

## In Flanders Fields



by John McCrae, May 1915

In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago

We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.

### Inspiration for “In Flanders Fields”

During the early days of the Second Battle of Ypres a young Canadian artillery officer, Lieutenant Alexis Helmer, was killed on 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 1915 in the gun positions near Ypres. An exploding German artillery shell landed near him. He was serving in the same Canadian artillery unit as a friend of his, the Canadian military doctor and artillery commander **Major John McCrae**.

As the brigade doctor, John McCrae was asked to conduct the burial service for Alexis because the chaplain had been called away somewhere else on duty that evening. It is believed that later that evening, after the burial, John began the draft for his now famous poem “In Flanders Fields”.



<http://www.greatwar.co.uk/poems/john-mccrae-in-flanders-fields.htm>

### **Biography of John McCrae Flanders Fields Author**

Canadian physician, soldier, teacher and poet John McCrae was born in Guelph Ontario on November 30, 1872, the second son of Scottish immigrants Lieutenant Colonel David McCrae and Janet Simpson Eckford McCrae.

#### **John McCrae Death**

McCrae suffered from asthma since childhood and by December of 1917 his health had dramatically declined. John McCrae succumbed to pneumonia and meningitis on January 28th, 1918 at Number 14 British General Hospital for Officers in Boulogne, France. His funeral procession was led by his horse Bonfire and in the tradition of mounted officers; McCrae's boots were placed backwards in the stirrups.

#### **Wimereux Cemetery**

Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae MD was buried with full military honors in the cemetery in Wimereux, France (plot 4, row H, grave 3). John McCrae's funeral was one of the best attended funerals of the entire war. In attendance were his many friends, military dignitaries, nursing sisters and colleagues.