A Day of Remembrance
Memorial Day in the US was founded to honor those who have died while serving in the US Armed Forces. Many artists across the years have used their art to help us remember and reflect on the sacrifices made by generations of American soldiers.

Military Members in Art
Look closely at the selection of artworks from MAG’s Permanent Collection on the following pages. They each show different views of soldiers from past wars.

- What do you see happening?
- How does the artwork make you feel?
- What does the artist include to make you feel that way?

A Service Member in Your Family?
Many families proudly include members of the Armed Forces, currently, recently, or in the distant past. Do you have a soldier in your family?

- Can you interview them about their experiences? Share these images with them and see what thoughts they have.
- How can you tell their story? Can you find (or take) a photograph?
- Could you create an artwork like one of the examples from MAG’s collection?

Soldier on Leave appeared on the cover of the Saturday Evening Post on August 12, 1944, in the midst of World War II. Two months earlier Allied Forces had landed on the beaches of France on D-Day.

The scene in this painting was a common story: young lovers take what comfort they can from each other in spite of their lack of privacy, knowing their time together is brief.

For more information about this artwork read Karal Ann Marling's essay in MAG’s publication Seeing America.
During World War I, posters distributed across America often depicted the gritty reality of war. At left, a tattered soldier, wielding both rifle and grenade, fights for his life and fearlessly crosses “No Man's Land” to attack the enemy trench. At right, Navy crewmembers work together to fire at the enemy with a huge gun on the deck of their ship. A young woman framed by the Stars and Stripes seems to cheer them on. Who do you think she represents?

Both of these images serve as a reminder to those at home: Men are giving their lives in the trenches! The least you can do is lend your money to the government in support of their sacrifices, by purchasing savings bonds that help to pay for the expenses of war.

Which poster do you find most convincing? Why?
American Civil War 1861–65


The drawings of Winslow Homer, turned into prints and published in the magazine *Harper’s Weekly* from 1861 to 1865, brought the reality of the Civil War into the lives of hundreds of thousands of readers. Armed only with his pencils and paper, artist-reporter Homer lived among the Union soldiers and recorded battles as well as life at the front facing the same perils of combat, injury, and disease.

This artwork shows not the action of battle, but the aftermath. Soldiers help their wounded comrades to the tree-shaded location where the army doctor has set up his station to treat the worst injuries. Can you see the ambulance wagon nearby?

MAG’s Permanent Collection includes many of Homer’s drawings. [See more of Homer’s prints in MAG Collection.](#)

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In 1897, the Robert Gould Shaw Memorial was dedicated in Boston in memory of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, the first northern regiment of African American soldiers. Abolitionist Civil War hero Colonel Shaw and 270 of his regiment soldiers died in an attack on Fort Wagner in South Carolina in 1863.

For this monument, the artist Augustus Saint-Gaudens included sixteen marching soldiers and their leader to represent the regiment. At the time it was unusual to commemorate the regular soldiers on such a monument.

This memorial was created a generation after the actual battle. Why do you think it was commissioned? Have you seen other war memorials? Are they similar to this?

Fun Fact: The story of Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Massachusetts Regiment is told in the 1989 film Glory.