The background of the page is a composite image. The top half features a waving American flag with its stars and stripes. The bottom half shows a cemetery with numerous gravestones, many of which are decorated with red and white floral wreaths. The ground is covered in a layer of snow, and the trees in the background are also dusted with snow, suggesting a winter setting.

# **In Service of the Country**

**An educational activity book about the 14 national cemeteries managed by the National Park Service (NPS).**

**This activity book belongs to: \_\_\_\_\_**

## National Cemeteries in National Parks

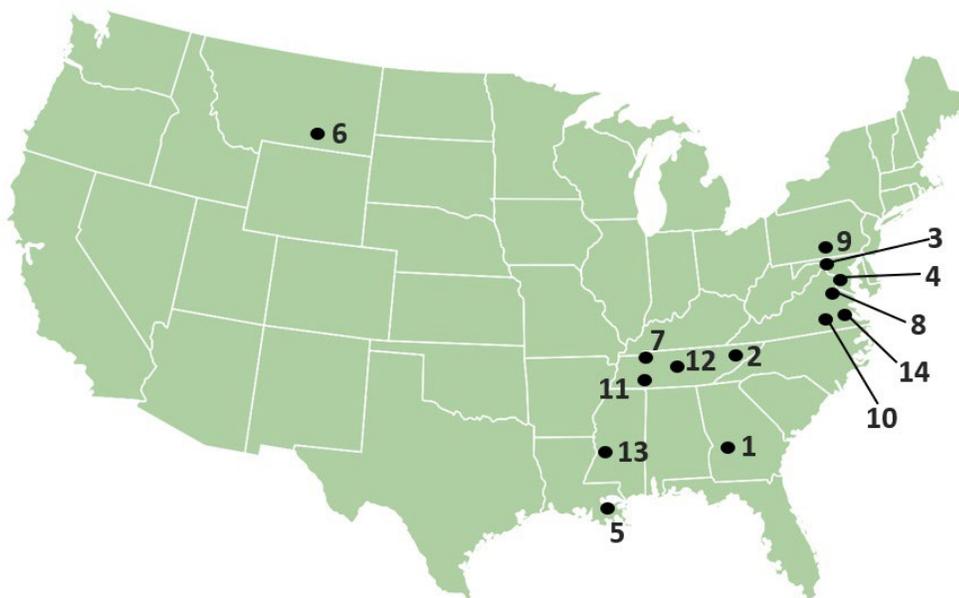
A National Cemetery is a military cemetery where people who served in the United States armed forces (and eligible family members) are buried. National cemeteries were originally created to honor U.S. soldiers who died during the Civil War (1861 – 1865). Now, national cemeteries serve as memorials to all United States military veterans. As of 2025, there are 164 cemeteries in the United States National Cemetery System.

Out of 164 national cemeteries, there are 14 national cemeteries in the United States that are maintained by the National Park Service.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Andersonville National Cemetery (GA)  | 8. Fredericksburg National Cemetery (VA) |
| 2. Andrew Johnson National Cemetery (TN) | 9. Gettysburg National Cemetery (PA)     |
| 3. Antietam National Cemetery (MD)       | 10. Poplar Grove National Cemetery (VA)  |
| 4. Battleground National Cemetery (D.C.) | 11. Shiloh National Cemetery (TN)        |
| 5. Chalmette National Cemetery (LA)      | 12. Stones River National Cemetery (TN)  |
| 6. Custer National Cemetery (MT)         | 13. Vicksburg National Cemetery (MS)     |
| 7. Fort Donelson National Cemetery (TN)  | 14. Yorktown National Cemetery (VA)      |

These national cemeteries that are maintained by the National Park Service are associated with historic sites and battlefields. Have you ever visited a national park or a national cemetery?

History Fact: An act passed by the United States Congress on July 17<sup>th</sup>, 1862, called the Omnibus Act, established the authority to create military burial grounds.



There are 14 national cemeteries managed by the National Park Service in the lower 48 (contiguous) United States. Only one is in the Western half of the United States. There are currently no NPS managed national cemeteries in Alaska or Hawaii.

## Vocabulary

**Acre** – a unit of land measurement.

**Armed Forces** – Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard, and Space Force.

**Battle** – a sustained fight between large organized armed forces.

**Cemetery** – a place where people are buried after their death.

**Civil War** – a war between citizens of the same country.

**Civilian** – a person who is not in the military.

**Confederates** – members of the Confederate army or the Confederate States of America, which seceded from the United States.

**Consecration** – the action of making or declaring something sacred.

**Enlist** – to enroll in the armed services.

**General** – a general is the highest officer rank in the Army; a military leader.

**Inter/Interred** – buried in a grave.

**Manage** – to be in charge of something or someone.

**National Park Service** – an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior that manages and maintains several hundred national parks, monuments, historic sites, and some national cemeteries. (NPS)

**Secede** – to officially leave a larger group or political union and become independent.

**Siege** – a military operation in which enemy forces surround a town or building, cutting off essential supplies, with the aim of compelling the surrender of those inside.

**Soldier** – a member of the military.

**Treaty** – an agreement made between two or more states, rulers, or nations.

**Troops** – a group of soldiers.

**United States Army (U.S. Army)/Union** – refers to soldiers who fought for the United States of America. The term “Union” is often used in curriculum and other sources to refer to the United States of America and/or U.S. Army during the Civil War.

**Veteran** – a former member of the armed forces (the military).

**Victory** – winning an argument, war, battle, or test.

## Andersonville National Cemetery



The Connecticut Monument in Andersonville National Cemetery – Memorial Day 2013

Andersonville was the site of Camp Sumter, a Civil War prison. Andersonville National Cemetery was officially established in June of 1865. Approximately 45,000 U.S. Army soldiers were imprisoned at Camp Sumter Military Prison. Nearly 13,000 prisoners died there and are buried in the cemetery. Since the 1870's, over 9,000 United States military service members and their families have been interred at Andersonville National Cemetery.

What state is Andersonville in? \_\_\_\_\_

Name the museum you can explore at this site: \_\_\_\_\_

### Active vs. Inactive National Cemeteries

As of 2025, Andersonville National Cemetery is the only remaining active national cemetery maintained by the National Park Service. This means the cemetery still has open space for gravesites available for burials. Other cemeteries maintained by the National Park Service are inactive – they have no available (or unassigned) gravesites, but they may bury eligible family members in the same gravesite or beside the interred veteran.

[www.nps.gov/ande](http://www.nps.gov/ande)

## Andrew Johnson National Cemetery



Monument Hill in the Andrew Johnson National Cemetery – Andrew Johnson’s gravesite and family plot.

Andrew Johnson was the 17<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. He lived in Greeneville, Tennessee from 1826 until his death in 1875. He purchased the land that is now Andrew Johnson National Cemetery in 1851. This site began as a family burial plot, made possible by the advocacy of Sam Johnson, an African American man formerly enslaved by Andrew Johnson. President Johnson was the first person buried on this property, which became a national cemetery in 1906.

Andrew Johnson National Cemetery remained active until 2019. In this cemetery, you will find veterans from the Civil War, Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, Gulf War, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and the War in Afghanistan. There are over 2,000 graves in Andrew Johnson National Cemetery.

What two items were buried with Andrew Johnson? \_\_\_\_\_

Who contributed to establishing the site as the burial place for Andrew Johnson? \_\_\_\_\_

[www.nps.gov/anjo](http://www.nps.gov/anjo)

## Antietam National Cemetery



The Battle of Antietam is known for being the bloodiest day in American history. On September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1862, during the Civil War, nearly 23,000 soldiers were killed, wounded, or missing after 12 hours of combat in Sharpsburg, Maryland. An estimated 100,000 troops were engaged in the Battle of Antietam. There were 12,500 estimated casualties for the U.S. Army and 10,500 for the Confederates. The result of the battle was a U.S. victory and inspired President Abraham Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation.

What is the Emancipation Proclamation? \_\_\_\_\_

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Tent hospitals were set up near battlefields during the Civil War for surgeons, nurses, and volunteers to care for wounded soldiers. \_\_\_\_\_ is one of the famous women associated with the Battle of Antietam. People called her the “Angel of the Battlefield.” She was more than a nurse during the Civil War, she also brought supplies to battlefields and hospitals, assisted with caring for wounded soldiers, and later founded the American Red Cross, an organization that provides aid to people during emergencies. There is a monument for her at Antietam National Battlefield.

Antietam National Cemetery is the final resting place for 4,776 U.S. soldiers and more than 200 non-Civil War Veterans from the Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, and the Korean War. [www.nps.gov/anti](http://www.nps.gov/anti)

## Battleground National Cemetery



One of the smallest national cemeteries in the country, Battleground National Cemetery was established in the summer of 1864 and is one acre in size. It is called Battleground National Cemetery because it is located on a piece of the actual battlefield of the Battle of Fort Stevens. In the center of the cemetery, there is a flagpole surrounded by 44 marble headstones. This national cemetery is located 5 miles from the White House and just half a mile North of Fort Stevens in Washington, D.C., our nation's capital.

By 1865, Washington, D.C. was one of the most fortified cities in the world. Fort Stevens was one of 68 forts surrounding the Washington, D.C. area during the Civil War. The Battle of Fort Stevens was a two-day battle from July 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>, 1864. During this battle, President Abraham Lincoln came under direct fire from Confederates, but ultimately was unharmed. This battle was a U.S. victory and the only battle in the nation's capital during the Civil War. President Lincoln dedicated this national cemetery on July 12<sup>th</sup>, 1864.

This national cemetery is part of the National Park Service and connected to sites in Washington, D.C., including Rock Creek Park, Civil War Defenses of Washington, and the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail.

Each year, there are Memorial Day services at Battleground National Cemetery. What is Memorial Day? \_\_\_\_\_

[Battleground National Cemetery \(U.S. National Park Service\)](https://www.nps.gov/battleground/)

## Chalmette National Cemetery



Chalmette National Cemetery was established in May 1864 as a final resting place for U.S. soldiers, including United States Colored Troops (USCT), who died in the state of \_\_\_\_\_ during the Civil War. There are more than 15,000 headstones located in Chalmette National Cemetery. The cemetery is located on the site of the 1815 Battle of New Orleans.

Soldiers from wars that are centuries apart are buried together in the tree-lined cemetery. Some headstones mark the gravesites of veterans of the War of 1812, Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, and the Vietnam War. Around 7,000 unknown soldiers are buried here; they are mostly from the Civil War.

The United States Colored Troops were regiments of African American soldiers who fought for freedom and the end of slavery with the U.S. Army during the Civil War. Originally not allowed to join the Army at the beginning of the war, the USCT formed after the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. After the Civil War, three amendments were added to the U.S. Constitution: the \_\_\_\_\_ amendment abolished slavery, the \_\_\_\_\_ amendment gave African Americans equal protection under the law, and the \_\_\_\_\_ amendment gave all men the right to vote, regardless of their race.

[Chalmette National Cemetery - Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve \(U.S. National Park Service\)](#)

## Custer National Cemetery



Custer National Cemetery is inside Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument in Crow Agency, Montana. It is the only national cemetery in the western United States that is managed by the National Park Service.

This cemetery honors veterans who served from the time of the Indian Wars through the Vietnam War. It also includes civilians from old frontier forts in the late 1800s. Even though the cemetery is the first thing visitors see when they arrive, most of the people buried there were not part of the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument is a place to honor and remember what happened here on June 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, 1876. On those days, Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho warriors defended themselves against an attack by the U.S. Army's 7th Cavalry, led by Lt. Colonel George Custer. The U.S. Army was instructed to force them onto reservations, breaking promises made in the Treaty of Fort Laramie of 1851 and 1868.

What is a treaty? \_\_\_\_\_

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The Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho, led by Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, Gall, and other leaders, won the battle and protected their way of life. Today, when you visit the battlefield, you will see red markers where Indigenous warriors lost their lives and white markers where 7th Cavalry soldiers fell. These markers help us remember all who fought in this battle.

[Custer National Cemetery - Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument \(U.S. National Park Service\)](#)

## Fort Donelson National Cemetery



When Fort Donelson National Cemetery was first established in 1867, 670 soldiers were reinterred there. Of those 670 Civil War soldiers, 512 were unknown. This high number is because some soldiers had been buried on the battlefield in haste, some were buried in local cemeteries, others in hospital cemeteries, or in nearby towns.

Find the percentage of unknown soldiers buried in Fort Donelson National Cemetery in 1867: \_\_\_\_\_

The Battle of Fort Donelson, Tennessee, was one of the first major victories for the U.S. Army under General Ulysses S. Grant. What happened to General Grant following the Civil War? \_\_\_\_\_

Former United States Colored Troops worked in this cemetery after the war. They helped build the rock wall surrounding the cemetery and took care of the cemetery. People who lived in a Freedmen's community called Free State, next to Fort Donelson, also worked at the cemetery in its early years.

[Fort Donelson National Cemetery - Fort Donelson National Battlefield \(U.S. National Park Service\)](#)

## Fredericksburg National Cemetery



Fredericksburg National Cemetery is the final resting place for over 15,000 United States soldiers. Most of these soldiers perished during the Civil War, but there were about 100 soldiers buried here during the 1900s. This national cemetery was established shortly after the Civil War, in July 1865. This cemetery contains the most unknown soldiers. Only about 20% of the soldiers buried here are identified.

Why do you think there were so many unidentified soldiers? \_\_\_\_\_

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Fredericksburg was one of the largest battles of the Civil War. Nearly 200,000 soldiers were engaged in this battle, which was a Confederate victory. Three other large battles were fought in this area during the Civil War: Chancellorsville, the Wilderness, and Spotsylvania Court House. Most of the U.S. soldiers buried in Fredericksburg National Cemetery died in one of these four battles. Confederate soldiers who died in this area were buried in Confederate cemeteries in Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania. The creation of the national cemetery system did not provide for the burial of Confederate soldiers. The arrangements for their burials were the responsibility of the local area, state, friends or relatives of the soldier.

How many battles were fought in Virginia, which was the state with the most battles during the Civil War? \_\_\_\_\_

[Fredericksburg National Cemetery - Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park \(U.S. National Park Service\)](#)

## Gettysburg National Cemetery



Gettysburg is one of the most recognized Civil War battles. Gettysburg National Cemetery is the final resting place for over 6,000 U.S soldiers and veterans from conflicts ranging from the Civil War to Vietnam. Of these, over 3,500 were among the soldiers who died at the Battle of Gettysburg. It was here at the cemetery's consecration ceremony, just a few months after the battle, that President Abraham Lincoln gave his famous Gettysburg Address on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 1863.

You may recognize the Gettysburg Address opening line, "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." Read the full address here: [The Gettysburg Address \(1863\) | Constitution Center](#). The full speech is less than 275 words and would have taken only about two minutes to deliver.

What is the significance of the Gettysburg Address? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

[Gettysburg National Cemetery - Gettysburg National Military Park \(U.S. National Park Service\)](#)

## Poplar Grove National Cemetery



Poplar Grove National Cemetery is part of Petersburg National Battlefield in Virginia. It is named after a church called Poplar Grove that was built during the Civil War by the 50<sup>th</sup> New York Volunteer Engineers. The cemetery is the final resting place for over 6,000 soldiers who died during the Civil War. It also contains gravesites for soldiers and veterans who served in the Spanish American War, WWI, WWII, and the Korean War.

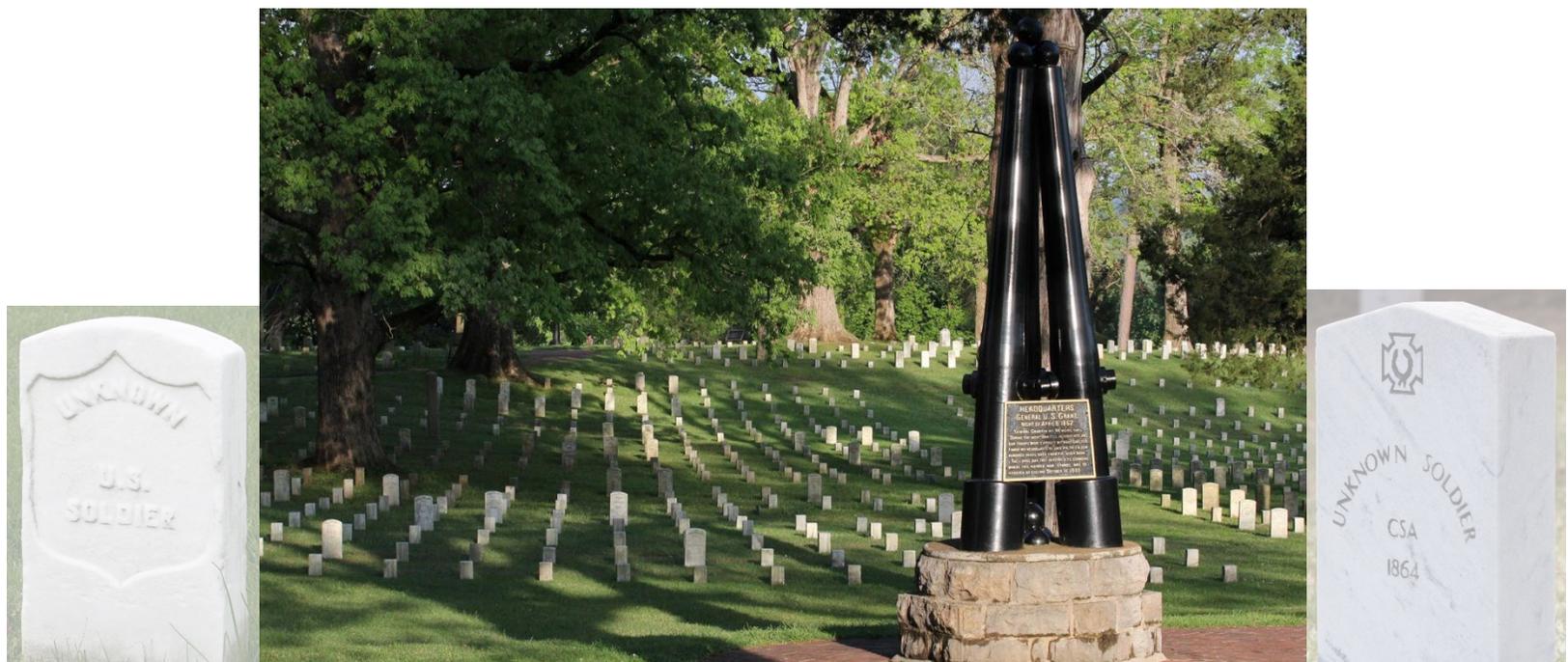
The Siege of Petersburg was the longest military event of the Civil War and resulted in around 70,000 casualties. The United States Army serving under General Ulysses S. Grant and the Confederate Army under General Robert E. Lee fought in a series of battles in this area, which had a huge impact on civilian life in the surrounding area. During the war, civilians (non-soldiers) also suffered due to food shortages, lack of supplies, destroyed homes and property, and loss of loved ones due to war, disease, and more.

How long did the Siege of Petersburg last? \_\_\_\_\_

How long did the Civil War last? \_\_\_\_\_

[Poplar Grove National Cemetery - Petersburg National Battlefield \(U.S. National Park Service\)](https://www.nps.gov/petr/learn/management/poplar-grove-national-cemetery)

## Shiloh National Cemetery



Shiloh National Cemetery is the final resting place of 3,584 U.S. Army and 2 Confederate soldiers who fell near Shiloh, Tennessee. The two Confederate headstones are different than the others. The top of their headstones is pointed. The cemetery has a separate section for veterans who served after the Civil War.

Why are so few Confederate soldiers buried in national cemeteries? Almost all the graves in national cemeteries are of U.S. Army soldiers or other U.S. military veterans. This is because the National Cemetery System was created for people who served in the U.S. military and to honor U.S. soldiers who died during the Civil War. Confederate soldiers were not part of the U.S. military, so they were traditionally buried elsewhere. Many also remain buried in the battlefields.

Like other sites where Civil War battles took place, the Battle of Shiloh happened at this specific location because of the nearby river and railroad systems, which transported troops and supplies through the area.

Which river is located along Shiloh National Cemetery? \_\_\_\_\_

What modes of transportation did people have in the 1860's? \_\_\_\_\_

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[Shiloh National Cemetery - Shiloh National Military Park \(U.S. National Park Service\)](#)

## Stones River National Cemetery



The Battle of Stones River saw U.S. and Confederate armies clash between December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1862, and January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1863. When it was over, both sides had suffered greatly; however, the U.S. Army won and gained control over central Tennessee while supporting the Emancipation Proclamation that shifted the war's focus to ending slavery.

Soldiers of the 111<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops began reburying U.S. soldiers in Stones River National Cemetery in 1865. When the time came for them to leave the Army a year later, many stayed in the area, continuing their work as civilian laborers.

What was the name of the Black community that grew up around Stones River National Cemetery? \_\_\_\_\_

Stones River National Cemetery is the final resting place for how many U.S. soldiers from the Civil War? \_\_\_\_\_

*Bonus Question:* Why do you think Sergeant William Holland of the 111<sup>th</sup> U.S. Colored Infantry chose not to be buried in the national cemetery he helped build? \_\_\_\_\_

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[Stones River National Battlefield \(U.S. National Park Service\)](https://www.nps.gov/stonesriver/)

## Vicksburg National Cemetery



Vicksburg National Cemetery is the largest cemetery in the nation. More than 17,000 U.S. soldiers interred in the Vicksburg National Cemetery; 13,000 of whom are listed as “Unknown.” Like in other national cemeteries, the rounded, upright headstones mark the graves of the known soldiers, while small, square blocks, etched with a grave number only, mark the burials of the unknown soldiers.

U.S. Military veterans continued to be buried here until 1961. Name three wars the U.S. Military fought in between 1866 – 1961? \_\_\_\_\_

In which state is Vicksburg located? \_\_\_\_\_

Winning the Battle of Vicksburg was very important to both sides during the Civil War. A major river runs right alongside Vicksburg. What is this major river? \_\_\_\_\_

The Siege of Vicksburg was ultimately a victory for the U.S. Army, and with Vicksburg’s strategic location, it proved to be an important victory in the war. Following this campaign, the U.S. controlled the entire Mississippi River – a major route for supplies, troops, and communication – and split the Confederacy in two.

[Vicksburg National Cemetery - Vicksburg National Military Park \(U.S. National Park Service\)](#)

## Yorktown National Cemetery



Yorktown National Cemetery in Virginia was established after the Civil War in 1866. What makes Yorktown National Cemetery unique, is that it is part of a NPS site that honors where the last major battle of the Revolutionary War took place. Nearly 100 years before the Civil War, the American Revolution began which led to the independence of the United States of America. George Washington commanded the Continental Army which defeated the British Army in the Siege of Yorktown over the course of twenty-one days. Yorktown was an important location in the Revolutionary War and Yorktown National Cemetery is near the spot where the British surrendered to General George Washington.

During the Revolutionary War, what year did the Siege of Yorktown take place? \_\_\_\_\_

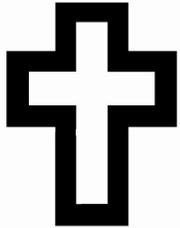
Yorktown was again the site of a siege during the Civil War. When did the second Siege of Yorktown occur? \_\_\_\_\_

Yorktown National Cemetery is near the location of battles related to the Peninsula Campaign of the Civil War. After the war, over 2,000 soldiers were buried here.

[Yorktown National Cemetery - Yorktown Battlefield Part of Colonial National Historical Park \(U.S. National Park Service\)](#)

# Symbols

You will often see symbols, or emblems of belief, on headstones in national cemeteries. These represent the religion or values of the people buried in the cemetery. Explore examples of emblems of belief below, fill in the blanks with what the emblem represents, and visit the website listed at the bottom of this page to learn more!



\_\_\_\_\_



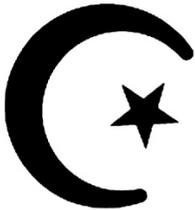
\_\_\_\_\_



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\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_

Which Emblems of Belief have you seen in a national cemetery? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

[Emblems of Belief - National Cemetery Administration](https://www.nationalcemeteryadministration.gov/emblems-of-belief)

## The Importance of National Cemeteries

Congress passed an act in 1862, "to purchase cemetery grounds and cause them to be securely enclosed, to be used as a national cemetery for the soldiers who shall die in the service of the country."

Document a visit to a national cemetery: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Which site(s) do you want to visit to learn more about its history and the soldiers?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have relatives buried in national cemeteries in the U.S.? If so, where? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Which national cemetery is closest to your home? What events do they have for the public to honor U.S. military veterans? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Using the information available at the national cemetery or national park, or online on the park websites ([www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)), answer the questions or fill in the blanks on the pages of your choosing.

### Onsite Activities:

- Complete the page for the national cemetery you visit in-person.
- Complete pages 18 and 19 (this page).
- Learn about the park that manages the national cemetery you visit in-person through a ranger program or the park museum exhibits.

### Virtual Activities:

- Virtually visit 5 national cemeteries in this booklet using the link on each page.
- Complete the pages for the national cemeteries you virtually visit.
- Complete pages 18 and 19.

Place Park Stamps Here:

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Learn more:

[National Parks and National Cemeteries \(U.S. National Park Service\)](#)

[Visit National Cemeteries in the National Park System - National Cemeteries \(U.S. National Park Service\)](#)

[History of National Cemeteries \(U.S. National Park Service\)](#)

