

# UCF Veterans Legacy Program Curricular Materials



VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
National Cemetery Administration



Department  
of History



Lesson Title	Veterans Day Poetry Unit
Grade(s)	4th grade
Time (Minutes/ Days)	7 days, approximately 30 minutes per day  *This project should take place shortly before Veterans Day, ideally two weeks before, so that the final poems can be sent to Veteran organizations if chosen.

## Lesson Overview

This lesson engages students in Veterans' history through poetry. Students will learn about Veterans, analyze poems related to Veterans, and create their own original Veteran poems to send to Veterans for Veterans Day.

## Essential Questions

What is a Veteran?  
What is a National Cemetery?  
How can poetry express the sacrifices and courage of Veterans?

## Florida State Standards

ELA.4.R.1.4: Explain how rhyme and structure create meaning in a poem.

ELA.4.R.1.2: Explain a stated or implied theme and how it develops, using details, in a literary text.

ELA.4.R.1.3: Identify the narrator's point of view and explain the difference between a narrator's point of view and character perspective in a literary text

ELA.4.R.3.1: Explain how figurative language contributes to meaning in text(s).

## Required Materials

- [Veterans Poetry](#) presentation
- Note Taker (Optional- See Below)
- Paper
- Crayons/Markers/Colored Pencils
- Envelopes

# UCF Veterans Legacy Program Curricular Materials



VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
National Cemetery Administration



Department  
of History



- Stamps

## Learning Objectives

Students will understand what Veterans and National Cemeteries are.  
Students will be able to analyze poems about Veterans and their stories.  
Students will write original poems on the topic of Veterans.

## Procedure

### Day 1: Learn about Veterans

- On a teacher presentation device, navigate to <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/veteran/>.
- Read the article together, pausing to discuss what a Veteran is and to allow students to make connections and ask questions.
- Click the "Vocabulary" tab to view the glossary for the article as well.
- Discuss the following questions together, and review the answers as a class. (See answers in the presentation, on slides following the questions.)
  - What is a Veteran?
  - What are the five branches of the U.S. Armed Forces?
  - When is Veterans Day?
  - What does it celebrate?
  - Which department helps Veterans and their families when they return home?
- Talk about the upcoming Veterans Day. Ask students if they have celebrated it before, and take suggestions for how we can make an impact for Veterans on this day (and year-round).
- Let students know that they will be writing poems for Veterans at the end of this unit.

### Day 2: Learn about National Cemeteries

- On a teacher presentation device, navigate to <https://vlp.cah.ucf.edu/instructionalmaterials/UCF-VLP-MiniToursClassroomIntro.pdf>.
- Move through the slides together, reviewing the possibly new vocabulary:
  - eligible (slide 3) - fit or proper to be chosen; qualified
  - dishonorable discharge (slide 4) - the dismissal of someone from the Armed Forces as a result of criminal or morally unacceptable actions.
  - interred (slide 6) - placed into a grave or tomb
  - memorial stone (slide 6) - a stone placed in memory of someone, although they are not buried there

# UCF Veterans Legacy Program Curricular Materials



VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
National Cemetery Administration



Department  
of History



- Discuss the following questions together, and review the answers as a class.
  - What is a national cemetery?
  - How many national cemeteries are there in the U.S.?
  - Can a spouse (husband or wife) of a veteran be buried in a national cemetery?
  - When is the earliest known burial in St. Augustine National Cemetery?
  - What is believed to be the oldest memorial in any national cemetery?
- Talk about the significance of being buried in a national cemetery. Ask students if they have ever visited one or if they know anyone buried in one.

## Days 3-5: Read Poems about Veterans

- Read the poems from the slides and have students discuss/answer the questions on each slide.
- Student responses may be in any form that works for your class: verbal discussion (whole group, partners, etc.), written response, quick answers on dry-erase boards, etc.
- Note that poems are broken up on multiple slides (look for the “continued” note in the bottom right corner of the slide).
- Questions are placed in blue text boxes, and answers are on the following slide in gold boxes.
- As you read the poems, encourage any additional discussion or connections that students may have to the topic, specifically friends or family who are Veterans, remembering those we’ve lost, etc.
- Some notes for each poem:
  - “In Flanders Fields”
    - Share that Flanders Fields was a major battlefield during WWI. Many soldiers from around the world were wounded or died there.
    - Discuss the significance of poppies: a symbol of remembrance, inspired by this very poem.
    - You can watch this short video which shows lines from the poems written with poppies: <https://youtu.be/Z1PG3jOHueQ>
    - Really dive into the fact that this poem is written from the perspective of a soldier who has died.
  - “You Are A Soldier”
    - Discuss reasons that soldiers may choose to go into service.
    - Share that many soldiers deploy overseas, and talk about the sacrifices they (and their families) make to protect our

# UCF Veterans Legacy Program Curricular Materials



VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
National Cemetery Administration



Department  
of History



country and freedom.

- Talk about how this poem is written from the perspective of a civilian (non-military person), and how that is different from “In Flanders Fields”.
- “Garlands”
  - Discuss garlands and other ways the gravestones are commemorated (wreaths, stones, coins, photos, candles, etc.).
  - Review that while the last poem was also written by a civilian, it focused on motivating Veterans who are living and serving now. This poem focuses on remembering Veterans who have passed and are buried.

## Day 6: Poetry Brainstorming

- Go through the slides to discuss some common types of poetry for inspiration.
- Review each type of poem. Note: limerick is not included here due to its typical comical nature. As an exception, a student may be able to come up with a poem that fits the limerick format and Veteran theme while keeping it respectful.
- Have students decide which type of poem they want to write.
- Review the slide of suggested topics that would be appropriate for this assignment (students may have other suggestions as well!). Have students choose their topic.
- If ready, students may begin the draft(s) of their poem(s).
- Remind students that these poems will be sent to Veterans and their families and should be respectful and appropriate. They should not reference excessive violence or triggering topics, etc. They should honor the time and sacrifice of the Veterans.
- If a student has a family member or friend that is a Veteran, they can write their poem for them specifically.

## Day 7: Writing Time!

- Give students paper and tools to create their poem. If time allows, students should draft their poems with pencil first to avoid mistakes in markers that cannot be erased.
- Help students that are stuck (rhyming and finding words for acrostic poems can be especially tricky)!
- Once student work is complete, you can drop them off at a local VFW or to an organization such as Soldiers’ Angels:  
[https://soldiersangels.org/writing-to-troops-and-veterans/?gad\\_source=1&qclid=Cj0KCQjwwuG1BhCnARIsAFWBUC3KNIU5S7CV5WpZVPriWIRXtSP676UGNtQ0amv9Cpj9QE.p9ZUPZudUoAu65EALw\\_wcB](https://soldiersangels.org/writing-to-troops-and-veterans/?gad_source=1&qclid=Cj0KCQjwwuG1BhCnARIsAFWBUC3KNIU5S7CV5WpZVPriWIRXtSP676UGNtQ0amv9Cpj9QE.p9ZUPZudUoAu65EALw_wcB)
- If a student has a Veteran family member or friend that that they wrote

# UCF Veterans Legacy Program Curricular Materials



VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
National Cemetery Administration



Department  
of History



their poem for, partner with families to determine how to get that poem to that Veteran.

## Possible Extensions or Enrichment Opportunities:

- Research Flanders Fields and their significance.
- Research John McCrae.
- Create Veterans Day or poppy-themed posters for the school.
- Visit other classrooms to share what was learned about Veterans Day.
- Visit other classrooms to read original student poetry from this lesson.

## Bibliography for Further Reading/Teacher/Student Use

"11 Things You Might Not Know About the Poppy." *Royal British Legion*. Accessed August 11, 2024.  
<https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/stories/11-things-you-might-not-know-about-the-poppy>.

"Cinquain." Poets.org. *Academy of American Poets*. Accessed August 11, 2024.  
<https://poets.org/glossary/cinquain>.

"In Flanders Fields." Visit Flanders. *Toerisme Vlaanderen*. Accessed August 11, 2024.  
<https://www.visitflanders.com/en/discover-flanders/arts-and-heritage/flanders-fields>.

"John McCrae." Poets.org. *Academy of American Poets*. Accessed August 11, 2024.  
<https://poets.org/poet/john-mccrae>

"Limerick." Poets.org. *Academy of American Poets*. Accessed August 11, 2024.  
<https://poets.org/glossary/limerick>.

McCrae, John. "In Flanders Fields." *Poetry Foundation*. Accessed August 11, 2024.  
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47380/in-flanders-fields>.

"Memorial Day Poems." *DiscoverPoetry.com*. Accessed August 11, 2024.  
<https://discoverpoetry.com/poems/memorial-day-poems/>.

National Geographic Society. "Encyclopedic Entry: Veteran." *National Geographic Education*. Last modified October 19, 2023.  
<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/veteran/>.

Peterson, Lewis. "You Are a Soldier." *AllPoetry.com*. July 3, 2004.

# UCF Veterans Legacy Program Curricular Materials



VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
National Cemetery Administration



Department  
of History



<https://allpoetry.com/poem/703484-You-Are-A-Soldier--Free-verse-Poem--by-The-Fallen-Poet>.

UCF VLP Team. "Mini-Themed Tour Introduction." *UCF Veterans Legacy Program*. Accessed August 8, 2024.

<https://vlp.cah.ucf.edu/instructionalmaterials/UCF-VLP-MiniToursClassroomIntro.pdf>.

"Writing to Troops and Veterans." *Soldiers' Angels*. April 15, 2022.

[https://soldiersangels.org/writing-to-troops-and-veterans/?gad\\_source=1&qclid=Cj0KCQjwwuG1BhCnARIsAFWBUC3KNIU5S7CV5WpZVPriWIRXtSP676UGNtQ0amv9Cpj9QE.p9ZUPZudUoAu65EALw\\_wcB](https://soldiersangels.org/writing-to-troops-and-veterans/?gad_source=1&qclid=Cj0KCQjwwuG1BhCnARIsAFWBUC3KNIU5S7CV5WpZVPriWIRXtSP676UGNtQ0amv9Cpj9QE.p9ZUPZudUoAu65EALw_wcB).

# Veterans Poetry Unit Note Taker

## Day 1- Learn About Veterans

[Read this article](#) and answer the questions below.

What is a Veteran?	
What are the five branches of the Armed Forces?	
When is Veterans Day?	
What does Veterans Day celebrate?	
Which department helps Veterans and their families when they return home?	



**VA**



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
National Cemetery Administration



**Department  
of History**



UCF Veterans Legacy Program  
vlp.cah.ucf.edu

Day 2- Learn about National Cemeteries

[Go to this link](#) to go on a digital mini-tour introduction with information about St. Augustine National Cemetery. While you work through this introduction, answer the questions below.

What is a national cemetery?	
How many national cemeteries are there in the U.S.?	
Can a spouse (husband or wife) of a Veteran be buried in a national cemetery?	
When is the earliest known burial in St. Augustine National Cemetery?	
What is believed to be the oldest memorial in any national cemetery?	



**VA**



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
National Cemetery Administration



**Department  
of History**



UCF Veterans Legacy Program  
vlp.cah.ucf.edu



Day 3- Read Poetry about Veterans

As you read these poems in class, answer the questions about each poem below.

“In Flanders Fields” by John McCrae

What is the rhyme scheme of this first stanza?	
Is this poem 1st or 3rd person point of view?	
How does this second stanza help us to understand the perspective of the speaker?	
What is the setting of this poem?	
What does the phrase, “we throw the torch” mean?	
What is the meaning of the last three lines?	



**VA**



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
National Cemetery Administration



**Department  
of History**



UCF Veterans Legacy Program  
[vlp.cah.ucf.edu](http://vlp.cah.ucf.edu)

Day 4- Read Poetry about Veterans

As you read these poems in class, answer the questions about each poem below.

“You are a Soldier” by Lewis Peterson

What is the rhyme scheme of this poem?	
What is the speaker’s perspective of soldiers??	
What does stanza three suggest that soldiers may feel as they fight?	
How does the free verse structure contribute to the meaning of the poem?	
Where can we infer “back here” might be?	
What is the theme of this poem?	



**VA**



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
National Cemetery Administration



**Department  
of History**



UCF Veterans Legacy Program  
[vlp.cah.ucf.edu](http://vlp.cah.ucf.edu)

Day 5- Read Poetry about Veterans

As you read these poems in class, answer the questions about each poem below.

“Garlands” by Russell Wells

What clues from stanza 1 can help us to understand the meaning of the word garlands?	
How does stanza 2 contribute to the meaning of the poem?	
What “types” of garlands does the author write about in these two stanzas?	
What point of view is this poem told from? How do you know?	
What is the rhyme scheme of this poem?	
Who is the speaker referring to as “you” in the last line of the poem?	



**VA**



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
National Cemetery Administration



**Department  
of History**



UCF Veterans Legacy Program  
[vlp.cah.ucf.edu](http://vlp.cah.ucf.edu)

Day 6- Poetry Brainstorm

1. What type of poem will you write?

2. What will your topic be for your poem?

3. Brainstorm ideas for your poem below.



**VA**



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
National Cemetery Administration



**Department  
of History**



UCF Veterans Legacy Program  
[vlp.cah.ucf.edu](http://vlp.cah.ucf.edu)

## Day 7- Poetry Draft

Before you create and decorate the final draft of your poem, use the space below to write a first draft.



**VA**



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
National Cemetery Administration



**Department  
of History**



UCF Veterans Legacy Program  
[vlp.cah.ucf.edu](http://vlp.cah.ucf.edu)