

Honoring our Veterans

Month: Nov.

Week #: 11

Day: d. Thur. Time: 30 min.

Vets in Your Family Tree

Life Tree Learning Systems ©

Objectives/Aims

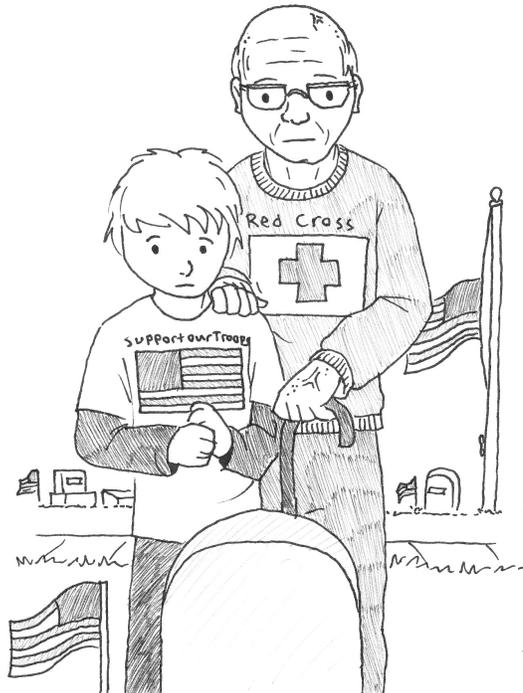
The students will: honor veterans and acknowledge the sacrifices they make to protect our country and our freedoms; understand why some people choose to be conscientious objectors.

Materials

photos and memorabilia (no weapons!) from veterans or COs from the students' family tree

Illustration

The boy is honoring the memory of his grandfather who was a Marine in WWII. He died trying to capture the island Tinian and its airstrip. Latter that same airstrip launched the B-29 bomber Enola Gay which dropped an atomic bomb killing some 350,000 people. Behind the boy stands his other grandfather, who he also highly respects. This grandfather was a conscientious objector during the war and did alternative service with the Red Cross.



Background

Whether one believes a particular war is just or not, or doesn't even believe in war, it is important to honor our veterans. These men and women are

willing to make the ultimate sacrifice: to give up their lives in order to protect our country and our freedoms.

Conversely, it's also important to acknowledge the conscientious objectors that choose not to go to war either because of their religious beliefs or intellectual convictions. Years ago, a CO might have been court-martialed, imprisoned, tortured or even shot (see quote below). Even given these consequences, these COs courageously stood by their convictions. According to today's law, a person can apply for CO status based on either religious or moral convictions.

“We were cursed, beaten, kicked, and compelled to go through exercises to the extent that a few were unconscious for some minutes. They kept it up for the greater part of the afternoon, and then those who could possibly stand on their feet were compelled to take cold shower baths. One of the boys was scrubbed with a scrubbing brush using lye on him. They drew blood in several places.”¹

” — Mennonite from Camp Lee, Virginia, United States, 16 July 1918. [13]

1 Wikipedia, Conscientious objector. Accessed at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conscientious_objector (Last visited 6/17/08)

Group Activity

Note: It's good to give the students several days warning prior to this activity so that they can find the needed photos and memorabilia.

Group Activity (continued)

1. Say, "Who are the people that are willing to sacrifice their lives in order to protect both our country and our freedoms?" A: *Veterans*. "It is important to both honor and recognize what these veterans have done for our country. We're going to do this by having you tell about relatives or family members who have served in the armed forces." Go around the circle and have the students share about their family members, showing their pictures and memorabilia.

2. Say, "There were also people, called 'conscientious objectors' who refused to go to war because they don't believe in killing. Years ago, a CO might be court-martialed or imprisoned, tortured or shot." Read the quote from the Mennonites who were COs that were imprisoned during WWI. Explain that Mennonites are a Christian denomination that are opposed to killing for any reason. "Even given these consequences, these CO's courageously stood by their convictions. According to today's law, a person can apply for CO status based on either religious or moral convictions."

Group Discussion Questions

1. What do you admire about our veterans?

A: Answers will vary but generally, they were willing to serve others, they protected our country and our freedoms, and were willing to make the ultimate sacrifice.

2. What do you think about the CO's?

A: Answers will vary.

3. Do you think these CO's, who live in a free and democratic country, should have the right to live their lives according to their beliefs and convictions?

A: Yes, unless we are hypocrites. (hypocrites say or believe one thing, but do the opposite)

Variations/Extensions

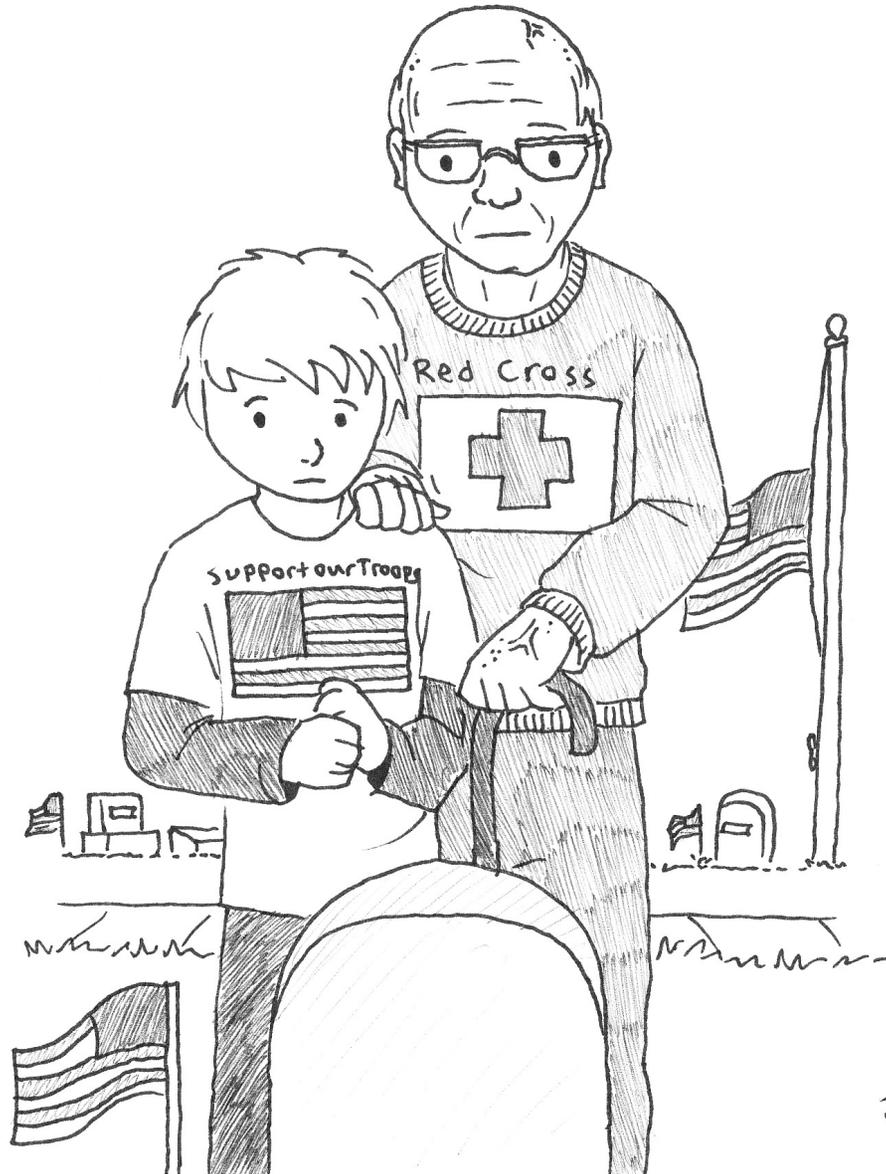
Conclusion

Say, "Someday you might be called upon, or you might decide on your own, to join the armed forces. It is an honor and a privilege to do so. On the other hand, it is not a decision to be taken lightly. Search your heart carefully.

Once again, we honor our veterans. They were willing to make the ultimate sacrifice: to give up their lives so that you and I could live in a free country. Think about it: you could be living in a country where people tell you what to think and what to do, where you live a life not much better than that of a slave.

We also recognize the CO's who had the courage to stand up for their convictions. This makes America strong because they exercised their freedom to 'disagree.' May our character be as strong as theirs."

Honoring our Veterans: Vets in Your Family Tree



July 30, 2009
Lucas Borein-
Holumb

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