

## *“The True Meaning of Memorial Day”*

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When asked what Memorial Day means to the average American, many will simply say that it's a day off of school or work; some may not even know when it is celebrated let alone the importance of the holiday. Observed on the last Monday in May, Memorial Day is mostly considered the unofficial beginning of summer for us Americans (History.com). After the realization that warm weather and free time are approaching, we should all take a step back and evaluate the true meaning of Memorial Day.

I will admit that when asked about Memorial Day, I often got the holiday confused with Flag Day, Veterans' Day, or other patriotic holidays that are usually celebrated nationally. After taking the time to truly understand this important day of commemoration, I realize how much impact a day like this could have. Although it did not become a federal holiday until 1971, Memorial Day has been celebrated and recognized by many Americans since the end of the Civil War (History.com). I have discovered that, “Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day, is a day of remembrance for those who have died in service of the United States of America,” and that after World War I the holiday went “from honoring just those who died fighting in the Civil War to honoring Americans who died fighting in any war” (Claybourn). The idea of having one day to honor those who died in serving this country was actually able to mend the wounds between the North and the South as time passed after the Civil War. Seeing how far back this tradition goes, and seeing its impact on American people as a whole, proves that Memorial Day did not only honor the dead, but it united the living. Americans of all different shapes and sizes were able to push their issues aside and come together and thank the men and women that allow us to stand where we are today. I believe that that is the one thing that every American should

take away from the parades and the processions that take place on Memorial Day; yes, we have lost some along the way, but we can honor this loss by joining hands and continuing to take pride in our nation and never losing hope for a better tomorrow.

In my opinion, this commemoration and unity is best represented through the introduction of the remembrance poppy. During World War I, on the front lines in Belgium and France, many soldiers observed that “Once the ground was disturbed by the fighting, the poppy seeds lying in the ground began to germinate and grow during the warm weather in the spring and summer months...” (The Story Behind...). The poppy flower came to symbolize the presence of life and hope in the midst of death and destruction. Since Memorial Day is about the remembrance of the ones who have fallen, but also the hope for those who are still standing, the red poppy flower has become the perfect symbol of the growth of this country through the deaths of the ones who have served it.

Bibliography

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