

Memorial Day

What is Memorial Day?

Memorial Day is a holiday that is observed in the United States on the last Monday in May. The purpose of Memorial Day is to honor the men and women who **died** serving their country in the United States military. Sometimes people confuse Veteran's Day with Memorial Day. Memorial Day honors the soldiers who died serving their country while Veteran's Day gives tribute to the soldiers who are still living and we honor their service to our country.

History of Memorial Day

Memorial Day was originally called Decoration Day because of the earlier tradition of decorating the soldiers' graves with flowers, wreaths, and flags. This started after the Civil War. In 1868 in Arlington National Cemetery there was a ceremony to pay tribute to Civil War soldiers who gave the ultimate sacrifice. Congressman James A. Garfield made a speech. Garfield had served as a general in the Civil War. There were 5,000 people that helped decorate the graves of 20,000 Confederate and Union soldiers that were buried there.

"We do not know one promise these men made, one pledge they gave, one word they spoke; but we do know they summed up and perfected, by one supreme act, the highest virtues of men and citizens. For love of country they accepted death, and thus resolved all doubts, and made immortal their patriotism and their virtue."

Congressman James A. Garfield (became President of the United States in May 30, 1868 Arlington National Cemetery

Each year Memorial Day is celebrated at a ceremony in Arlington National Cemetery. It is a tradition that the President or Vice President places a wreath by the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Decoration Day traditionally became Memorial Day in the 1880's. It legally became Memorial Day in 1967, and in 1971 it was passed by Congress that it would be celebrated on the last Monday of May.

Do You Know?

1. What was Memorial Day originally called?
 - A. Remembrance Day
 - B. Decoration Day
 - C. Veterans Day
 - D. Flag Day
2. On Memorial Day who lays a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier?
 - A. James Garfield
 - B. A Congressman
 - C. A Veteran
 - D. President or Vice President
3. Memorial Day is often confused with what other day?
 - A. President's Day
 - B. Fourth of July
 - C. Labor Day
 - D. Veteran's Day
4. In what war were the most American lives lost? (this was not in the article)
 - A. World War I
 - B. World War II
 - C. Civil War
 - D. Revolutionary War
5. Please explain how Memorial Day helps us to remember that ***freedom isn't free.***

Answer Sheet

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5. Please explain how Memorial Day helps us to remember that ***freedom isn't free.***

We celebrate Memorial Day to honor the men and women who gave their life while serving in the United States military. The military goes to war to protect our right to freedom. It wasn't free because these people paid the price with their life.