

WHAT SO ★ PROUDLY ★ WE HAIL

The American Soul in Story, Speech, and Song

We Shall Keep the Faith

MOINA BELLE MICHAEL

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*John McCrae's "In Flanders Fields" resonated deeply with the public, even in the then-neutral United States. Three years later, when the United States had entered the conflict, Moina Michael (1869–1944), an educator and volunteer trainer of nurses, wrote "We Shall Keep the Faith," as a response of the living to the call of the dead in McCrae's poem. Soon afterwards, she launched the tradition of selling and wearing red poppies to aid and honor wounded war veterans. Michael's autobiography, *The Miracle Flower: The Story of the Flanders Fields Memorial Poppy*, published in 1941, is dedicated to the late Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae.*

Compare the mood, tone, and content of this poem with "In Flanders Fields." Who is speaking in Michael's poem, and how is it an answer to the summons from McCrae's poem? How exactly do "we keep the Faith / with All who died"? The central verse concerns the red poppy. How does Michael reinterpret its meaning? What does it mean to say that "We'll teach the lesson that ye wrought / In Flanders Fields"? What was that lesson, and how can it be taught? If we fail to teach it, will those who fell have died for naught?

Oh! You who sleep in "Flanders Fields,"
Sleep sweet—to rise anew!
We caught the Torch you threw
And, holding high, we keep the Faith
With All who died.

We cherish, too, the poppy red
That grows on fields where valor led;
It seems to signal to the skies
That blood of heroes never dies,
But lends a lustre to the red
Of the flower that blooms above the dead
In Flanders Fields.

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And now the Torch and Poppy Red
We wear in honor of our dead.
Fear not that ye have died for naught;
We'll teach the lesson that ye wrought
In Flanders Fields.

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