

A Veterans Day Lesson

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Summary: Four students are studying together at a friend's house after school for their history test about Veteran's Day. As they study and learn together, history comes to life in the form of past veterans and their loved ones from previous wartimes as well as scenes of Veterans Days from the past.

Character Breakdown

Student 1 - Doesn't care about Veterans Day at first and only wants to complain about the history quiz; by the end of the script, they have changed their tune and realized the significance of the holiday.

Student 2 - Bookish do-gooder who wants to get a good grade on the quiz and references many different sources to supply information

Student 3 - Encourager of the group; at some point, we learn they have a relative who is currently serving in the armed forces

Student 4 - At first glance, does not seem like the brightest in the bunch, but they are hyper-focused on getting the extra-credit answer correct from their teacher, blurting out answers that are completely wrong throughout the script until finally getting it right at the end.

Mrs. Cooley (Ralph's Mother) - Mother of a soldier serving in World War I.

Ralph Cooley - A soldier serving in World War I.

Mayor of Emporia, KS - Mayor of a small town, quite a no-nonsense person and tries to keep her meetings efficient.

Townsperson #1 - Has wanted to make Pajama Day a holiday for the last 3 years in Emporia and brings it up in EVERY. SINGLE. MEETING.

Townsperson #2 - Has had multiple family members serve in the armed forces.

Townsperson #3 - Eager to be genuinely helpful in town meetings with their suggestions.

Teacher - Very patient and engages her students by asking them questions and getting them to participate in conversation.

Young Student #1 - Wonders why national holidays are so important.

Young Student #2 - Answers why national holidays are important.

Young Student #3 - Has a brother that tricks them on April Fools every year; wants to know what the difference is between Veterans Day and Memorial Day.

Town Ensemble - Consists of all performers who are not cast as Townspeople #1-3, the Mayor, or the main Students.

Classroom Ensemble - Consists of all performers who are not cast as Young Students #1-3, the Classroom Teacher, or the main Students.

Properties List

- (1) History textbook
- (1) Laptop
- (1) Bible
- Various school supplies (notebooks, pencils, highlighters, etc.)
- Stack of envelopes
- (1) Envelope with letter from Ralph
- (1) Gavil
- (1) Podium
- (1) Old Radio
- (1) Teacher desk
- (8) Chairs

Costume Descriptions

Student 1 - Casual, modern clothing that follows the TCS Dress Down code

Student 2 - Casual, modern clothing that follows the TCS Dress Down code

Student 3 - Casual, modern clothing that follows the TCS Dress Down code

Student 4 - Casual, modern clothing that follows the TCS Dress Down code

Mrs. Cooley (Ralph's Mother) - Dress or skirt and shirt in muted/neutral colors (beige, off-white, black, brown, muted green, etc.) ideally in the style or close to the style of the 1910s (if possible)

Ralph Cooley - Faux army uniform, such as a plain t-shirt and pants in muted brown/green colors, no camo patterns as we are going for a more dated look

Mayor of Emporia, KS - A blazer or professional business attire ideally in the style of the '50s (if possible) that can be worn over TCS uniform

Teacher - Dress or a long skirt and plain shirt in muted or neutral colors (white, black, beige, off-white, or soft colors like light pink/blue, etc.), ideally in the style of the '60s/'70s (if possible)

Townspeople & Town Ensemble - Casual sweater/vest/jacket ideally in the style of the '50s (if possible) that can be worn over TCS uniform

Young Students & Classroom Ensemble - TCS uniforms

Setting: After school, present day.

At rise: Students are huddled around a "living room" looking at various notes, textbooks, maybe even a laptop is out, etc.

Student 1

Ughhh, this is so boring.

Student 2

Come on, we have to study for this history quiz tomorrow!

Student 3

It won't do anyone any good if you're just moaning and complaining the whole time.

Student 1

I just don't get why we have to learn about Veterans Day in the first place.

Student 4

What even is a veteran anyway?

Student 3

A veteran is a person who has served in the armed forces. They're experienced soldiers, especially those who served in times of war.

Student 2

Yeah, it says here, *[they read from their history textbook]* "A veteran is a man or woman who has served in one of the branches of the military: the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard or Air Force."

Student 4

Well, that's all good to know for the test, but I just wish I could figure out the extra-credit question on our study guide.

Student 3

What is it again?

Student 4

"How does the Bible teach us the importance of Veterans Day?" What kind of question is that? The bible was written way before Veterans Day...or even

America was ever invented! [*He thinks for a moment, then he has an idea.*] Oh! Maybe it has something to do with the shepherds at Jesus's birth! [*The students stare at Student 4.*] You know! Because they were kind of like veterinarians with their sheep! Veterans are vets, and veterinarians are vets, too! [*The students all sigh with exasperation. Student 4 realizes this isn't the right answer based on their reactions.*]

Student 1

[*casually*] Well, I'm sure you'll figure it out eventually. Anyway, speaking of it being invented, what does that book say about how Veterans Day was started?

Student 2

Oh, now you want to study?

Student 1

Might as well! I don't want to flunk this quiz any more than you all do!

Student 2

Alright, well it says here that the first beginnings of Veterans Day started all the way back at the end of World War I.

[*Lights up on Mrs. Cooey, who looks through a stack of mail as she walks, supposedly, home. She suddenly stops on a specific envelope.*]

Mrs. Cooey

Well, I do declare! A letter from my sweet, brave boy serving in France! [*She opens the envelope enthusiastically*] Oh, I can't wait to read what he has to say! [*She unfolds the letter and starts to read silently to herself, reacting at the news as Ralph narrates his letter as he writes. Ralph is sitting at a desk with a pencil and paper, writing his letter to his mother.*]

Ralph

Well, my dear mother, I guess the war must be over... We have not heard any guns or cannons for some few days, [*he pauses to listen for a second just to be sure, looks relieved, and then continues writing*] and the Armistice has been signed on the 11th day, 11th month, and on the 11th hour, so I guess that means peace...[*he looks content, then has a discovery before writing the next part*] Aw, gee, I wish I could only be home by Christmas, but if I don't get home until after Christmas, I want to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. From your loving son...Ralph.

Mrs. Cooley

What incredible news! The war is over! My son is coming home! [*She runs excitedly offstage.*]

[*Lights up on the students.*]

Student 4

Wow, that's a lot of elevens!

Student 2

You're right about that. So many that they decided to set aside November 11th at 11 o'clock as Armistice Day to remember the sacrifices that men and women like Private Ralph Cooley and many others made during World War I.

Student 3

Nowadays, at 11:00 in the morning on Veterans Day, most Americans observe a moment of silence, remembering those who fought for peace, and there's a special ceremony in Washington D.C. At 11:00, a color guard made up of each of the military branches renders honors to America's war dead during a traditional ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown soldier. The President places a wreath at the tomb and a bugler sounds taps.

Student 2

Wow, you know a lot about this stuff!

Student 3

Well, I--

Student 2

You must be studying extra hard!

Student 1

Wait, so is Armistice Day the same as Veterans Day?

Student 2

Kind of. It was more like a stepping stone to what Veterans Day would eventually become. The first real Veterans Day started in 1953 in a town called Emporia, Kansas.

[Lights up on the Mayor addressing her many townspeople in what we can assume is a town hall meeting. The townspeople are chattering to themselves while the Mayor tries to get their attention.]

Mayor of Emporia

Alright, settle down now! *[The people continue to chit chat casually.]* Settle down, I say! *[The people continue to pay her no mind.]* I SAID SETTLE DOWN! *[The people immediately give their undivided attention. She composes herself, clearly pleased.]* Now! I have called this meeting to discuss a very important issue in regards to our annual celebrations. *[Townsperson #1 raises her hand enthusiastically.]* No, Melinda, I am not talking about recognizing Pajama Day as a town holiday! It's been 3 years; please stop asking!

Townsperson #1

Aw. *[The townsperson lowers her hand, clearly dejected.]*

Mayor

I am talking about our annual Armistice Day in November! Now, I realize the Great War, or as people are starting to call it now, the First World War, was one that many of us still remember. I do not wish to diminish its importance, but we must also acknowledge that we have now had two World Wars, and brave

soldiers have fought for our freedoms in both! *[Townsperson #2 raises her hand.]* Yes?

Townsperson #2

My father served in the first World War, and now my brother has served in the second. Both have sacrificed so much. The way I see it -- why not recognize both of them?

Mayor

I absolutely agree with you. So, my question to you all is: what should we call this holiday now? We can't keep calling it Armistice Day anymore, since that was only about the First World War. *[Townsperson #3 raises a hand.]* Yes?

Townsperson #3

What about Soldier Day?

Mayor

Hm...that could be a good name. But it might not be right since not every soldier who served in the past is one who is serving now...*[Townsperson #2 raises her hand again.]* Yes, dear?

Townsperson #2

Well, both my father and my brother no longer serve, so now they are considered veterans. So, how about Veterans Day?

Mayor

I do believe that is the perfect name for it! All those in favor of renaming Armistice Day to Veterans Day, say "Aye!"

All Townspeople

Aye!

Mayor

Motion passed! *[The Mayor swings her gavel down on her podium to demonstrate the finality of the decision.]* From now on, November 11th will be known as Veterans Day in this town in honor of all those who have served our country. Who knows, maybe the name will catch on in other places!

[Lights up on our group of students once again.]

Student 1

Well, it definitely caught on, otherwise we wouldn't be learning about it and still recognizing it today!

Student 4

I got it!

Student 3

What?

Student 4

The extra credit question! *[The other students groan.]* No, no, hear me out! So, Noah, right? He was kind of like an army commander! I mean, he had to lead all those people out of Egypt and then he ended up having that crazy boss battle with Pharaoh and was all like, *[in a deep voice]* "Let my people go!" and --

Student 2

That wasn't Noah, that was Moses! And anyway, Moses didn't have a "boss battle" with Pharaoh; he let God do all the wonders and miracles in that story.

Student 4

[He thinks for a moment, and then realizes his mistake.] Ohhhhhh...yeah, I guess you're right.

Student 3

Well anyway, back to Veterans Day. It took some time for Veterans Day to be announced as a federal holiday, but once President Nixon declared it one in 1971, it became official!

[Lights up on the other side of the stage where we see a Teacher and her students listening to the radio with interest.]

President Nixon (Voice Over)

A nation which condemns those who serve it will find itself condemned in turn.

[The Teacher turns off the radio and addresses the class.]

Teacher

Well, this is as good a time as any for Veterans Day to finally be recognized as a national holiday, wouldn't you say, class? Now, please get out your mathematics books and -- *[She sees Young Student #1 has raised her hand.]* Yes?

Young Student #1

Ma'am, why is it important for Veterans Day to become an official holiday? We already celebrate it every year, so what's the point?

Teacher

Well, that's an excellent question! Does anyone have an idea on how to answer?

[Young Student #2 timidly raises her hand.] Yes?

Young Student #2

Because...that way it won't be forgotten? Like...sometimes I forget about Groundhog Day or...

Young Student #3

April Fool's Day! Every year, my brother plays the same old trick on me, and I forget every year!

Young Student #1

What prank does he pull?

Young Student #3

He puts shaving cream on my hand while I'm sleeping and then tickles my nose so that I'll scratch it and POW! *[She dramatically puts her hand over her entire face]* I get shaving cream all over my face!

[The children all laugh, eventually Young Student #3 joins in with them.]

Young Student #2

But I bet you would remember it a lot better if it was a day where the whole country talked about it and made a big celebration for it every single year.

Teacher

Yes, a very good answer to our question. [*Young Student #3 raises her hand.*]
Yes?

Young Student #3

I don't mean to be disrespectful by asking this question, but...why do we celebrate Veterans Day in November when we already have a Memorial Day in May?

Teacher

I think that's a very good question. Class? Does anyone know? [*No one raises their hand.*] Well, it's because Memorial Day is just for remembering soldiers who died while serving our country in times of war, but not all veterans died during their service. There are many veterans alive today who still sacrificed much in their service to our country, even if it wasn't with their lives. All veterans are worth recognizing and remembering, don't you think?

[*Lights up on students. Student 4 is off to the side, engrossed in his bible.*]

Student 1

Wow...I guess Veterans Day is a pretty important day to learn about after all.

Student 2

According to our textbook, it's estimated that "More than 1.3 million American service members died in the service of this country, more than 1.4 million lived with the wounds they suffered while fighting for us, and more than 19 million former service members are still living today."

Student 3

Yeah, like my brother will be one day. He's serving overseas right now.

Student 4

[*Looking up from his bible*] What!? Really?

Student 3

Yeah. He left about 3 months ago. I...miss him a lot.

[There's silence. The students don't quite know how to respond to this new information. Student 4 goes back to reading the bible. Finally, Student 1 approaches Student 3 hesitantly.]

Student 1

I'm sorry I had such a bad attitude before about learning about Veterans Day. I didn't realize it was such an important holiday to one of my friends. I hope your brother is ok and that he comes home safely.

Student 3

It's ok; you know how important it is now, and that's all that matters.

[They smile at each other, relieved that the tension in the room is gone.]

Student 4

I FIGURED IT OUT!

[The other students jump, clearly startled by the sudden outburst.]

Students 1, 2, & 3

[slightly annoyed] WHAT?!

Student 4

[He realizes the distress he caused to the others.] Oh, sorry. But I figured out how Veterans Day relates to the Bible! Listen to our class memory verse from this week: "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13. Eh? *[He waits expectantly for the other students to get it. They don't get it. He sighs with exasperation, then explains.]* Jesus laid His life down for us so we can have freedom in Him, just like how there are soldiers who sacrifice and sometimes even lay down their lives for their friends and families.

[The other students are stunned. Student 2 closes her textbook and addresses Student 4.]

Student 2

Buddy, I think you could be the wisest out of all of us after all.

[The students all share a laugh as the lights fade to black.]

The End