

Name : _____ Date : _____

ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION OF MEMORIAL DAY

Memorial Day, originally known as Decoration Day, began after the American Civil War as a way to honor the soldiers who had died in battle.

The Civil War (1861-1865) resulted in more casualties than any other conflict in American history, leading communities to establish formal practices of remembrance. On May 30, 1868, General John A. Logan, leader of a Union veterans' organization, officially proclaimed Decoration Day as a nationwide day of remembrance.

Initially, the holiday honored only Union soldiers, but after World War I, it expanded to include all American military personnel who died in service. Over time, Memorial Day evolved from a solemn day of mourning into a broader cultural observance that includes parades, family gatherings, and the unofficial start of summer.

This transformation has led to ongoing debates about whether the original meaning of the holiday has been diluted. While some argue that modern celebrations distract from remembrance, others believe that gathering with loved ones reflects the freedoms that fallen soldiers helped preserve.

Questions

1. What was the original purpose of Decoration Day?

2. Why did the Civil War play a significant role in the creation of Memorial Day?

3. How did Memorial Day change after World War I?

4. What tension or debate does the author describe?

5. What is the author's implied opinion about modern celebrations?
