

***Has the project offered you an occasion to reflect on the horrors of the War and the necessity for peace? If yes, explain how and give a feedback on the project activity that has just finished.***

The project has offered me an occasion to reflect about the horrors of the War.

We started this project three months ago. We analysed the letters written by people from all over the world. They imagined writing to a Warrior of the First World War; we can say that the receiver of the letters is the Statue of the Unknown Warrior at Paddington Railway Station, Platform 1 in London.

The 21439 letters are accessible on a website, opened on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2014 (the website will be closed in 2018).

Many of the letters had a deep meaning and some of them provided many hints of reflection; thanks to the letters we understood that today people are troubled by the horrors of the War. We also understood that many young warriors were bound to go to War and when some of them died their relatives didn't have a grave where they could cry; indeed, the warriors who died in France remained on the battlefields and for this reason War Memorials were built.

After analysing the letters we began studying the function of funeral rites and War Memorials. To study for this project we made individual and group work and then we discussed in class arguing and listening to different opinions.

We read and studied the text *"Why the funeral ritual is important"*, written by a researcher Alan D. Wolfet. We knew that rituals are symbolic activities that help people and their families to express their most profound thoughts and sentiments about the most important events of life; in particular, a funeral ritual helps people to accept death and offers a reason and a prospect of life.

Talking with our English teacher during a lesson we understood that in the last years people undervalue the importance of funeral-rites, because modern culture and society are afraid of death and has forgotten the meaning of a funeral.

Subsequently, in group works we analysed some chapters of *"The Unknown Soldier"*, written by Neil Hanson; my group analysed the Chapter of the Cenotaph, an example of War Memorial like the grave of the Unknown Warrior at Westminster Abbey. The Cenotaph, in Whitehall, is an empty tomb and its function is to commemorate all the warriors who died in the First World War; it represents an opportunity to remember an important part of European history.

From the 20<sup>th</sup> March to 27<sup>th</sup> March we went to London and we visited all the monuments we had studied about. At first, in London, we visited Westminster Abbey and in particular the grave of the Unknown Soldier. A very kind guide told us about the history of the Unknown Soldier, but it was only a refresher for us, because we had already studied it very well at school. David Railton, a chaplain who served in the First World War proposed to build the tomb that would represent all they who died in the First World War, but King George V initially did not accept the proposal immediately. Subsequently, Ryle (the dean of Westminster) accepted Railton's idea and wrote a letter to the king. In the end, the King accepted the idea and Ryle wanted to be recognized as the promoter of the idea. Studying the texts we have learnt to single out the character and the personality of the people, reading "between the lines". We understood that lots of times the richer and powerful people wanted to be more important than the other people (for example Ryle wanted to be recognized as the promoter of the grave of the Unknown Soldier). With the first Minister Lloyd George the grave at Westminster Abbey was finally built; George wanted his citizens to share a sense of belonging to the same community and wanted to give them patriotic ideals. The Unknown Warrior is one of the six dead men that L.J. Wyatt chose at random. He was

brought from France to England. We studied that when the Soldier was brought to Westminster Abbey there was really great ceremony and in two days about 1.5 million people went to London and visited the tomb at Westminster Abbey and the Cenotaph. We saw that also today both the grave at Westminster and the Cenotaph are very well maintained.

The school trip was very interesting and informative; from this trip we have understood that the English are proud and also a bit jealous of their monuments and history.

We studied also the history of the ritual of the Unknown Soldier in France, in the USA and in Italy. The First World War caused a very high number of victims (17 millions of dead and 20 millions of wounded) and when the warriors died their bodies did not return to their relatives. For this reason, War Memorials changed their function: before the First World War War Memorials were used to exalt the war and invite people to fight (to convince people to fight the governments presented the men who died in War as heroes), instead after the First World War they were used to commemorate the dead.

Thanks to the project we understood we should cultivate peaceful relations.

We also understood that the vision of the war and the world have changed; indeed, in the last century people appreciated the ideology of War, on the contrary, nowadays we have the ideology of peace.

By our project I understood the sufferings that the War causes and that we have to promote peace.

In the present century people are generally in favour of peace, but 62 countries are still in war; even if people know the terrible effects of the war the ones who govern continue fighting.

In my opinion each country must educate their young people to peace, explaining that peace is the only means to avoid tragedies alike the ones of the First and Second World War.