

Remember. Honor. Teach. The Mission of Giving

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| | Total Points Earned |
| 15 | Total Points Possible |
| | Percentage |

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____

Directions: Read the synopsis of a story about giving below. Record your reaction to questions on the back of this page and be prepared to share your thoughts with fellow classmates.

Wreaths Across America – *Remember. Honor. Teach.* Founder: Morrill Worcester, Maine
Source: USA Today “Gift of Wreaths Touches a Nation” Dec 15, 2006 by Rick Hampson

Synopsis: Morrill Worcester is a business owner in Harrington, Maine. His business, The Worcester Wreath Company makes and sells Christmas Wreaths and is the sole provider of wreaths to retail giant L. L. Bean. In 1992, he got a call from one of his employees who said the company had overproduced 5,000 wreaths and he didn’t have anywhere for them to go. As owner, Morrill Worcester thought about it for a while, and thanks to an endearing memory he had of a childhood visit to Arlington Cemetery and the vast scenes of markers of military heroes, he decided to ask if he and some of his workers could drive down to Washington DC and lay the extra 5,000 wreaths in the cemetery. After the initial gift of wreaths in 1992, Worcester and his family and a few volunteers decided to continue this activity every year; they would load up a big truck and drive to Arlington every December to lay the wreaths. In their eyes, it was a simple gesture: to take a wreath, a symbol of victory, adorned with a simple red bow, and place it on the marker of the final resting place of a military hero.

The Worcester Wreath Company continued their tribute each year in virtual obscurity until one year, in 2005, an Air Force news photographer had gone to Arlington to shoot some photographs after newly fallen snow had blanketed the cemetery. The photographer came upon the wreaths that had just been laid, and posted some of his pictures to the Internet and eventually to the Air Force website. From there, someone else attached the picture into a chain email with a poem:

Rest easy, sleep well my brothers.

Know the line has held, your job is done.

Rest easy, sleep well.

Others have taken up where you fell, the line has held.

Peace, peace, and farewell ...

"Please share this with everyone on your address list," the e-mail read. "You hear too much about the bad things people do. Everyone should hear about this."

The email went viral and spread like wildfire across the Internet. The Worcesters, in the meantime, had returned to Maine and expected they might receive a few emails about their gift of wreaths at Arlington, as had been the case in recent years. However in January, they noticed something much different occurring. Many more emails and calls than normal started coming from people just wanting to say “thanks”. Also, people soon began calling and emailing to ask if they could get wreaths to lie in local cemeteries in all different parts of the U.S. Morrill Worcester thought about it and

while he realized he couldn't possibly send wreaths to everyone who asked, he could ship seven (7) wreaths to each state, one wreath for each branch of the military. Beginning in 2006, with the help of the Civil Air Patrol and numerous private companies, wreath laying ceremonies were held at 150 cemeteries across the U.S. In 2007, the Worcester, and other volunteers who believed in the project, formed a charitable organization, {a 501(c)(3)}, and thus "Wreaths Across America" was born.

Remember. Honor. Teach. (The Mission of Wreaths Across America)

A note from founder, Morrill Worcester

"I started Worcester Wreath Co. in 1971. That first year I sold 500 wreaths. Over the past 37 years with the help from my family, our business has grown to sales of over 500,000 wreaths.

I happen to think this incredible growth could only be accomplished in America because of the freedoms we all enjoy.

Of course, our freedoms did not come without a tremendous cost and sacrifice. Over the past 231 years, nearly 1,000,000 Americans, men and women, have given the ultimate sacrifice for all of us. Millions more gave years of their lives in the military services and were lucky enough to come home safely.

I know our wreaths placed on the veteran's graves each year is a very small gesture. I only wish we could do more."

*Morrill Worcester, Founder
Wreaths Across America
Quoted in 2008*

In December 2013, there were 105,000 wreaths that were placed in military cemeteries all over the nation. Today, many companies and individual volunteers join Morrill Worcester's company in giving back to our fallen war veterans.

Your Thoughts on Giving ...

1. Was this the first time you have heard about this effort to honor our military's fallen heroes? What are your initial thoughts about this campaign to give back?

2. What types of sacrifices are made by people who become actively involved with this campaign?

3. If this activity was offered in a town/city where you live, would you get involved? How?
