

Remembrance Day



Remembrance Day Memorial Service at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (Ottawa, Canada)

In Canada, November 11th is a day to commemorate the soldiers who died for our freedom. The reason this date is important in Canadian history is that it is the day World War I hostilities ended in 1918. Specifically, the hostilities ended, “at the 11th hour, of the 11th day, of the 11th month”. For this reason, all towns and cities in Canada celebrate Remembrance Day, with the largest celebration being in the nations capital, Ottawa. This ceremony is held at the National War Memorial, which features the “Tomb of the Unknown Soldier”. At the end of the ceremony, attendees place their poppies on the “Tomb of the Unknown Soldier”.



*Poppies on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (Ottawa, Canada)**

As my father is a veteran of the Canadian Forces, this day has a special meaning to my family. To show our support for both current and past soldiers we wear a poppy on our jackets from the end of October to November 11th. The poppy, a flower, was popularized by the famous poem, "In Flanders Fields", written by Canadian physician Lieutenant-Colonel 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 your 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.*

Flanders is a region in Belgium, and is where the second battle of Ypres took place. In this battle the Canadians fought against the Germans. John McCrae noted how quickly poppies grew around the graves of those who died at Ypres.



In contrast to our rather solemn holiday, I was very surprised to find out that November 11th is also a special day in Japan. As both students and teachers informed me, November 11th is Pocky Day in Japan. I didn't understand why at first, but nonetheless enjoyed receiving Pocky from various students (Thank you! They were delicious!). Finally Ueshima-sensei explained to me that it's Pocky Day because the day consists of many ones, which, of course, are shaped like Pocky. Although Pocky comes from Japan, we also have Pocky in Canada. However, we do not celebrate Pocky Day.