

## The Wall

*"...this memorial is for those who have died, and for us to remember them."*  
- Maya Ying Lin, designer, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial recognizes and honors the men and women who served in one of America's most divisive wars. The memorial grew out of a need to heal the nation's wounds as America struggled to reconcile different moral and political points of view. It was not built without controversy. Some thought the long black wall resembled a scar in the earth and that the granite gave it the appearance of a massive tombstone on a grave rather than a memorial. Some did not like the fact that Maya Lin, the young college co-ed was chosen as the designer of the memorial because she had no personal investment or connection to the war.

In fact, the memorial was conceived and designed to make no political statement whatsoever about the war. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is a place where everyone, regardless of opinion, can come together and remember and honor those who served.

The Wall is a sacred and moving place—made more so by the personal memorials left behind—the letters, photographs, flowers, drawings, etc. Each night park officials collect the “offerings at the wall” and catalogue them in the archives.

Continue on to experience the Vietnam Veterans Memorial...



Complete the following activities:

1. Read *The Wall* by Eve Bunting and discuss the following in your group.
  - What does this story illustrate about loss? Name examples of loss from the story.
  - Why do you think people leave things at the wall? Would you want to leave something if you visited the memorial? (What would it be—why?)
  - Do you believe as time goes on people will continue to want to visit this memorial in 20 years? In 200 years? Why or why not? Do you think that memorial should be created for all troops killed in battle?
2. Read “The Power of a Name” and look at the photographs in the folder.
  - At first, Valerie is not moved by her visit to the memorial because she has no personal connection. Do you think you might have felt the same way as Valerie on a school visit to the memorial if you did not know anyone lost in the war?
  - Why/how did seeing the woman in the blue outfit change Valerie? Would it have affected you also?
  - How do you think Valerie would remember the memorial if she had not seen the woman in blue?
  - Are you surprised that the Valerie was just an 8<sup>th</sup> grader when she wrote this?
  - Which photographs do you like the best? Why?
  - What emotions do you feel as you look at the photographs?
  - Which photograph has the most emotion in your opinion?
  - If you were a reporter for a magazine or newspaper, what would write as a caption for each picture? Use the “Captioning” the Image sheet to record the group’s ideas.

3. Make your own personal connection to the wall. Visit the following site

<http://thewall-usa.com/>

Search for a soldier who either shares your birthday or lost their life on your birthday. Choose one soldier and write down their information on an index card:

Name  
Branch of service/ Rank  
Hometown  
Age  
Birthday  
Date tour began  
Date of casualty  
Description of casualty  
Location of name on memorial

Read the sent messages and then write your own message to the soldier on the back of your index card. Once you have edited and proofread your message post it on-line. Remember, do not use your full name or give any personal information. Once you are through, add your index card to the memory wall.