



MFL Sunderland Primary French Podcasts

intercultural
understanding

le 11
novembre

Welcome to the MFL Sunderland Primary French podcast. Intercultural Understanding – le 11 novembre

In this lesson you'll find out how the 1918 Armistice is commemorated in France.

L'Armistice et le 11 novembre

The Armistice signed on the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918 marked the end of the First World War, the victory of the Allies and the surrender of Germany. The cease-fire became effective at 11 o'clock.

"L'Armistice" is different to Remembrance Sunday in the UK in some regards. To begin with, it is always on 11th November, whatever day of the week that happens to be, and not the nearest Sunday to the 11th. The emphasis is still very much on the First World War, because that was France's major and most deadly involvement in international conflicts, rather than being shared more equally with the Second World War or subsequent conflicts.

11th November is a public holiday throughout France, and every city, town and village marks the day with a civic ceremony. In Paris respects are paid at the Arc de Triomphe. Civic and military leaders lay wreaths and the President relights the Eternal Flame on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. In smaller towns, there is a parade to the local war memorial. The parades are led by one person carrying the Tricolore and another carrying a wreath. The wreath is made up of seasonal flowers and is tied with a tricolore ribbon. At the war memorial the Mayor reads out a message that has been sent to every mayor in France for the occasion. It comes from the French Government and calls attention to the debt owed to France's own soldiers and those of her allies. Then there is the Silence.

Once the formal part of proceedings is over there is often a "vin d'honneur" – a toast – in the local "Salle des Fêtes", or community centre. That tends to last until about 12.30 p.m. when, it being France and a public holiday, everyone suddenly vanishes to go home and have a fine family lunch.

The symbol of remembrance in the UK is, of course, the poppy. In France it is the bleuet, or cornflower. The bleuets are distributed on 11th November and also on 8th May, to commemorate the end of the Second World War in Europe and VE Day in 1945.

There have been a few reasons put forward as to why the bleuet was chosen as the symbol of remembrance. Some say that it was chosen because of the vivid blue colour of the new uniforms of the young soldiers, who were nicknamed "Les Bleuets" by their older comrades, who wore blue and red uniforms. Blue is one of the colours of the French Tricolore and therefore a patriotic colour, and cornflowers, like poppies, continue to grow on the battlefields, where, together with the ox-eye daisies, they form a permanent tricolore of remembrance.

The bleuets are sold as stickers which people wear for the remembrance services. The money collected goes to help former soldiers, war widows and orphans and nowadays the victims of terrorist attacks. Part of the money is given to educational projects which promote remembrance in schools.

Here is some of the vocabulary that you can use to talk about le 11 novembre in French:

le onze novembre mil neuf cent dix-huit	11th November 1918
la Première Guerre Mondiale	the First World War
l'Armistice	Armistice
la cérémonie du onze novembre	the 11th November ceremony
l'Arc de Triomphe	the Arc de Triomphe
la Marseillaise	the French national anthem
la Tombe du Soldat Inconnu	the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier
un jour férié	a bank holiday

That's the end of this podcast. If you think you need a bit more practice, go back to the beginning and listen again.

Au revoir !

History of the Bleuets de France: http://www.bleuetsdefrance.fr/ewb_pages/h/histoire-oeuvre-et-de-la-fleur.php