



Tomb of the Unknown Soldier Virtual Visit:

Teacher Guide

This 360-degree virtual experience allows students to explore the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and Memorial Amphitheater at Arlington National Cemetery. Through interactive hotspots, students will learn about the history, symbolism, and ongoing traditions that honor unidentified U.S. service members.

Link to the 360-degree virtual experience:

<https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Portals/2/SCORM/story.html>

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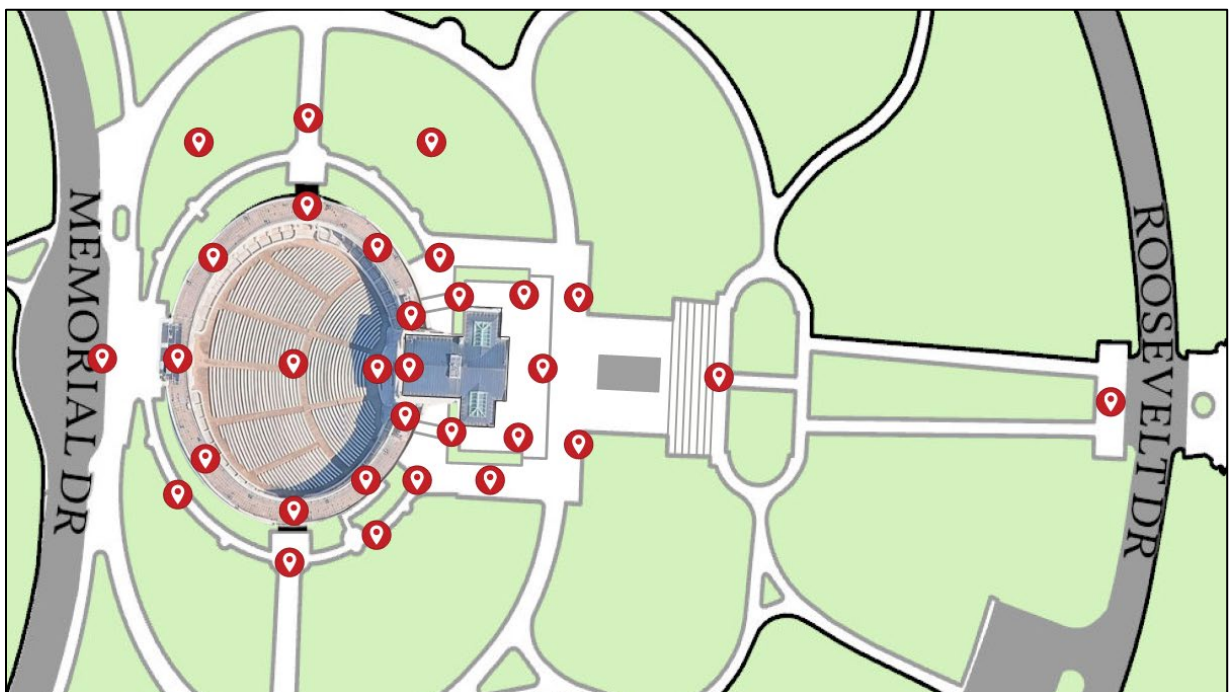
Navigation

This Tomb of the Unknown Soldier Virtual Visit is designed as a self-guided, interactive 360-degree exploration. Rather than moving through content in a single linear order, students can navigate between locations using clickable hotspots, maps, and interactive buttons.

Students may explore the experience independently, follow a teacher-directed pathway, or focus on specific themes or historical periods.

How Navigation Works:

- Students move between locations by selecting the blue navigation rectangles embedded within the 360-degree environment, which appear when hovered over with a mouse.
- Throughout the experience, students can select icons, buttons, and highlighted objects to open additional information. Many locations contain multiple layers of optional content, allowing students to explore topics in greater depth.
- The Glossary tab contains definitions of certain terms that students may be unfamiliar with. These terms are also identified throughout the virtual visit with bolded, underlined text that displays a pop-up definition when students hover over the word.
- At any point, students can open the aerial map in the upper-right corner. This feature supports non-linear explorations and allows teachers to assign specific sections.





Major Exploration Areas:

Exploration Area #1: The Tomb Plaza

This is the first view that students will see when they select “Enter” on the title slide. From here, students can explore the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the Tomb Guards, and the various ceremonial features surrounding the plaza.

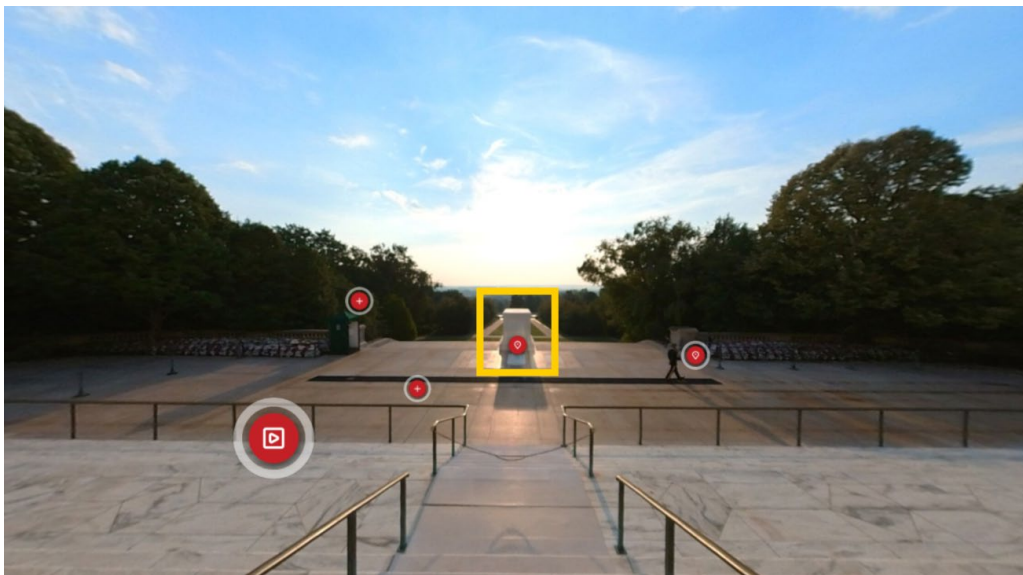
Highlighted interactive features:

- Video: Introduction to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier
- Tomb Guards: Learn More
 - Video: Introduction to the Tomb Guards
 - Video: Elements of the Changing of the Guard
 - Video: Meet a Tomb Guard
- The Tomb: Learn More (Exploration Area #2)

Exploration Area #2: The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

Students can investigate the histories of the Unknown Soldiers from World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War while examining how the United States has honored unidentified service members during different time periods.

Students can only reach these pages from the Tomb Plaza.





Highlighted interactive features:

- Video: Preserving the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier
- World War I Unknown
 - The Idea
 - The Selection
 - The Ceremony
 - The Design
- World War II Unknown
 - The Selection
 - The Ceremony
- Korean War Unknown
 - The Selection
 - The Ceremony
- Vietnam War Unknown
 - The Selection
 - The Ceremony
 - The Disinterment

Exploration Area #3: Memorial Amphitheater

Students can navigate throughout the interior and exterior of Memorial Amphitheater using multiple connected viewpoints.

Students can explore the architecture, inscriptions, and ceremonial features of Memorial Amphitheater while learning how this site serves as a national space for remembrance, military ceremonies, and public memory.

Exploration Area #4: The Tomb's Symbolic Landscape

Students can examine the design of the Memorial Mall, the surrounding landscape, and the views toward Washington, D.C. while learning how architecture, landscape design, and spatial design contribute to the symbolic meaning of this site.



Recommended Instructional Approaches

Option 1: Whole Class Guided Exploration

The teacher projects the virtual visit and navigates through the experience as a class while students observe, discuss, and respond to prompts.

Best for:

- Elementary school classrooms
- Shorter class periods
- Classes with limited technology access

Teaching Tips:

- Pause frequently for observations and discussion. Use think-pair-share discussions to increase student engagement
- Use the map to preview movement between spaces
- Limit hotspot exploration to maintain pacing
- Assign note-taking or observation tasks during exploration

Option 2: Small-Group Exploration

Students work in pairs or small groups and explore assigned branches of the virtual visit. Each group will investigate a different section and later share their findings with the class.

Best for:

- Middle school classrooms
- Collaborative learning
- Longer class periods

All students should complete the Tomb Plaza content. Suggested branches for small group exploration include:

- World War I Unknown
- World War II & Korean War Unknowns
- Vietnam War Unknown
- Memorial Amphitheater
- Guarding the Tomb & Landscape



Option 3: Independent Student Exploration

Students independently navigate the virtual visit. Students may:

- Follow an assigned pathway
- Explore freely
- Investigate a compelling question

Best for:

- High school classrooms
- Inquiry-based learning
- Homework and/or asynchronous assignments

Tips for Classroom Use

- Assign students a specific branch or historical era
- Use the map for faster navigation during limited class time
- Encourage students to revisit sections independently
- Pair students to divide exploration tasks
- Use screenshots or notes to document observations during exploration



Foundational Discussion Questions (Elementary and Middle School)

Introduction & Tomb Overview

- What do you notice about this place?
 - What color is the Tomb?
 - How many wreaths are carved on the side of the Tomb?
- What words would you use to describe how this place feels?

Tomb Guards & Changing of the Guard

- What do you notice about how the guards move?
 - How many steps does the guard take before turning?
- Why do you think the guards move so carefully and precisely?
- Why is it important to show respect in places like this?

Unknown Service Members

- What does the word “unknown” mean?
- Who is buried at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier?
 - Why is that person “unknown”?
 - Why is that person buried there?
 - When was he buried at the Tomb?

Landscape and Memorial Amphitheater

- What shapes, designs, or decorations do you notice?
- Why do you think this building was designed to look important or grand?
- Many parts of the Tomb and Memorial Amphitheater use design ideas from Ancient Greece and Rome. Why do you think the designers chose those styles for this memorial?
- What events and ceremonies take place here?

Reflection Questions

- How has the Tomb changed since it was created?
- Why has the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier been so important to Americans over time?
- What part of the virtual visit was most memorable to you?
- What did you learn about honoring service members?
- What is one new thing you learned today?



Advanced Discussion Questions (Middle and High School)

Introduction & Tomb Overview

- What details stood out to you when you first entered the virtual visit?
- How does the design of the Tomb and its surrounding landscape create a particular mood or feeling?

Tomb Guards & Changing of the Guard

- What message does the Changing of the Guard ceremony communicate to visitors?
- How do the Tomb Guards demonstrate honor and respect?

Unknown Service Members

- What is an unknown service member and why should we care about unknown service members?
- Why did the United States decide to create the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier after World War I?
- Why might the Tomb have been especially meaningful to families whose loved ones were never identified?
- Why do you think the United States chose to honor Unknowns from multiple wars?
- How did advances in DNA testing change the meaning of the Vietnam War crypt?
- Commemorating unknown service members became a collective way for the nation to mourn all of those killed in a conflict. As technological advances make it unlikely that we'll ever have another unidentified service member, what monuments or spaces could we build as sites for collective mourning and remembrance?

Architecture & Symbolism

- Why do you think the Tomb and Memorial Amphitheater use elements of neoclassical architecture?
- What symbols, inscriptions, or design features seemed most meaningful to you?
- How does architecture shape the way people remember history?
- Why might this location overlooking Washington, D.C. be significant?

Public Memory & National Identity

- What does the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier communicate about American values?
- How do memorials help shape national identity?
- Why do societies create places for remembrance and mourning?



Reflection & Civic Connection

- What responsibilities do citizens have in remembering military sacrifices?
- How should future generations continue honoring service members?
- What part of the virtual visit did you find most meaningful or memorable? Why?



Culminating Activity Ideas

Timeline Activity

Using the virtual visit, students will create a timeline of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, individually, in small groups, or as a class.

Keep it open-ended and require students to choose a certain number of events with which to build their timeline or provide students with a list of preselected events to place on a timeline. See page XX for a full list of timeline events.

Reflection Questions

- What events on the timeline seem most important? Why?
- What patterns or changes do you notice across the timeline?
- Which event surprised you the most?

Exhibit Poster Gallery Walk

Students will work individually or in small groups to create a museum-style exhibit poster about one section of the virtual visit. After completing their posters, students will participate in a gallery walk to view, analyze, and discuss one another's work.

This activity encourages students to synthesize information from the virtual visit while practicing historical interpretation, visual communication, and collaborative discussion.

The Arlington National Cemetery Education team would love you see your students' work! Share with us at usarmy.anc.education@army.mil or tag @ArlingtonNatl on social media.

Poster Requirements

Each poster should include:

- A title
- 3–5 important historical facts
- At least one image, sketch, or symbol
- An explanation of why the topic is significant
- One quotation, inscription, or meaningful phrase from the virtual visit
- A reflection question for gallery walk participants



Guiding Questions

- Why is this topic important to understanding the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier?
- What does this topic communicate about remembrance or sacrifice in the United States?
- How does this topic connect to American history or national identity?

Gallery Walk Responses

Students record:

- One new thing they learned
- One strong visual element
- One question they still have

Reflection Questions

- Which poster most effectively communicated its message? Why?
- What common themes appeared across the exhibits?
- How did different groups represent remembrance and sacrifice?
- What did the gallery walk add to your understanding of the virtual visit?

Memorial Comparison Activity

Students compare the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier to another memorial, monument, or commemorative site.

Possible Comparison Sites

- Vietnam Veterans Memorial
- Korean War Memorial
- World War II Memorial
- Air Force Memorial
- Navy Memorial
- Lincoln Memorial
- Pearl Harbor Memorial
- Local veterans memorials
- Unknown soldier memorials in other countries



Guiding Questions

- How do different memorials shape remembrance?
- What similarities and differences do you notice?
- How do memorials reflect the values of the societies that built them?

Suggested Comparison Categories

- Purpose
- Design
- Symbols
- Visitor Experience
- Historical Focus

For additional resources on monuments and memorial analysis and comparison, explore Arlington National Cemetery’s lesson plan, *Memorializing the Cold War*, available here:

<http://education.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Themes/Cold-War>.

Symbolism & Design Analysis

Students select one symbol, architectural feature, inscription, ritual, or design element from the virtual visit and analyze its meaning and purpose.

Possible Topics

- The sarcophagus
- The crypts for the WWII, Korean War, and Vietnam War Unknowns
- The Changing of the Guard
- Memorial Amphitheater’s architecture
- The inscription “Known But to God”
- The Memorial Mall landscape
- Classical Greek and Roman design features

Guiding Questions

- What does this feature communicate?
- Why was it included?
- How does it shape visitor experience?
- What emotions or ideas does it encourage?



Suggested Products

- Short written reflection
- Visual annotation activity
- Small-group presentation
- Class discussion



Tomb of the Unknown Soldier Timeline Events

- November 11, 1918 — World War I ends with the signing of the Armistice. Millions of soldiers died during the war, including many whose remains could not be identified.
- November 11, 1920 — Great Britain and France honor Unknown Soldiers with burials at Westminster Abbey in London and the Arc de Triomphe in Paris.
- March 4, 1921 — Congress authorizes the burial of one unidentified American service member from World War I at Arlington National Cemetery.
- October 1921 — The U.S. Army exhumes four unidentified service members from four American military cemeteries in France. Sergeant Edward F. Younger selects the World War I Unknown Soldier.
- November 9, 1921 — The World War I Unknown arrives in Washington, D.C. aboard the USS Olympia and lies in state in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda.
- November 11, 1921 — The World War I Unknown Soldier is interred at Arlington National Cemetery during a national ceremony attended by President Warren G. Harding.
- July 3, 1926 — Congress approves a national design competition for a permanent Tomb monument.
- 1931 — Construction begins on the marble sarcophagus using the winning design by architect Lorimer Rich and sculptor Thomas Hudson Jones.
- April 9, 1932 — The completed sarcophagus and surrounding memorial landscape are formally dedicated.
- May 8, 1932 — A memorial tree honoring the mother of the World War I Unknown Soldier is planted near the Tomb.
- July 2, 1937 — The Tomb begins to be guarded continuously, 24 hours a day, by the US Army.
- 1950–1953 — The United States fights in the Korean War.
- August 1956 — President Dwight D. Eisenhower authorizes the selection and interment of Unknowns from World War II and the Korean War.
- May 12, 1958 — Major General Edward J. O'Neill selects the Trans-Atlantic World War II Unknown in France.
- May 15, 1958 — Army Master Sergeant Ned Lyle selects the Korean War Unknown in Hawaii.
- May 16, 1958 — Colonel Glenn T. Eagleston selects the Trans-Pacific World War II Unknown in Hawaii.
- May 26, 1958 — Hospital Corpsman 1st Class William R. Charette selects the World War II Unknown aboard the USS Canberra.



- May 28–30, 1958 — The World War II and Korean War Unknowns lie in state in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda.
- May 30, 1958 — The World War II and Korean War Unknowns are interred in front of the World War I Unknown at Arlington National Cemetery.
- November 11, 1978 — President Jimmy Carter dedicates a plaque at the Tomb honoring those who served in the Vietnam War.
- May 17, 1984 — The remains designated as the Vietnam War Unknown are selected in Hawaii.
- May 25–28, 1984 — The Vietnam War Unknown lies in state in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda.
- May 28, 1984 — President Ronald Reagan presides over the interment ceremony for the Vietnam War Unknown at Arlington National Cemetery.
- May 14, 1998 — The Department of Defense exhumes the Vietnam War Unknown after evidence suggests the remains may belong to Air Force 1st Lt. Michael Joseph Blassie.
- June 1998 — DNA testing identifies the Vietnam War Unknown remains as Michael Blassie.
- September 17, 1999 — The empty Vietnam crypt is rededicated to honor all missing and unidentified service members from the Vietnam War.
- 2019 — Arlington National Cemetery replaces the aging linden tree hedge surrounding the Memorial Mall with 44 new trees.