

Who are the Tomb Guards?

To honor the service and sacrifice of the Unknown Soldiers, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is guarded at all times, even in the middle of the night when there are no visitors at the cemetery!

Walking the Mat

- While on duty at the Tomb, the guard marches 21 steps down the black mat in front of the Tomb, turns and faces east for 21 seconds, turns and faces north for 21 seconds, and then takes 21 steps down the mat.
- Next, the guard executes a sharp "shoulder-arms" movement to place his/her weapon on the shoulder closest to the visitors, signifying that he or she stands between the Tomb and any possible threat.
- The number 21 symbolizes the highest symbolic military honor that can be bestowed: the 21-gun salute.

The Changing of the Guard

- The guards perform a special ceremony when it is time to change who is on duty.
- You will see a relief commander and a new guard come out, and the relief commander will ask all visitors to stand and remain silent throughout the ceremony.
- The relief commander will first inspect the new guard's rifle and uniform.
- Then, the relief commander, current guard and new guard will salute the Unknown Soldiers.
- The new guard is then given the order to remain at the Tomb, and the relief commander and other guard will leave.

To learn more, check out our [Tomb of the Unknown Soldier education module](#).



TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY PACKET

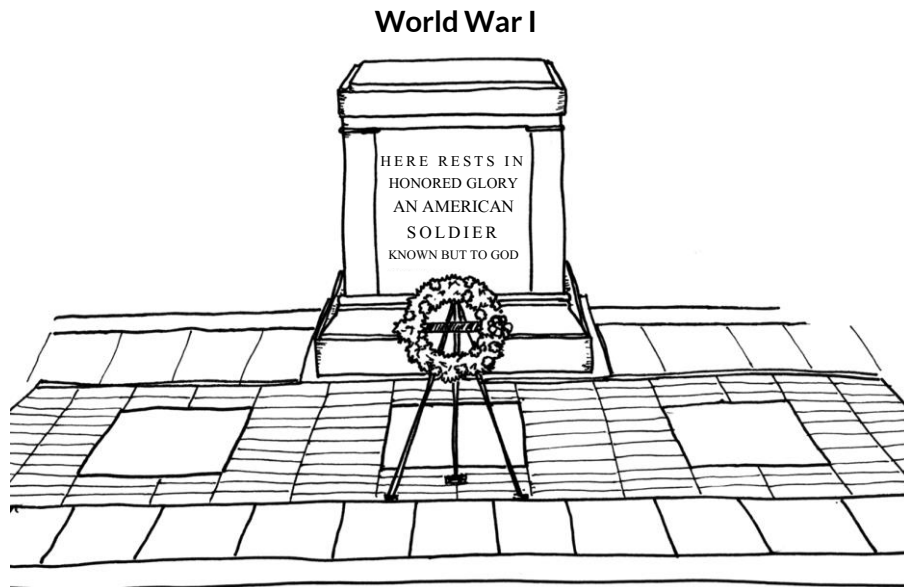


What is the Tomb?

In the past, there were times when soldiers were killed in battle and their bodies could not be identified by name. These soldiers were buried with headstones labeled "Unknown" or "American Soldier" instead of their names. To honor all these soldiers, the U.S. government chose to build the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in 1921.

There is one soldier from World War I buried in the Tomb, and then one soldier from World War II and the Korean War buried in the crypts in front of the Tomb. The third crypt is empty and honors all missing service members from the Vietnam War.

TOMB AND CRYPTS



World War I

Korean War

Empty Crypt

World War II

What do you notice?

What color is the Tomb?

How many wreaths are carved on the side of the Tomb?
How many columns?

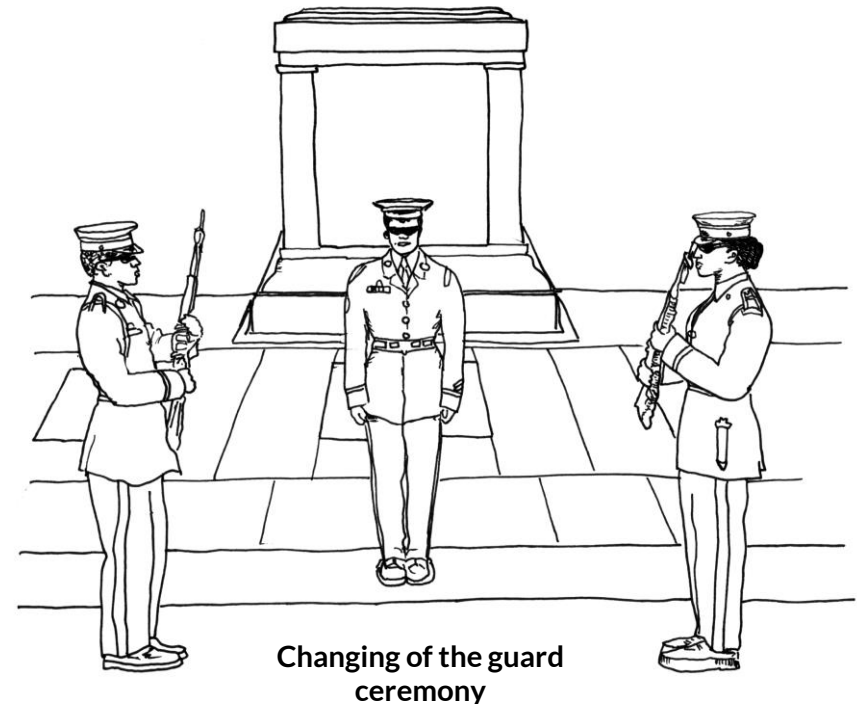
What colors do you see on the guards' uniforms?

How many steps does the guard take before turning?

What sounds do you hear?

How are people behaving?

How do you feel ?



Changing of the guard ceremony