***FUNERAL RITES AND WAR MEMORIALS***

Ritual are symbolic activities that express our deepest thoughts and feelings about life’s most important events like birthdays, weddings or deaths. Funerary customs comprise the complex of beliefs and practices used by a culture to remember and respect the dead, from interment itself, to various monuments, prayers, and rituals undertaken in their honor. The funeral usually includes a ritual through which the corpse of the deceased is given up. Depending on culture and religion, these can involve either the destruction of the body or its preservation.

During wars, the most part of soldiers’ families couldn’t celebrate funeral because the body of the soldiers didn’t come back in their country. Although they didn’t allow to celebrate a real funeral, war memorials were built. War memorials are buildings, monuments or statues or other edifice to celebrate wars, victories, or those who died or were injured during a war. The oldest war memorial is the All Souls College in Oxford, that was founded in 1438, so that its fellows could prey for those who died in the Long War with France. War memorials for the Franco-Prussian war were the first to have rank-and-file soldiers commemorated by name. During the war, in the villages and towns of the countries involved in the conflict, many memorials were built, often listing the name of the local soldier who died, in addition to their names being recorded on military headstones, usually against the will of those directly involved. Nowadays war memorials are built to honor who died, instead to glorify war.

An important example of war memorial is the Cenotaph. The Cenotaph is the national (United Kingdom) War Memorial which consists in an empty tomb situated in Whitehall in London. Its function is to represent all the soldiers who died in the first world war in the name of the United Kingdom.

There are a lot of types of war memorials, here are the principal examples:

* War memorials often serve as a meeting place for commemorative services. As such, they are often found near the center of town, or contained in a park or plaza to allow easy public access.
* Many war memorials bear plaques listing the names of those that died in battle. Sometimes these lists can be very long. Some war memorials are dedicated to a specific battle, while others are more general in nature and bear inscriptions listing various theatres of war.
* Many war memorials have epitaphs relating to the unit, battle or war they commemorate.