

Christian Norris
Veteran's Day Essay

To understand the significance of Veterans Day, ask a simple question; where would we be without our veterans? Where would we be if the men at Lexington and Concord had thrown down their arms and refused to fire the shot heard 'round the world? Where would we be if thousands of young Union soldiers refused to enlist to fight the Confederacy and for the freedom of their fellow man? Where would we be if brave Americans didn't sign on to fight halfway around the world against the growing grasp of the evil Nazi Germany and for the lives of millions of their European and Hebrew brethren? To understand the importance of Veterans Day one cannot simply read mere words placed before their eyes. To understand the importance of Veterans Day one must take account for their very state of being; they must peer deep into the very fact that they can freely read those words; that someone could freely write those words. They must look into their ability to live in a free and developed nation, outside of the grasp of tyranny and the clutches of poverty; that they live in the most powerful, prosperous, and greatest nation on earth: the United States of America. The honoring of sacrifices, celebration of victories, and appreciation of service and bravery all account for a mere fraction of a great number of reasons behind the significance of Veterans Day and hence the importance of honoring our veterans.

Chief among the reasoning behind the importance of Veterans Day and quite possibly the most immediate to come to mind is that behind the honoring of sacrifice. Hundreds of thousands of brave American soldiers have sacrificed life and limb for their fellow men, both their brothers in arms on the battlefield, and their friends and family at home. Thousands upon thousands of American soldiers have given their lives and bodies to this country. They've had their final breaths everywhere between right here at home, fighting for independence from Great Britain, to halfway around the world in countries such as the Philippines, Korea, Vietnam, France, Germany, and a million hot, dry deserts in a place called the Middle East, fighting for the freedom of their fellow countrymen and the allies and friends of the United States. They so selflessly made the ultimate sacrifice because they knew that above all they were Americans, and that any price was worth paying in the name of peace and securing freedom to first their fellow Americans and then to mankind, to annihilate the struggles of war and the bonds of chains and slavery. They also, in the heat of battle, made sacrifices to save the lives of their fellow soldiers, their brothers and sisters in the fox holes, saving countless fathers, sons, mothers, and daughters, doing everything from carrying their friends out of the heat of battle through a haze of gunfire and spray of whistling bullets to shielding the man next to them from a stray bullet making a beeline for him or a nearby grenade with a rain of shrapnel about to hail down upon him. There is no greater love than this; to lay one's life down for their friends, and this is the very embodiment of our veterans and why Veterans Day is so important; that this love, this willingness to sacrifice is not forgotten, that great men are remembered and that their sacrifices are known. That we take a day to acknowledge those honored in the rolling hills of Arlington National Cemetery, inscribed in the walls of the World War II, Korean War, and

Vietnam War memorials, and those buried in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier; that these sacrifices are honored with the greatest dignity and respect.

Yet, sacrifice of that caliber can also be appreciated along with the very act of service in itself on Veterans Day; the brave initiative of countless Americans to sign on to fight for their country and their fellow Americans. The actions of bravery from that of enlisting to distinguishing themselves in battle ought to be appreciated and serve as another reason for the significance of Veterans Day. The willingness to put oneself at risk of having to make a sacrifice thereof and to go through the rings of hell that war brings upon men both during the battle and after the fight is a greater conviction than many men possess. This very action, possessing the courage to sign one's name to go to war on its own is deserving of a great honor, but do not forget the distinguishing actions of extraordinary men in the battlefield itself. Heroes such as pacifist Pfc. Desmond T. Doss, the center of the new movie Hacksaw Ridge, who alone saved the lives of 75 fellow soldiers during Battle of Okinawa or Signalman First Class Douglas Munro, the only Coast Guardsmen to receive the Medal of Honor, who rescued 500 marines under fire during the Battle of Guadalcanal. Incredible actions of heroism and bravery on the battlefield are appreciated on Veterans Day, not just the sacrifices. Heroes who accomplish great feats such as saving others' lives, destroying an extraordinary number of enemy combatants, and other such tasks of heroism need to be appreciated for what they've done. Men who've received Bronze Stars, Silver Stars, and Medals of Honor; those who've done actions that bring upon an end to the war sooner and to save the lives of their fellow men must be appreciated. This is another factor for the importance of Veterans Day, as it is a day where these men are specifically honored and people are compelled to appreciate and give back to their heroes; so that they know that what they've done is appreciated by their fellow men, so that they are honored for their heroism as it is they who are the closest this world has to superheroes. Great men who take actions that save lives and end wars are deserving of more appreciation than any common celebrity, they deserve their one day, their one nationally recognized holiday where they are actually appreciated and acknowledged more than them.

But to acknowledge the actions of individuals, however heroic, great, and praiseworthy, on their own doesn't take into account the larger effort; the victories of thousands of our great American soldiers fighting together for their country must also be celebrated and as such serves as another factor in the importance of Veterans Day. It's important that Veterans Day is celebrated as it celebrates the men who've brought the United States every single one of its victories. This fuels America's national pride and power, as this country has time and time again proven itself in battle, with some of the bravest and courageous soldiers the world has ever seen fighting in its armies. Our victories at Yorktown, Gettysburg, Omaha and Normandy Beach, and so many other places are celebrated on Veterans Day as the men who brought those victories to us are honored and exalted. Should we not celebrate victory? Should we not celebrate defeating our adversaries, those against freedom and democracy? Should we not honor the men who bring these things to fruition? It is the culmination of the sacrifice and heroism of veterans that these victories are brought to us, and it is rightful that we take a day to celebrate these victories as they were hard fought and won, and they paved the way for us to

have our freedom, our peace, and our country. This country has fought hard for every inch it has crawled from being a ragtag set of colonies to the most powerful nation on earth. Imagine if none of our veterans made the sacrifices and had the bravery as they have for the past 240 years. These victories, with the amount of lives lost to gain them and the amount of effort put in to gain them by soldiers has led to an exponentially larger number of people to live and live free, and the men who brought upon these victories ought to be celebrated.

Accounting for all of the preceding factors behind the importance of Veterans Day produces the final point; the very fact of the status of our country. The status of our country's freedom and power are both significant in the celebration of Veterans Day as the goal and result of everything that our veterans have done, are doing, and will do. The sacrifices of every American soldier, the bravery and service of every American hero, and the victory brought by every single American to ever fight for their country has brought the United States to the level at which it is today. Their fighting, their spirit, their actions created the rebellious and free spirit of this nation today. They brought to this country an unprecedented level of freedom, one never attained before in the course of human history. Their actions also brought great power to this nation, allowing it to create the largest and most powerful military in world with the greatest and most influential diplomatic power, and to retain its status as the only superpower in the world, with the world's largest independent national economy. They brought the United States to the status of the world's greatest and most recent empire, the current iteration of legendary empires such as the Romans and Mongols. Because of them the United States was able to spread its reach across the North American continent, outwards to new territories throughout the world, and to make oppressive countries bend to its will in the name of benefiting Americans here at home while toppling fascist and tyrannical regimes throughout the world, serving to expand the reach of freedom and peace throughout the world while expanding the United States' political and economic prominence. Veterans Day celebrates the men and women who are the instruments of peace and freedom which the United States uses to unleash the power of free men and women upon the world in the name of the greater good, national freedom, power, and prosperity. This is why Veterans Day is important; so that the men and women who make this country great are celebrated for making this country great by their sacrifice, service, and victory in the name of freedom and national pride.