

May



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MEMORIAL DAY NEWS LETTER

In Flanders' Fields

In Flanders' fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders' fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch, be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders' fields.

Major John McCrae, 1915



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At the start of the Great War, John McCrae was appointed as a field surgeon in the Canadian artillery, in charge of a field hospital during the 2nd. Battle of Ypres in 1915.

His friend and former student, Lieutenant Alexis Helmer, was killed in this battle, and his burial inspired the poem, written in 1915.

The poem was written as he sat upon the back of a medical field ambulance near an advance dressing post at Essex Farm, just north of Ypres.

The poppy flower, a central feature of this poem, grew in great numbers in the spoiled earth of the battlefields and cemeteries of Flanders.

McCrae later discarded the poem, but it was saved by a fellow officer who sent it in to “Punch” magazine, which subsequently published it.

On January 28, 1918, while commanding No. 3 Canadian Hospital (McGill) at Boulogne, McCrae died of pneumonia and meningitis.

His grave may be found at Wimereux Cemetary, near Boulogne, France.