and by 2 November 1942, they Australians had retaken Kokoda. The following day, now commemorated as Kokoda Day, the Australian flag was raised at Kokoda.
- About 56,000 Australians were at one time or another involved either in Papua or in sea or air operations there. More than 600 Australians were killed and more than 1,600 were wounded.
- To commemorate the Australians who served in the Second World War, including on the Kokoda Track, visit the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway that stretches from Concord Hospital to Rhodes Station.

Resources

- Battle of Kokoda background: https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/ww2/where/swpa/png
- Audio files – Kokoda Track resources: https://www.veterans.nsw.gov.au/commemoration/significant-commemorative-dates-for-nsw/kokoda-day-resources
- Video – Remembering the Kokoda Track: https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/resources/remembering-kokoda-track
- Learning Activity – The Australian veterans' accounts in Kokoda: https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/resources/kokoda-their-own-words

A patrol of the 2/31st Battalion negotiates a path through the native cane growing on the swampy river flats bordering the Brown River. AWM 027081.

Kalikodobu, New Guinea. 1942-10. The party of of the 2/14th Infantry Battalion arriving at the US base camp. AWM 069248.

The Origin and Significance of Remembrance Day

- Remembrance Day is an important day in Australia, and across the world.
- We observe one minute's silence at 11am and hold commemorations to remember those who died or suffered in all wars, conflicts.
- Red poppies are worn, inspired by the thousands that grew across the battlefields of the Western Front.
- In 1918, the Germans accepted the terms presented by the Allied Supreme Commander General Ferdinand Foch. In doing so, they signed an armistice on 11 November 1918 that ended the fighting between Germany and the Allies and brough a close to the First World War.
- The armistice was signed in a railway carriage stationed at Compiègne forest, north of Paris, at 5:10 am, and it came into effect at 11 am.
- Prime Minister of Australia, William Hughes, received a cablegram from the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London. Dated '11 November 1918, 10.55 am', it read:
  Most urgent. Armistice signed 5 a.m. this morning.
- Australia was a small nation with a population of fewer than five million. From this small population base, no less than 416,809 men enlisted of which 302,000 served overseas. Of these, 62,000 were killed and 155,000 wounded.
- More than 2,000 Australian nurses served in the Australian Army Nursing Service during the First World War. Twenty-five Australian nurses died during the war and eight were awarded the Military Medal for bravery.
- The below links provide additional information about the origins of Remembrance Day, which can be utilised in lesson plans for students:
  - https://www.veterans.nsw.gov.au/commemoration/remembrance-day/origins-remembrance-day/
  - https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/rd-kitbag-history.pdf

Curriculum
Secondary – Syllabus links:
Modern History Year 11, Stage 6 – The Shaping of the Modern World (World War 1)

Content:
The nature and legacy of World War 1 and its influence on modernity.

Students:
Explain how World War 1 has shaped our world today

Secondary – Syllabus links:
History Extension Year 12, Option 23 – Representations of Anzac

Content:
Students examine the historians and approaches to history (including recent historiography) that have contributed to historical debate in the role of Anzac in culture in Australia

Communications / key messages

- At 11am on 11 November 1918, fighting in the First World War came to an end.
- Over 100 years later, we pause for a minute at 11am on Wednesday, 11 November 2026 to remember the service and sacrifice of our veterans.
- The tradition of stopping at 11am started on the very first anniversary of Armistice Day in 1919 and has continued for over 100 years.
- This year marks the 108th anniversary of the First World War Armistice, where a peace settlement was signed to end four years of brutal conflict.
- Almost 62,000 Australians died fighting for our freedom and in service of our nation.

80th anniversary of Australian War Widows movement

- In the aftermath of the Second World War, Australia mourned the loss of thousands of servicemen, leaving behind a generation of women facing an uncertain future.
- Recognising their shared grief and the significant challenges ahead, one remarkable woman, Jessie Mary Vasey, took decisive action. On 22 November 1945, in Victoria, she brought together a group of war widows and founded the Australian War Widows Craft Guild, laying the foundation for what would become the War Widows' Guild of Australia.
- By the time of Jessie Mary Vasey's death, the War Widows' Guild of Australia had grown into an influential national lobby group. Over the decades, it continued to evolve, adapting to the changing needs of its members and the broader veteran community, establishing social clubs, providing information, advice and support services.
- In a significant step towards inclusivity, the organisation officially changed its name in 2020 to Australian War Widows (AWW). This change reflected a desire to acknowledge and support a broader range of women who had lost partners due to war and defence service, regardless of the nature of their partner's passing.
- In 2022, the first War Widows Day was commemorated in Queensland and New South Wales.
- Today, the Families of Veterans Guild (formerly War Widows Guild) continues the legacy established by Jessie Vasey, providing vital support, advocacy and companionship to war widows across the country.
- More information and background details are available here: https://www.dva.gov.au/newsroom/vetaffairs/vetaffairs-vol-41-no2-august-2025/80-years-of-australian-war-widows

Social content / posting

- A great way to commemorate Remembrance Day is to post to your social media accounts, whether Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn or X (formerly Twitter) with images of your event.
- Visit the NSW Veterans Affairs webpage for some social media tiles that can be used: https://www.veterans.nsw.gov.au/commemoration/remembrance-day/
- We encourage schools to post about their service on Remembrance Day with:
  #RemembranceDay2026
  #LestWeForget
  #WeWillRememberThem

Hosting a commemorative service

- Kokoda Day falls on Tuesday, 3 November 2026, and is a time to remember and acknowledge those who served on the Kokoda Track.
- Remembrance Day falls on Wednesday, 11 November 2026. On this day, we pause at 11am to remember and acknowledge our servicemen and servicewomen.
- We are encouraging schools to organise commemoration services for Kokoda Day and Remembrance Day.
- It is suggested that invitations could be extended to the local Member of Parliament, Mayor and local council, and members of the local RSL sub-Branch.
- The below link provides some details for delivering a commemorative service:
    - Link to NSW Veterans Affairs: https://www.veterans.nsw.gov.au/commemoration/plan-and-deliver-a-commemorative-activity/
    - Link to the Commonwealth Department of Veterans Affairs: https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/resources/remembrance-day-kitbag
- The Ode, Last Post and Rouse can be downloaded as an audio link below:
    - https://www.veterans.nsw.gov.au/assets/veterans-affairs/4-AMCP-service-simple.mp3

Curriculum
Secondary – Syllabus links:
History K-10, Stage 5 – Core Study- Depth Study 3: Australians at War: World Wars I and II (1914-1918, 1939-1945)

Content:
Commemorations and the nature of the ANZAC legend

Students:
Explain how and why Australians have commemorated the wars

Curriculum:
Primary – Syllabus links:
History K-10, Stage 2 – Community and Remembrance

Outcomes:
HT2-1 – identifies celebrations and commemorations of significance in Australia and the world

Content:
Days and weeks celebrated or commemorated in Australia (including Australia Day, Anzac Day, Harmony Week, National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week, National Sorry Day) and the importance of symbols and emblems

Students:
Identify and describe local, state and national symbols and discuss the origins, symbolism and significance, eg the school logo, Australian and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags, coats of arms from states and Australia
Identify important Australian celebrations and commemorations and discuss their origins and significance in society

Research a veteran

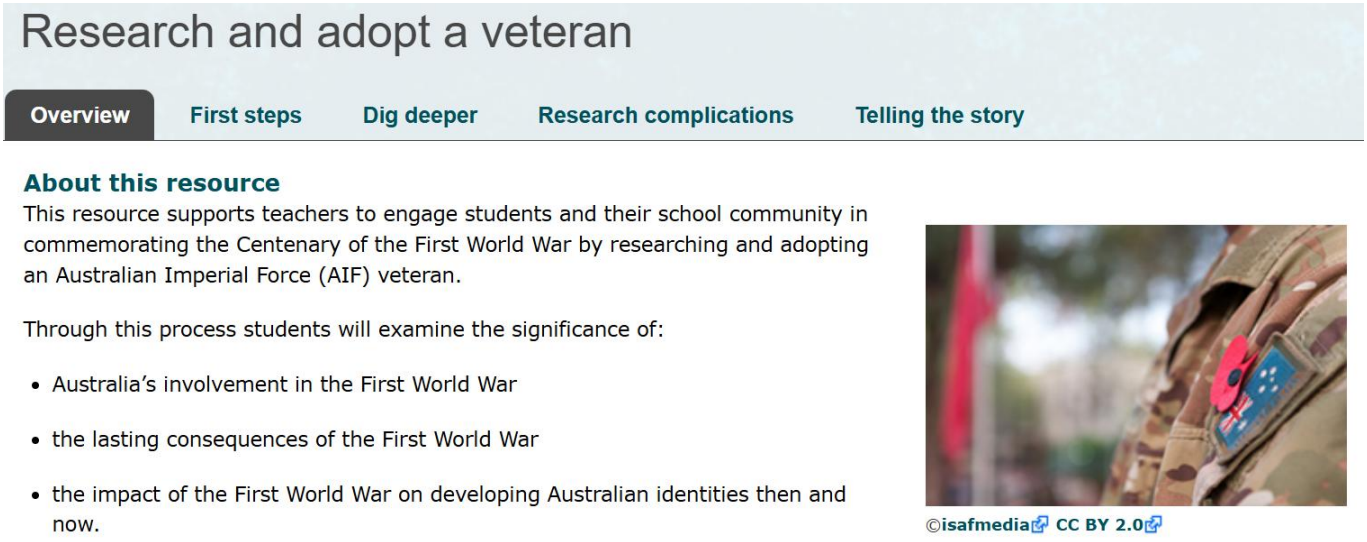
A project that might also be of interest to teachers and students is 'Research a veteran'.

This resource guides users through the process of researching historical records if an Australian First World War veteran.

The resource can be viewed on the following website:
https://bit.ly/research-a-veteran

Students will examine the significance of:

- Australia's involvement in the First World War
- The lasting consequences of the First World War
- The impact of the First World War on developing Australian identities then and now.

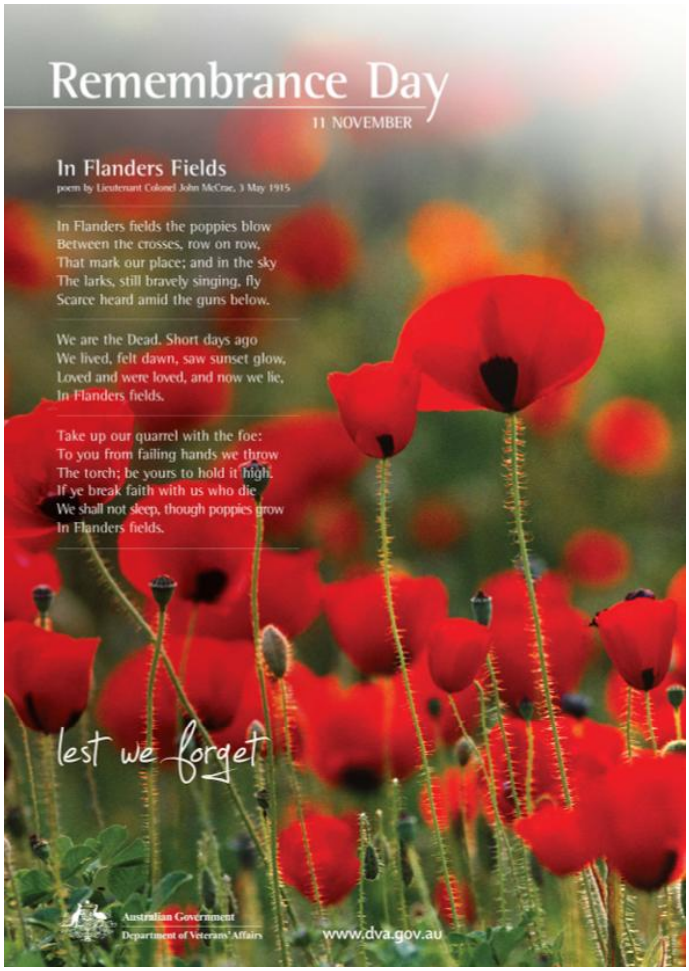


The poppy

- A video prepared to assist students understand commemoration
- Developed for lower primary students
    - Link to video: https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/resources/poppies-here-they-come-day-remember

Remembrance Day - Flanders Poppies Poster

- **Poster to be downloaded**
    - Link to download the poster: https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/remembrance-day-poster-flanders.pdf



Making a poppy

Step by step process for making a poppy

- This project is targeted at primary students
    - Link to information from DVA: https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/commemoration/event-planning/poppies

You'll need:

- thin cardboard
- red crepe paper
- green pipe cleaner
- black paper
- scissors
- pencil
- glue

What to do:

1. Use scissors to cut out a poppy shape (see image) on cardboard to make a template.
2. Place the poppy template on the red crepe paper and trace around it with a pencil.
3. Cut out the poppy shape with scissors.
4. To make the stalk, take a pipe cleaner and bend the end over twice at 1cm lengths.
5. Push the straight end of the pipe cleaner through the middle of the red poppy shape and continue to thread it through until the bent end sits against the middle of the poppy.
6. Cut a small circle out of the black paper and glue it onto the centre of the poppy. The centre will secure the green pipe cleaner to the red crepe paper poppy.
7. Bend and shape the pipe cleaner and poppy petals.

Additional creative: Combine many poppies in a circle to make a wreath (video link).

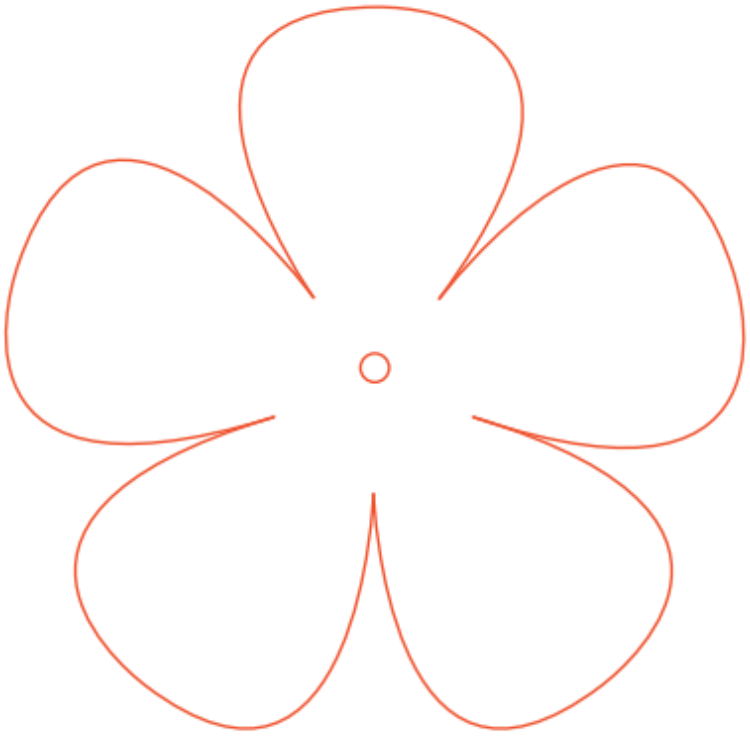


Figure 1. Petal template

Figure 2. Stem template

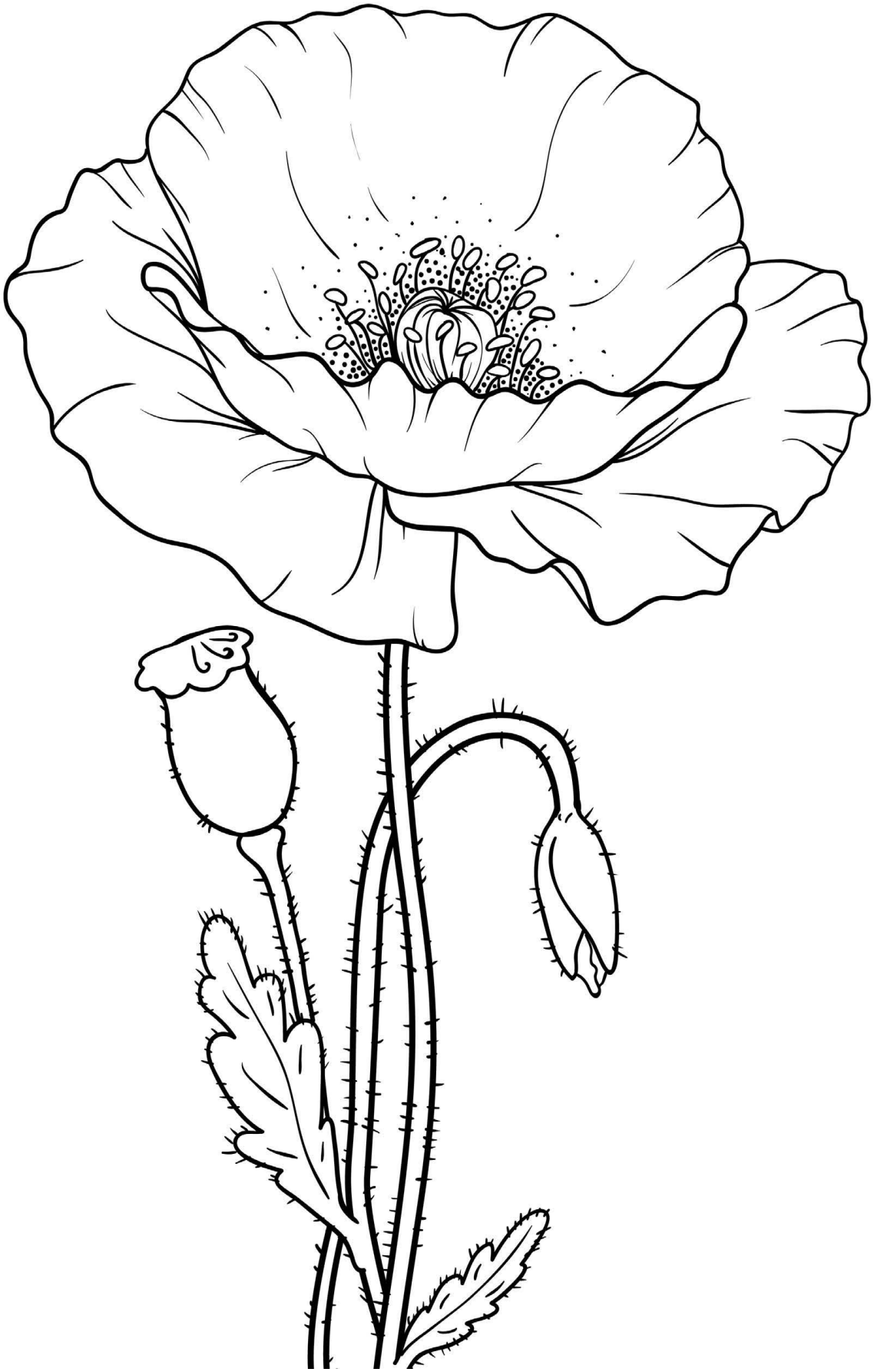
Not to scale

Colouring in activity

- The following two pages can be used as a colouring in activity, targeted at primary students.

The Poppy

In Australia and other countries of the Commonwealth, we recognise the red poppy as the commemorative flower of remembrance. The flower reminds us of those who lost their lives or suffered in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations. It's a tradition that began soon after the First World War.



In Flanders Fields (John McCrae)

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.

Making a wreath

Follow these instructions to make your own wreath.

You'll need:

- Cardboard or cardboard box, wire or dough base
- green wreath wrap or ribbon
- purple ribbon
- leaves
- native flowers or foliage
- scissors
- pencil or pen
- glue
- paper for a card

What to do:

1. Cover the base shape with wreath wrap or ribbon and secure it with glue.
2. Add the leaves in layers, starting from the top, with the pointy ends of the leaves pointing upwards (all in the same direction).
3. Add the local flora in a small cluster at the bottom of the wreath.
4. Place the purple ribbon on the wreath. It should start high on the left side of the wreath and finish low on the right side. This symbolises the sun rising in the east and setting in the west.
5. Add a small card with the words 'We will remember them' or 'Lest we forget'.

Circle wreath

Chaplet wreath (tear shape)