In Flanders Fields

by John McCrae, May 1915

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 our 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.
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Poppies were a symbol of death before WWI but it was this poem that made them a symbol for WWI. Encourage students to refer to how we wear poppies on Remembrance Sunday.

Gives an idea of how many people there are that are buried in the war cemeteries.

Crosses marking places – there were so many dead that there was not the time or resources for proper headstones.

Discuss with the students how larks are considered a symbol of freedom and beauty.

Compare this line to the one above. Discuss how contrasting the two images are.

The poet has given ‘the dead’ a voice. The ‘dead’ are now talking to the reader. This is a powerful writing technique.

They aren’t just the dead, or soldiers – they were people with lives and families, just like anyone else.

The voice of the dead is telling the living to continue fighting.

The torch is light – it is showing the way forward. Holding it high is a symbol of pride.

If the ‘way forward’ (peace) is not continued by those that survive and future generations, those that have given up their lives will be restless, as it would have been in vain.

Repetition of the referral to poppies. Poppies are a symbol of sleep.

A sign that they will always be remembered and represented by the poppies that grow in the fields where battles took place.