

“The Sounds of Remembrance Day”

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As I was sitting on the gym floor staring, a sharp, distinct sound pierced the air. My attention was instantly drawn towards the source of the sound like a magnet. I tilted my head up above the rows of students to see my band teacher standing and performing a song on his trumpet.

Each note from the trumpet clearly echoed through the gym that created a strong somber feeling that captivated me. I had never heard a song with such a sad but powerful sentiment attached to it. As the final measures of this song were played, the notes were drawn out, providing what seemed to be an enduring sound of mourning. It was as if the trumpet was crying out one final time. Finally, the song was brought to a conclusion and my band teacher held his trumpet at his side. The sounds of this song lingered in my mind, along with a reserved feeling of sadness.

I looked around and found myself confused at the atmosphere of the gym. Instead of a wave of applause in response to the song, a void of absolute silence seemed to take hold over the gym. My entire middle school sat in this state of total silence until my band teacher brought his trumpet back to his lips and began a new song.

This song still kept the same type of reverent tone as the first song but it felt more uplifting. The notes of this song were sharp and punctuating, notes with a brisk tempo. Listening to this song, there was still a solemn feeling that it invoked but I also felt like the song was inspiring me towards something. As the final bars were played, the song crescendoed into a poignant finish. This time there was applause after the song finished but it was still quite brief.

After the performance by my band teacher, my principal came up and talked for a time about what Remembrance Day was before dismissing us from the assembly. Leaving the gym, I found that I was still fixated on those songs and how poetic they seemed. Later that day, I learned that the first song played at the assembly was called “The Last Post” and the second song was called “The Rouse.” It was my first time hearing both of them but they left a lasting impression. That Remembrance Day assembly in Grade 5 was so memorable to me because of what it taught me. At the time, my younger self couldn't articulate it but I had discovered new things to value.

Hearing “The Last Post” and “The Rouse” for the first time, I learned about the true power and emotion that music could convey. In Grade 5 I had just started doing band class and learning about music. We played a lot of different musical pieces and arrangements, but I never really saw them for anything more than that. I thought that their meaning started and ended on the music sheet. I also didn't appreciate music that had a slower and more toned-down mood, as I thought that it wasn't exciting or interesting. That Remembrance Day assembly changed that for me. When I listened to “The Last Post” and “The Rouse,” the sounds of those pieces stayed with me and I gained new thoughts and perspectives about the purpose of music.

I saw that music extended past just the sheet of paper it was displayed on. It could communicate emotions that words could barely even begin to express. I also realized that the power of music is an enduring force. Both “The Last Post” and “The Rouse” were written between the late 1700s and early 1800s yet the weight and meaning of both songs remains constant through time. Finally, I came to the conclusion that those songs we played that had a more reserved or hushed tone were just as important as those upbeat pieces we played. Musical pieces like “The Last Post” and “The Rouse” give us deeper insight into themes of more complex emotions.

Along with my newfound appreciation for musical symbolism, that Remembrance Day assembly taught me more about the significance of Remembrance Day. When I moved to Canada, there were multiple things that were foreign to me but one major thing I had to adjust to was holidays and celebrations. I quickly got used to the high-profile holidays like Halloween and I made a lot of great memories. I knew what Remembrance Day was about since elementary school but I hadn't truly appreciated what it meant until that assembly. Hearing those two songs helped me grasp the sacrifice that men and women made in war so I could have what I have now. This assembly is what inspires me to remember those who are gone.