

**Senior Essay 3rd Place**  
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**Zone G-5**

**The People We Will Never Forget**

My father enlisted the first day of 1940. He had watched his brothers leave; his friends and cousins signing their names. I watched him board the ship destined for Europe before his silhouette disappeared amidst the fog. My father was gone and we knew not of when he might return. I knew little of war to begin with. The newspapers are printed with vivid headlines of death and politics and invasions but I barely know what lies beyond the Atlantic. When my father left I believed, and so did everyone else, that he would be back before we knew it. Thinking of war and what it might bring to our world, it rarely crossed my mind what could really happen. I did not ever think my father would die. I didn't know his name would be written across a slip of paper saying he had been killed in action. I wondered if my father had known what happened in war. He read the newspapers. When I think of the day the ship sailed away, there had been nothing on my father's face but pride. He had been proud to serve his country. *He had been proud.*

My sister left the day after Christmas. She donned the warmest scarf she could find and went off in search of a position in which she could contribute to the war effort. She became a nurse; wanting to help others overseas who were fighting for our country was what had inspired her to join. She left home with a smile on her face and what seemed like an adventure ahead of her. When we began to receive her letters she was not the same cheerful person who we had last seen. The war was brutal. She was seeing people with wounds she never imagined could be purposely inflicted by another human being. Screams would haunt her for the rest of her life and yet she continued to help every soldier she could. She would not stop because she knew that they were risking their lives as she was and that she needed to help these soldiers that were serving for their country. *She had been selfless.*

My brother joined the navy with his friend. They were young and reckless but they signed up thinking of what lay ahead. He was gone before I knew it. He would send letters but we never really knew where he was or what he was doing. We waited for him to come home and one day he did. My brother was alone when he returned. His friend was missing; so was his leg. The look in my brother's eyes would never be the same. His smile had changed too, though it would still appear every once in a while. He had gone away to serve and though he would live to see another day, he had already lost many things to the war. He had been brave to sign up and he would remember his experiences for the rest of his life. *He had been brave.*

My grandmother left Poland when she was seven. She had been told to pack her most valuable possessions and say goodbye to her home, as it would probably be the last time she saw it. She hadn't really understood what was going on at the time; she told me these stories many years later. Her family had sailed overseas. They had arrived in Canada with little more than a suitcase. She remembered holding her father's hand as he hugged his sister for the first time in decades. She can remember how different everything had felt. She was in a new country and was scared of what the future would bring. *She had been scared.*

I fold the shining pin into the felt of my jacket and lay the red poppy above my heart. The soft red petals and the ebony black of the rounded center of the flower represent so many things. So many people who had been affected by war are remembered on this day and their sacrifices and bravery still resonate with us today. Their pride, their selflessness, their bravery, and their fear are what bring their stories together. People fought for a future they weren't even sure of and they did it for their country, their families, their freedom, their friends, and even themselves. They fought for us. On November 11<sup>th</sup> of each year I think of the importance of this day and what it signifies. I stand amidst a crowd gathering in silence; there are so many people and yet not a sound rings out. It brings us together and not only that but it brings the people we are remembering together, too. They will never leave our thoughts. They will never leave our hearts. *Lest we forget.*