

SUGGESTED ADDRESS FOR ARMISTICE DAY OBSERVANCE
NOVEMBER 11, 1944
(For delivery before high school students)

*Amer.
Holidays
Armistice
Day*

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The American Legion

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The last resting place of the Unknown Soldier of World War I is in Arlington, Virginia, the largest and most notable of our 93 National Cemeteries. This Cemetery is a sanctuary for any veteran of the naval or military forces who gave his life for his country.

The Arlington National Cemetery is located on Arlington Heights, across the Potomac River and overlooking our Nation's beautiful Capitol.

There every Armistice Day and Memorial Day, services in which the American Legion has a leading part dedicate our nation anew to the ideals of the republic for which our soldiers and sailors fought and died. Here are buried more than 47,000 veterans of all of our wars.

The name of General Robert E. Lee, leader of the Confederacy, is linked with Arlington Heights. It was while living here that General Lee decided to cast his lot with the South in the Civil War. During the war a ring of forts was built on the Heights, then a military hospital, and finally a burial ground was established near the Lee mansion. Thus Arlington National Cemetery came into existence.

At eleven o'clock today the President of the United States, the National Commander of The American Legion, and other distinguished Americans, are participating in the observance of the Armistice which marked the firing of the last shot in World War I and which hailed the dawn of a new era of peace 26 years ago.

Some of our World War I comrades lie in eternal sleep at Arlington, buddies for whom the last reveille sounded more than 26 years ago. We knew these veterans. They were real fellows; they, too, wanted to live.

We won World War I on the flaming battlefields of Europe. We lost the peace. Our buddies thought that they were dying to end all wars. But now our sons, and the little curly-haired fellow's dad just down the street, are out there today fighting World War I all over again -- and dying -- on far-flung battlefields under world horizons. The war we won, we also lost 26 years ago because the world was not prepared to write an enduring peace.

So today, with the Second World War, the most destructive of all wars, not yet won by months -- perhaps years -- I come before you with a message which can hardly flash back to those early and joyous Armistice Day celebrations -- because every day of this war tolls the knell of blood and tears, terrible heartaches, even death.

The fighting men who are pitting their lives hourly against cold steel, searing flame throwers, and other instruments of death wielded by a ruthless enemy, are our sons who were in school only yesterday. Growing up, like you, they were eager with hope for the future. Now, these fellows, because they love their country, their homes and their loved ones more than life itself, are winning this terrible war for us. Some of these grand fellows will come back; many will never greet loved ones again.

What a challenge is ours on this 26th Armistice Day!

It is our job to build a world of opportunity, a world of security, a world of freedom.

But, you ask, "How shall we build such a world?" "How can we prepare for the tasks before us?"

The only hope for the future lies in our people -- our young men and our young women -- the character and the intelligence they possess -- and, to some extent, the youth of other nations, since invention and science in recent years have made one neighborhood of the world.

Hitler used education to build a race of haters and ruthless killers. His education for war, torture of the innocent, and death, is now being outlawed forever from the earth by our fighting men.

That paper hanger whom, we hope, our fighting men will give a first-class hanging all of his own before the end of 1944, came into power only 11 or 12 years ago.

German youth have followed Hitler because Hitler dramatized Germany and created an undying love for the Fatherland in the hearts of youth. In the German youth camps speakers emphasized German unity, the need for German supremacy in world affairs, the ideals of the party, and the contribution of youth to the present and the future of the Fatherland. The boys and girls sang stirring patriotic songs, looking up to heaven and pledging themselves to Hitler and to Germany.

They believed in what they were doing, were convinced of the soundness of the Nazi doctrine, and desired to follow Hitler wherever he must lead them. These boys and girls were clear-eyed, healthy, well fed, and deeply patriotic.

Hitler knew that the fate of a nation rests on the education of its youth.

Here in America, 30,000,000 of you grand young Americans are defiantly challenging Hitler's right to kill, to starve, to torture and to enslave innocent people, by training daily to understand, to practice and to preserve the greatest heritage in the entire world today -- our own great American way of life. You are learning that the American Constitution and the fine things which it protects,

are superior to those of any other country on the face of the earth. You 30,000,000 are training to make and to keep America strong -- in fact, so strong that there shall never be another Pearl Harbor nor a goose-stepping gestapo to destroy world happiness and send many of our sons to premature death!

That America may be strong, we of The American Legion are dramatizing the fine things in American life, our beautiful traditions and our illustrious history, through youth programs.

Through Boys' State, more than 100,000 heroic young Americans have learned to understand how to make good government work, to appreciate the great American heritage and to support the American way of doing things. 91,000 of these fellows are now in our armed forces, 23 per cent of them being commissioned officers.

The National High School Oratorical Contest develops a thorough knowledge of the Constitution and creates an undying love for America in the hearts of youth. More than a half million brilliant high school students have participated in that program.

American Legion Junior baseball has enrolled more than ten million red-blooded young men in a program featuring fair play, citizenship and clean sportsmanship -- an activity providing the physical training, coordination of mind and muscle, and the lessons in teamwork so vitally important to our fighting men today. More than ninety per cent of these players, including several hundred major league stars, are out there today playing the more serious game of knocking out Hitler and the Jap war-lords for eternity.

We have placed more than 25,000,000 copies of Flag literature in schools, building patriotism and creating a thorough understanding of proper Flag display and Flag etiquette.

That Young America may become physically strong, we promote thousands of recreation, athletic and competitive sports programs, under trained leadership.

In fact, through a total of some forty character-building programs, we are making a great effort to hasten the day of victory, to write a just and a lasting peace, to prepare for leadership in the post-war world, to inculcate a love of country, and to create an understanding of our basic charters of liberty.

When we have won this war, our country must join an association of free nations, backed by force, to protect the peace and to prevent the recurrence of war.

But, you must never forget for a moment that the national interests of our country must ever be our first concern. Fine as the peace which is written after this war may appear, our country must remain sufficiently strong and powerful to make that peace live.

Our country must have a strong Army, a strong Navy, a strong Air Force, and universal military training of youth. America has twice prevented Germany in the last twenty-seven years from overrunning the world. But, if another insane Hitler, or another barbarous Jap world-lord decides to overthrow peaceful world government, he will first try to knock out America with his first blow; that is, if we are not prepared.

Each of you want to be physically strong; to play at games in which the elements of fun, competitive fight, and teamwork predominate; and each young man, between the ages of 18 and 22, should receive the benefits of military training for one year, this training to be a part of his education.

Do you realize that only 5 per cent of our young people participate in athletics? Do you realize that if all of you were to take a physical examination for service in the armed forces of our country today, more than one fourth of you would be rejected? That is the teen-age record, 25.4 per cent rejected under Selective Service!

Your brothers are fighting this terrible war which we hoped foolishly would never come, and did not prepare to prevent or to fight.

A year of military service, including physical training, much life in the open, constant medical supervision, the development of self-reliance and leadership qualities, the benefits of discipline and respect for authority, and citizenship training will be of great benefit to the individual and will help perpetuate a great nation.

The pacifists took over our country after World War I; some of them even went so far as to write textbooks for our schools. There is no permanent peace in pacifism! But the pacifists are already at work on a planned effort to prevent this nation from remaining sufficiently strong to protect the new peace. If the pacifists win out, you and your sons will be fighting World War III in another twenty-five years in a conflict which will destroy civilization for hundreds of years to come.

How proud you must be to be a member of this generation! Young America has proven its patriotism and its loyalty in deeds of valor and acts of heroism in tens of thousands of instances in this war.

You will want to learn to play the game while here in this high school just as Manual Medina played it a few short years ago.

Manual was a hero of the Junior World Series Championship baseball team from San Diego, California, in 1938. He played the game then -- and he played it later when he enlisted in the United States Navy. Then came a notice from Washington to his parents at San Diego -- "Killed in action October 12, 1942." Manual died a hero's death. He gave his life in the greatest game of all -- the battle for humanity.

The place was Spartansburg, S.C. and San Diego was playing the Spartansburg team. Manual was a substitute player that year but his team was battling it out for top honors.

Just a substitute! But his team needed runs to win, and those runs were on the bases. It was the kid, Manual, who got the nod from the coach to go in there and pinch hit. For a moment he hesitated -- he was a boy far away from home, and there were 6,000 fans sitting on the bleachers with every eye on him.

Then he stepped up to the plate, his knees shaking, but with grim determination written on his face, and perhaps a tear in his eye. He played the game -- and his team won the Junior World Championship title.

And now he has played to the greatest audience before the Great Umpire. He went in this time not as a substitute but as a regular member of the team -- the greatest team on earth. Manual enlisted in the Navy on April 9, 1942.

Yes, he played the game well. Played it with the loyalty and gameness learned on the sand lots in American Legion Junior Baseball. This time his team will win again -- win for Manual -- Win for the millions of boys like him -- win for America!

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