

H.S. # 1

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Memorial Day: Magnified

Memorial Day. A time to reflect on the previous lives of war veterans and lost loved ones. You plan out which colored flowers will look the best with the headstone you picked out so long ago. After you've pulled up to the cemetery and placed your flowers, you'll shed a few tears, and hop back in the car. You might think about these people, but then you will move on. At least, that's how I used to be. In order to show our recognition, we leave artificial flowers on the graves of those we love, but our love for them is anything but artificial. We should stop and think about the lives our veterans and loved ones have lived, and recognize the true meaning of Memorial Day.

Leaving flowers for the ones we have lost, and reminiscing in old memories is normal; however, are we mourning for ourselves, or for the people in the ground? Some use this weekend as a way to grieve for themselves, instead of actually recognizing the well lived lives of their family and friends. The true reason for Memorial Day, I believe, is honoring and lifting up the lives that have been lost. As stated by Francis A. Walker, "We come, not to mourn our dead soldiers, but to praise them" (Quotery, 9). We are broken people, and so we tend to try and fill ourselves. Instead, we should be putting ourselves aside and remembering the lives of those we love, in order to be happy.

In addition to this, we should also recognize our freedom. Our veterans literally *gave* their lives in order for us to get up and go to work in the morning. As mentioned by Thomas Campbell, "The patriot's blood is the seed of freedom's tree" (Chanel, 1). I think that this is

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another huge factor in Memorial Day. Yes, we are remembering and honoring the lives we have lost, but we are also remembering what they provided us in the time that they were alive.

Up until a year ago, I was immune to the true reason behind Memorial Day. During Memorial weekend in the summer of 2015, I was able to travel to Washington D.C. There, we toured Arlington National Cemetery. It was overwhelming. *Never* had I seen so many white headstones. I was walking back to our designated meeting spot, when I saw a group of marines huddled around a grave marker. Each kneeled, honoring their friend. This *one* person out of the *thousands* buried there, had meant the world to them. This left a *huge* impact on me. All of those heroes are deserving of honor and recognition, as they forfeited their lives to provide us freedom.

We as people should stop and think about the lives our veterans and loved ones have lived, and recognize the true meaning of Memorial Day. Instead of mourning our losses, we should be lifting up their lives. Remembering the experiences and advice they have given us, and above all, freedom. The true meaning of Memorial Day may be different to other people, but to me, it means honor and sacrifice.

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