

Essay Winner 2021-Molly Duel

Knowing the True Meaning of Memorial Day

If I were to ask and survey the people around me at this very moment about their understanding of Memorial Day, a majority of them would have around the same concept of what it means to them. Their ideas would most likely consist of the forever-lasting memories of parties with family and friends or perhaps the parades attended by hundreds of people celebrating the day. However, the true meaning of Memorial Day has somehow gotten lost within the 3-day weekend celebration. Even though celebrating with your loved ones isn't at all inferior, being able to understand the true meaning of Memorial Day and how different people view it is much more important than it seems.

Memorial Day, observed on the last Monday of May, was originally known as Decoration Day and originated in the years following the Civil War, becoming an official federal holiday in 1971. The meaning has always been interconnected by the same concept, but not everybody knows exactly what it is in true significance. This day is solely to remember the fallen soldiers that have sacrificed and served for our country. The purpose is to commemorate the people that have obligated their lives to our freedom, giving us the rights that we can't even start to imagine ourselves without. However, there aren't too many Americans that can wrap their heads around what this holiday ultimately represents.

Before writing this paper, being completely honest, I myself hadn't comprehended what Memorial Day fully characterized until a veteran had spoken to our class. He had talked a lot about his past, what he personally had gone through, and the real meaning of Memorial Day. But what really stuck out to me was this: precisely how a veteran himself acknowledges this holiday and the importance it brings to them. They do not celebrate Memorial Day but instead use it to mourn over the personnel that have died during their service and honor what they have contributed to our country. During this time, a living veteran does not want to be honored, yet would rather have this attention go forth to those who have departed their life. This guidance taught me how highly held in importance this day is to the people who are still here with us in the present, but also how most people don't adequately recognize it.

Knowing the essence of Memorial Day, it comes to my attention that the true meaning has recently been lost through the generations of Americans in this country. The backyard barbecues, parades filled with children, and all the fun activities planned aren't at all a thing to look down upon, but we also need to remember what is more important than that. It all relates back to what our guest veteran had stated during his lecture, and I quote, "We have all drank from wells we did not dig; We have been warmed by fires we did not build; We have sat in the shade of trees we did not plant; We are where we are because of what someone else did." The water, warmth, and shade in this scenario represent our personal freedoms, whether it is something simple or complex. The person who had dug that well, built that fire or planted those trees, however, was the price that was paid for that freedom. The meaning of this phrase simply is for you to have those freedoms, someone must have fought for it. Concisely, remember this; our country wouldn't nearly be as prosperous without those who have died for our rights, so just by solely understanding the true meaning of Memorial Day during this time stands greater importance to any veteran than you may think.