

Symbol Interpretation: Reading the National War Memorial

This handout will guide you in examining the artistic elements, symbols, and meanings found in Canada's National War Memorial. Read each section and respond to the questions.

Name:

The granite arch

- What shapes, textures, or design details do you notice?
- What does the arch symbolize?
- How does the size and structure of the arch contribute to its meaning?

The bronze statue

- Who is represented in the procession? Consider uniforms, equipment, and roles.
- What does the forward movement of the figures suggest?
- How might this group represent national unity?



Veterans Affairs
Canada

Anciens Combattants
Canada

Canada

Peace and Freedom figures

- Describe the appearance of the sculptures Peace and Freedom (pose, placement, symbols).

- Why do you think these figures are placed at the top of the memorial?

- What message do Peace and Freedom add to the overall meaning of the memorial?

Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

- What emotions or thoughts does this tomb evoke?

- Why is it important that the soldier is unknown?

- How does this tomb connect to the larger National War Memorial nearby?



Representation and perspective

- Who is clearly represented at the memorial?
Who might be missing, and why might that be?

- How can memorials change as society's understanding of service and sacrifice evolves?

Reflection

- Which symbol or figure stands out most to you and why?

- How does the memorial help Canadians remember war and sacrifice?

- Why is it important to have national spaces dedicated to remembrance?

