FLUENCY-BUILDING READER'S THEATER FOR GRADES 4 - 8



Meets Standards

War Stories

Why We Recognize Veterans' Day

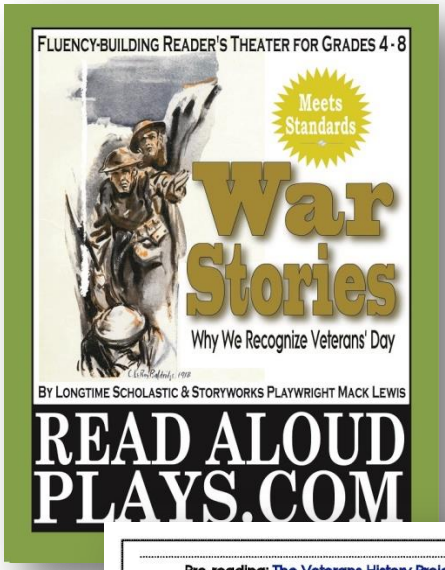
BY LONGTIME SCHOLASTIC & STORYWORKS PLAYWRIGHT MACK LEWIS

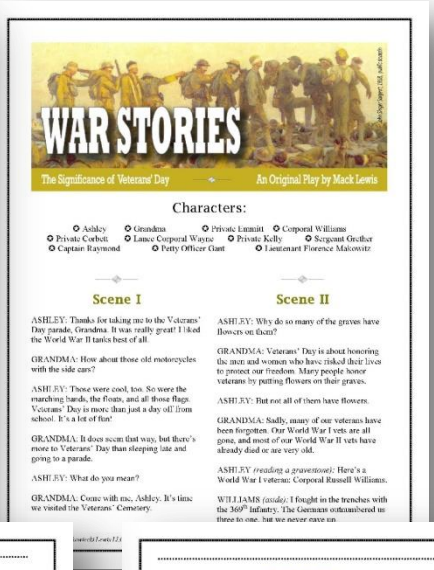
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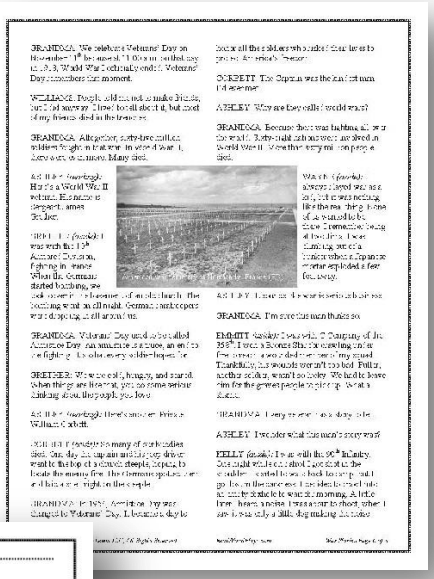
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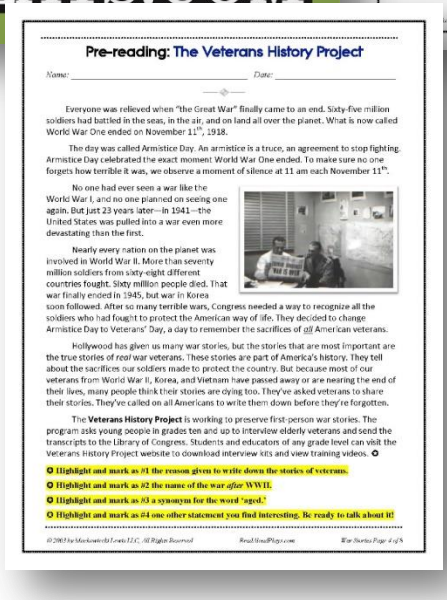
Thank you for purchasing ***War Stories***. Originally published in *Read Aloud Plays: Symbols of America* (Scholastic, 2003), it reveals the history behind Veterans' Day and the importance of recognizing it, giving a meaningful reminder about the sacrifices made by America's soldiers. The play has speaking parts for eleven actors and comes with two comprehension activities. Great for reader's theater, podcast, or stage performance, it's most appropriate for grades 4 and up, though a strong third grade could handle it given appropriate practice.

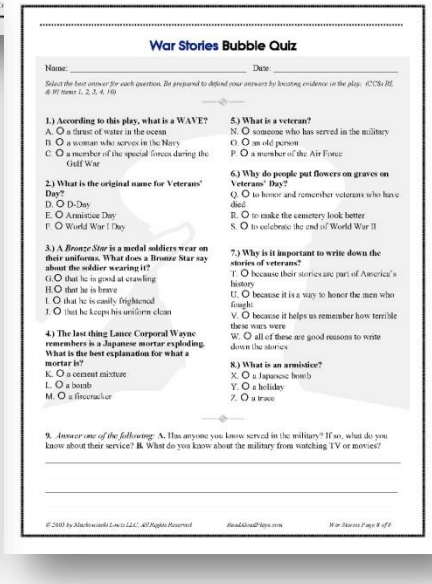
If the script meets your needs, please be sure to follow me and leave a positive review. Remember, anything less than 5 out of 5 stars is considered negative. Thanks!

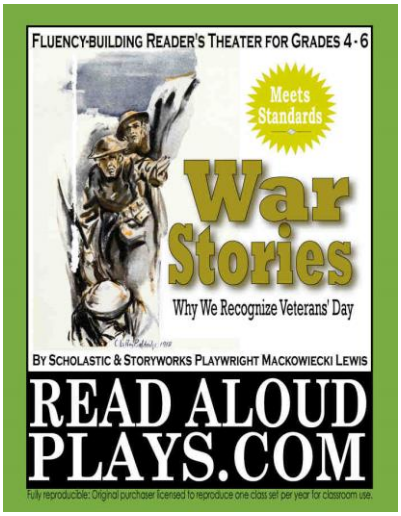












Whether read as a class for Veterans' Day or fully enacted as part of your history curriculum, "***War Stories***" gives students a meaningful reminder about the sacrifices of America's soldiers. It shows a woman taking her granddaughter to the Veterans' Cemetery. As they read the grave markers, the audience is treated to the lost stories of our deceased veterans. Though fictional, the stories are based on real events and real soldiers. They represent just a few of the millions of war stories America is in danger of losing. While the play's obvious themes include sacrifice and war, the main idea is that it's important to record individual histories, no matter how tragic. First person accounts help us form an accurate portrayal of important events. Be sure to review the optional **pre-reading activity** for more historically-accurate details (page 4). "War Stories" originally appeared in *Read Aloud Plays: Symbols of America* (Scholastic, 2003)

Play: parts for eleven students, including Grandma and Ashley, the two primary characters. Though "Ashley" is given a specific name in the script, consider substituting with the name of the student playing the part. The play is geared for grades 4 through 8 and potentially advanced third graders.

Standards: *play performance:* Speaking & Listening #6; *post-play discussion:* Literature #2, 3, 5, 6; Speaking & Listening #1; *bubble quiz:* Lit #1, 2, 3, 4, 10; *pre-reading activity:* Info. Text # 1, 2

Key: 1. B; 2. E; 3. H; 4. L; 5. N; 6. Q; 7. W; 8. Z; 9. *answers will vary*. **Pre-reading**: **1.** "…before they're forgotten forever," paragraph 5; **2.** "Korea," para. 4; **3.** "elderly," para. 6; **4.** *answers will vary*.

Resources:
U.S. Naval Historical Center: http://www.history.navy.mil/index.html
U.S. Army Center for Military History: http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/
Tankbooks.com: http://www.tankbooks.com/stories/stories.htm
The National World War II Memorial: http://www.wwiimemorial.com/
The Story of World War II by Stewart Graff, 1978, Dutton, NY
An Album of World War I by Dorothy Hoobler, 1976, Franklin Watts, NY
The Military History of the Korean War by S.L.A. Marshall, 1963, Franklin Watts, NY

Photos: All photos and illustrations are from the Public Domain.

Extension Activities:
- ***Collect oral histories.*** Have your students interview family members who have served in the armed forces during war time. Collect and share the stories in print or electronically. Visit the Veterans History Project online for tips and training.
- ***View pictures from World Wars 1 and 2.*** Create a webpage or Power Point show with details about the images, perhaps using them to explain trench warfare, D Day, The Blitz, or other elements. Wikipedia is a good source, but be sure to preview to protect young students from graphic images.
- ***Take a field trip.*** Visit a veteran's cemetery, charging you students with identifying and recording the service ranks of those buried there. Talk to cemetery management prior to visiting, and make sure you school your students on the etiquette of visiting a gravesite.
- ***Rank the officers.*** Have students research the enlisted and officer ranks of each military branch, then create a classroom chart showing how each branch compares. Discuss how soldiers become officers (usually through education), and what it takes to advance in rank.

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Pre-reading: The Veterans History Project

Name: _____ *Date:* _____

Everyone was relieved when "the Great War" finally came to an end. Sixty-five million soldiers had battled in the seas, in the air, and on land all over the planet. What is now called World War One ended on November 11th, 1918.

The day was called Armistice Day. An armistice is a truce, an agreement to stop fighting. Armistice Day celebrated the exact moment World War One ended. To make sure no one forgets how terrible it was, we observe a moment of silence at 11 am each November 11th.



No one had ever seen a war like the World War I, and no one planned on seeing one again. But just 23 years later—in 1941—the United States was pulled into a war even more devastating than the first.

Nearly every nation on the planet was involved in World War II. More than seventy million soldiers from sixty-eight different countries fought. Sixty million people died. That war finally ended in 1945, but war in Korea soon followed. After so many terrible wars, Congress needed a way to recognize all the soldiers who had fought to protect the American way of life. They decided to change Armistice Day to Veterans' Day, a day to remember the sacrifices of *all* American veterans.

Hollywood has given us many war stories, but the stories that are most important are the true stories of *real* war veterans. These stories are part of America's history. They tell about the sacrifices our soldiers made to protect the country. But because most of our veterans from World War II, Korea, and Vietnam have passed away or are nearing the end of their lives, many people think their stories are dying too. They've asked veterans to share their stories. They've called on all Americans to write them down before they're forgotten.

The **Veterans History Project** is working to preserve first-person war stories. The program asks young people in grades ten and up to interview elderly veterans and send the transcripts to the Library of Congress. Students and educators of any grade level can visit the Veterans History Project website to download interview kits and view training videos. ✪

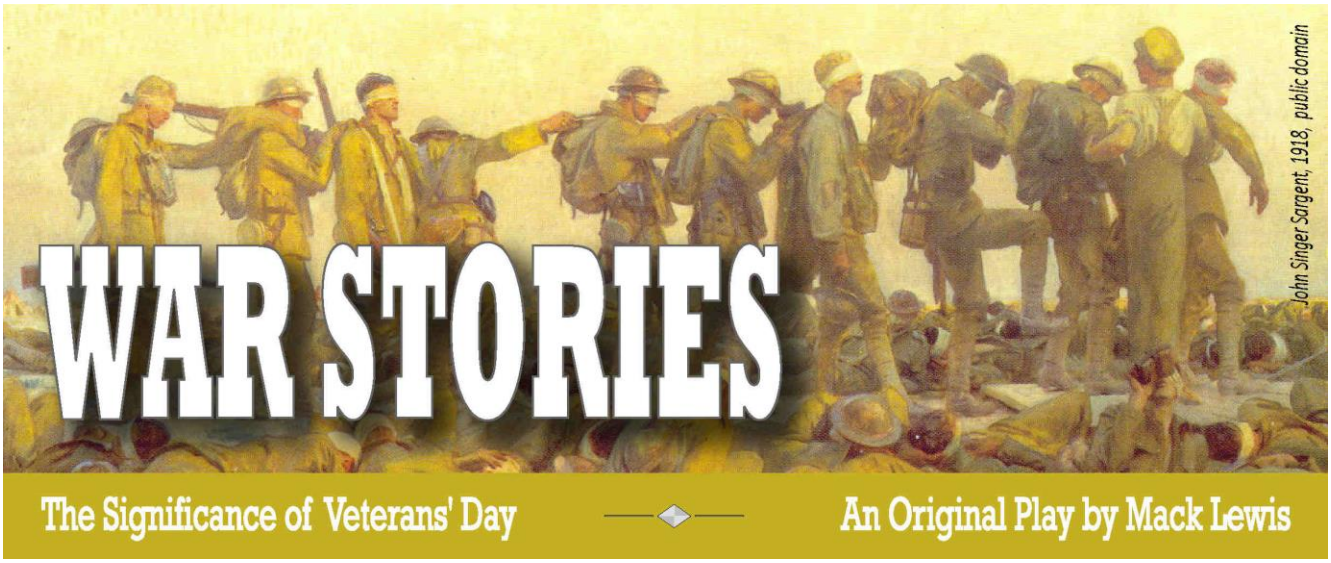
✪ **Highlight and mark as #1 the reason given to write down the stories of veterans.**

✪ **Highlight and mark as #2 the name of the war *after* WWII.**

✪ **Highlight and mark as #3 a synonym for the word 'aged.'**

✪ **Highlight and mark as #4 one other statement you find interesting. Be ready to talk about it!**

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Characters:

✪ Ashley ✪ Grandma ✪ Private Emmitt ✪ Corporal Williams
✪ Private Corbett ✪ Lance Corporal Wayne ✪ Private Kelly ✪ Sergeant Grether
✪ Captain Raymond ✪ Petty Officer Gant ✪ Lieutenant Florence Makowitz

Scene I

ASHLEY: Thanks for taking me to the Veterans' Day parade, Grandma. It was really great! I liked the World War II tanks best of all.

GRANDMA: How about those old motorcycles with the side cars?

ASHLEY: Those were cool, too. So were the marching bands, the floats, and all those flags. Veterans' Day is more than just a day off from school. It's a lot of fun!

GRANDMA: It does seem that way, but there's more to Veterans' Day than sleeping late and going to a parade.

ASHLEY: What do you mean?

GRANDMA: Come with me, Ashley. It's time we visited the Veterans' Cemetery.

Scene II

ASHLEY: Why do so many of the graves have flowers on them?

GRANDMA: Veterans' Day is about honoring the men and women who have risked their lives to protect our freedom. Many people honor veterans by putting flowers on their graves.

ASHLEY: But not all of them have flowers.

GRANDMA: Sadly, many of our veterans have been forgotten. Our World War I vets are all gone, and most of our World War II vets have already died or are very old.

ASHLEY *(reading a gravestone):* Here's a World War I veteran: Corporal Russell Williams.

WILLIAMS *(aside):* I fought in the trenches with the 369th Infantry. The Germans outnumbered us three to one, but we never gave up.

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GRANDMA: We celebrate Veterans' Day on November 11th because at 11:00 a.m. on that day in 1918, World War I officially ended. Veterans' Day remembers that moment.

WILLIAMS: People told me not to make friends, but I did anyway. I lived to tell about it, but most of my friends died in the trenches.

GRANDMA: Altogether, sixty-five million soldiers fought in that war. In World War II, there were even more. Many died.

ASHLEY *(reading):* Here's a World War II veteran. His name is Sergeant James Grether.


American war cemetery at Normandy, France (PD)

GRETHER *(aside):* I was with the 10th Armored Division, fighting in France. When the Germans started bombing, we took cover in the basement of an old church. The bombing went on all night. German paratroopers were dropping in all around us.

GRANDMA: Veterans' Day used to be called Armistice Day. An armistice is a truce, an end to the fighting. It's what every soldier hoped for.

GRETHER: We were cold, hungry, and scared. When things are like that, you do some serious thinking about the people you love.

ASHLEY *(reading):* Here's another: Private William Corbett.

CORBETT *(aside):* So many of our buddies died. One day the captain and his jeep driver went to the top of a church steeple, hoping to locate the enemy fire. The Germans spotted them and laid a shell right on the steeple.

GRANDMA: In 1954, Armistice Day was changed to Veterans' Day. It became a day to honor all the soldiers who risked their lives to protect America's freedom.

CORBETT: The Captain was the kindest man I'd ever met.

ASHLEY: Why are they called world wars?

GRANDMA: Because there was fighting all over the world. Sixty-eight nations were involved in World War II. More than sixty million people died.

WAYNE *(aside):* I always played war as a kid, but it was nothing like the real thing. None of us wanted to be there. I remember being at Iwo Jima. I was climbing out of a bunker when a Japanese mortar exploded a few feet away.

ASHLEY: It sounds like war is serious business.

GRANDMA: I'm sure this man thinks so.

EMMITT *(aside):* I was with C Company of the 358th. I won a Bronze Star for crawling under fire to reach a wounded member of my squad. Thankfully, his wounds weren't too bad. Fuller, another soldier, wasn't so lucky. We had to leave him for the graves people to pick up. What a shame.

GRANDMA: Every veteran has a story to tell.

ASHLEY: I wonder what this man's story was?

KELLY *(aside):* I was with the 90th Infantry. One night while on patrol I got shot in the shoulder. I started to walk back to camp, but I got lost in the darkness. I decided to crawl into an empty foxhole to wait for morning. A little later I heard a noise. I was about to shoot, when I saw it was only a little dog making the noise.

The little mutt jumped into the hole and curled up beside me.

GRANDMA: Their stories are part of America's history. But because they haven't been written down, many veterans take their stories to the grave.

KELLY: When the sun came up, I went for help, but the dog tugged at my legs and tried to get me to go the other way. He made such a fuss! Finally I turned around and followed him. As it turned out, the dog led me back to camp. Had I gone the way I'd planned, I would have walked right up to the Germans.


Soldier_of_Company K, 110th Regiment (Lossy, PD)

ASHLEY: Why don't they write them down?

RAYMOND *(aside):* Yeah, I fought in the war. That's all I care to say about it.

GRANDMA: For many veterans, it's just too painful.

RAYMOND: What's there to tell? That I had to shoot people? That my best buddy was right beside me one second and gone the next? Or that no one would give me a job when the war was over? It's awful stuff. Why relive it?

GRANDMA: For others, people don't realize how important it is until after the soldier has passed away.

ASHLEY: Look here, Grandma. It's a woman. Lieutenant Florence Makowitz.

MAKOWITZ *(aside):* I was a WAVE—a woman of the U.S. Navy. I worked at a hospital in England. A lot of the wounded were suffering from shell shock. Some of them thought we were on the other side, so they wouldn't tell us anything but their names and serial numbers. They were just farm boys. The shock of war was too much for them.

GRANDMA: Many women have served in the military. Their stories are important too.

MAKOWITZ: After D-Day, when our troops landed in Western Europe, the Germans began shooting buzz bombs at England. If we were bombed we were to pull the patients on to the floor and push them under the bed, putting their helmets on first. We would hear the buzz bomb whizzing. Suddenly its engine would stop and we'd wait in terror for the explosion. Thank goodness we were spared.

GRANDMA: Almost everyone knows someone who fought in a war to defend our country, our freedom, or our way of life.

ASHLEY *(reading):* Petty Officer Third Class Charles Gant.

GANT *(aside):* I was aboard the U.S.S. *Missouri* when Japan surrendered at the end of World War II. All I could think about was how glad I was the war was finally over. We were all glad to finally be going home.

GRANDMA: Maybe it's your grandfather, or an aunt or an uncle, or a neighbor. One way of thanking them is to share their stories. When we hear their stories we remember their sacrifices.

ASHLEY *(reading):* Lieutenant-Colonel William E. Lewis. . . . Grandma, isn't this Grandfather's gravestone?

GRANDMA: Yes, it is, Ashley. Grandfather had stories to tell, too. I think it's time you learned some of them. That's what Veterans' Day is all about. ✪

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War Stories Bubble Quiz

Name: _____ Date: _____

Select the best answer for each question. Be prepared to defend your answers by locating evidence in the play. (CCSs RL & RI items 1, 2, 3, 4, 10)

1.) According to this play, what is a WAVE?
A. ○ a thrust of water in the ocean
B. ○ a woman who serves in the Navy
C. ○ a member of the special forces during the Gulf War

2.) What is the original name for Veterans' Day?
D. ○ D-Day
E. ○ Armistice Day
F. ○ World War I Day

3.) A *Bronze Star* is a medal soldiers wear on their uniforms. What does a Bronze Star say about the soldier wearing it?
G. ○ that he is good at crawling
H. ○ that he is brave
I. ○ that he is easily frightened
J. ○ that he keeps his uniform clean

4.) The last thing Lance Corporal Wayne remembers is a Japanese mortar exploding. What is the best explanation for what a mortar is?
K. ○ a cement mixture
L. ○ a bomb
M. ○ a firecracker

5.) What is a veteran?
N. ○ someone who has served in the military
O. ○ an old person
P. ○ a member of the Air Force

6.) Why do people put flowers on graves on Veterans' Day?
Q. ○ to honor and remember veterans who have died
R. ○ to make the cemetery look better
S. ○ to celebrate the end of World War II

7.) Why is it important to write down the stories of veterans?
T. ○ because their stories are part of America's history
U. ○ because it is a way to honor the men who fought
V. ○ because it helps us remember how terrible these wars were
W. ○ all of these are good reasons to write down the stories

8.) What is an armistice?
X. ○ a Japanese bomb
Y. ○ a holiday
Z. ○ a truce

9. *Answer one of the following:* **A.** Has anyone you know served in the military? If so, what do you know about their service? **B.** What do you know about the military from watching TV or movies?

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