**Introduction**

The present text want to be a summary of an individual work of reading, comprehension, text comprehension of documents concerning the cult of the Unknown Soldier, particularly the one of Great Britain.

**Activity 1: individual summary**

During the WWI, The British and French armies, who were allies during the war, decided to bury their death soldiers. The idea came in 1916 from the Reverend David Railton. The legend says that during his service as a chaplain to British forces at the front in France, more specifically in a garden at *Armentieres*, the Reverend noticed a grave marked by a rough cross on which was written "An Unknown British Soldier".

The churchman did not forget the episode and four years ago, in 1920, he wrote to the Dean of Westminster, to make a proposal. He suggested the creation of a national symbolic funeral of an “Unknown Soldier” and his burial in the Nave of Westminster Abbey "amongst the kings" to represent the many hundreds of thousands of dead. The idea was strongly supported by the Dean of Westminster, the Prime Minister David Lloyd George and then by King George V. At the same time, there was a similar undertaking in France, where the idea was debated and agreed upon in Parliament.

The selection of the fallen (maybe a soldier, or perhaps sailor or airman) began in France. The remains of six Unknown British dead were exhumed from Aisne, the Somme, Arras and Ypres at random. On the night of November 7, 1920, the bodies were carried to St. Pol in Northern France. The bodies were received by the Reverend George Kendall. The remains were then placed in six plain coffins each covered by Union Flags, to make them look the same. The Brigadier General L.J. Wyatt, commander of all British troops in France and Flanders, and Lieutenant Colonel E.A.S. Gell of the Directorate of Graves Registration and Enquiries went into the chapel alone. At random, the General with closed eyes rested his hand on one of the coffins. Two officers placed the body in a plain coffin and sealed it. The other soldiers were then taken away for reburial by Kendall at a nearby military cemetery.

The coffin of the unknown warrior then stayed at the chapel overnight. On the morning of November 8, a service was held to commemorate the sacrifice of the Unknown Soldier, officiated by chaplains from the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Non-Conformist Churches. On the afternoon of the same day, the coffin was escorted under a French honor guard and Kendall to a medieval castle near Boulogne, drawn by a wagon with six horses and following by a mile-long procession. For the occasion, the castle library was transformed into a chapelle ardente. A company from the French 8th Infantry Regiment, recently awarded the Légion d'Honneur en masse, vigil overnight.

On the morning of November 9, two undertakers placed the coffin inside another constructed of the oak timbers of trees from Hampton Court Palace. The coffin was secured with iron bands a medieval crusader's sword chosen by The King personally from the Royal Collection was affixed to the top and surmounted by an iron shield with an inscription.

“A British Warrior who fell in the Great War 1914–1918 for King and Country”

At 10.30 am, all the church bells of Boulogne tolled, the massed trumpets of the French cavalry and the bugles of the French infantry played Aux Champs. The casket was carried onto a French military wagon, drawn by six black horses to the port led by one thousand local schoolchildren and escorted by a division of French troops.

Here, the casket was loaded on the HMS Verdun receiving a 19-gun Field Marshal's salute. The Verdun transported the Unknown Soldier to Dover Marine Railway Station at the Western Docks on 10 November.

Six warrant officers from the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Royal Air Force and Royal Army then bore the coffin home to British soil. The body of the Unknown Warrior was carried to London in South Eastern and Chatham Railway General Utility Van N°132. The van has been preserved by the Kent and East Sussex Railway. The train went to Victoria Station, where it arrived at platform 8 at 8.32 pm and remained overnight.

On the morning of 11 November 1920, the casket was placed onto a gun carriage of the Royal Horse Artillery and drawn by six horses through immense and silent crowds, making its first stop in Whitehall where the Cenotaph was revealed by King George V. The King placed his garland of red roses and bay leaves on the coffin. His card read:

"In proud memory of those Warriors who died unknown in the Great War. Unknown, and yet well-known; as dying, and behold they live. George R.I. November 11th 1920".

Then the carriage, with pall bearers (Admirals) Lord Beatty, Sir Hedworth Meux, Sir Henry Jackson, Sir C.E.Madden, (Field Marshals) Lord French, Lord Haig, Lord Methuen, Sir Henry Wilson, (Generals) Lord Horne, Lord Byng, Albert Farrar-Gatliff and Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Trenchard, followed by the King, members of the Royal Family and ministers of State, headed toward the north door of Westminster Abbey.

Reached the abbey, the Unknown Soldier was welcomed by a guard of honor of one hundred holders of the Victoria Cross, under the command of Colonel Fryeburg VC and a chore of about one hundred women, that had each lost their husband and all their sons in the war. Inside, the Choir sang "O Valiant Hearts". The coffin was interred in the far western end of the Nave, only a few feet from the entrance, , using 100 sandbags of soil brought from each of the main battlefields, and covered with a silk. After the hymn "Lead kindly light", the King dropped a handful of French earth onto the coffin. Next it was lowered into the grave. At the close of the service, after the hymn "Abide with me”, the congregation sang Rudyard Kipling's solemn Recessional "God of our fathers" , after which the Reveille was sounded by trumpeters.

For seven days the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier of Great Britain lay under the watchful eye of a military guard while thousands of mourners passed by to leave their last respects. On 18 November and then covered by a temporary stone inscribed with the words:

“A British warrior who fell in the great war 1914-1918 for king and country. Greater love hath no man than this.”

The grave was then closed with a black Belgian marble stone featuring this inscription, composed by Herbert Edward Ryle, Dean of Westminster.

“Beneath this stone rests the body

of a British warrior

unknown by name or rank

brought from France to lie among

the most illustrious of the land

and buried here on armistice day

11 nov: 1920, in the presence of

his majesty king George V

his ministers of state

the chiefs of his forces

and a vast concourse of the nation

thus are commemorated the many

multitudes who during the great

war of 1914-1918 gave the most that

man can give life itself

for God

for king and country

for loved ones home and empire

for the sacred cause of justice and

the freedom of the world

they buried him among the kings because he

had done good toward god and toward

his house”

Textual references:

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* The Tomb of The Unknown Warrior at:

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http://www.westminster-abbey.org/our-history/people/unknown-warrior

* also at BBC:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic\_figures/unknown\_warrior.shtml