

MAYA LIN

ARCHITECT OF MEMORY

Comprehension

Genre

A **Nonfiction Article** in a newspaper or magazine presents facts and information.

Summarize

Main Idea and Details

The main idea of an article is what the article is mostly about. Details give more information about the main idea.



Maya Lin

How did one architect create two of the most powerful memorials in the United States?

As is her habit, architect Maya Lin stayed away from the crowds—and the limelight. She stood behind the tinted windows of the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama. Outside, hundreds of visitors arrived at the **site** for the opening of the Civil Rights Memorial, which Lin designed. “I like standing back quietly,” Lin said. “You create your message, and then it is out there on its own.”

Lin’s message can be found in the memorial’s **exhibits**. This memorial honors those who died fighting for **equality** during the Civil Rights Movement. Some visitors reached out to touch the names of loved ones carved into a black granite disk. Their faces were wet with tears. “I’m so thankful,” said Sarah Salter, whose husband, Willie Edwards, Jr., was killed in Montgomery in 1957. “At last he’s being recognized.”

Remembering Vietnam Veterans

Nine years before the opening of the Civil Rights Memorial, Lin had been a senior at Yale University. She sent in the winning design for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. After it was **dedicated**, angry veterans at first called the stark, V-shaped granite wall a “black gash of shame.” Yet the memorial soon became the most visited monument in the capital. Millions of Americans touched—and were touched by—the more than 58,000 names carved into the stone. They are the names of Americans who died in Vietnam.

Lin’s Vietnam Memorial does not present any **artifacts** of the Vietnam era. It is just a wall. This simple wall, however, helped the United States begin the long process of healing after years of bad feelings over the war. The memorial made it possible for the country to come together and honor those who had served.

A Different Way of Looking

“I’m an architect, I’m an artist, I make things,” Lin said. “I just love the fact that I can make a work and put it out there and walk away from it and then look at it like everyone else.”

As Lin grew up in her hometown of Athens, Ohio, one of the subjects she did well in was mathematics. That skill first led her toward architecture and now shapes her outlook on work. “If you present me with a problem, and if I like it and think I can work with it, I’ll do it.” In fact, Lin finds herself driven to solve a problem immediately.



Paying respects on a rainy day



The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, with the Washington Monument in the distance

Throughout Lin's career, she has shown her range as an architect. Her other projects include the design of a stage set in Philadelphia; an open-air gathering place at Juniata College in Pennsylvania; a "playful park" outside the Charlotte Coliseum in North Carolina (with trees shaped like spheres); and a 38-foot clock for a New York City train station that has moving rays of light instead of hands.

Lin's work shows a thoughtful approach to building design. "It's the kind of thing," Lin said, "that requires patience, awareness, and added sensitivity."

Inspiration from a Great Leader

Too young to remember the Civil Rights Movement firsthand, Lin researched it for months while working on the design for the Civil Rights Memorial. She was struck by a line from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. That line said, "We will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." Lin thought the calm, soothing quality of water



The words of Martin Luther King, Jr., carved on the wall in the background, inspired Lin's design.



At the Civil Rights Memorial, Sarah Salter touches the name of her husband, who was killed during the Civil Rights Movement.

and its quiet, constant sound would be perfect for the area in front of the center. This is a place “to appreciate how far the country has come in its quest for equality and to consider how far it has to go.”

Using King’s quote as her theme, Lin designed a granite disk that is 12 feet in diameter. Inscribed on it are the names of 40 freedom fighters and landmark events of the Civil Rights Movement. Behind it she designed a black granite wall nearly 9 feet high and 39 feet long, also covered by water. King’s words were carved into the rock of this wall. “I’m trying to make people become involved with the piece on all levels,” Lin said, “with the touch and sound of the water, with the words, with the memories.”

Memories of the past are very important to Lin. After all, she asked, “If you don’t remember history accurately, how can you learn?”

Think and Compare

1. What does Maya Lin love about her work?
2. What is the main idea of this article?
3. What people and events are honored with statues and monuments in your city or town?
4. What are some things the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, the National Museum of the American Indian, the Civil Rights Memorial, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial all have in common?



Test Strategy

Author and Me

The answer is not directly stated. Think about what you have read to figure it out.



☒ ☒ ☒ A SALUTE to ☒ ☒ ☒ SERVICEWOMEN

Throughout our nation's history, nearly 2 million women have served in the armed forces. Their brave work is remembered at the Women in Military Service for America Memorial. The memorial opened in Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia in 1997. The Vice President at the time, Al Gore, helped dedicate the memorial. He thanked servicewomen for "their countless acts of bravery and sacrifice."

The memorial covers more than four acres and is surrounded by a semicircular stone wall 30 feet tall. In front of the memorial are a fountain and reflecting pool. The use of light and water symbolizes life. Two

hundred jets of water create a sound that represents the voices of women blended together in one purpose. The reflecting pool is a symbol that these women's lives and stories are unified, or brought together, into one history.

The 33,000 square foot education center includes a theater and a computer register. Visitors can use the computer database to read about all the women who served in the armed forces. The memorial roof is an arc of curved glass, 250 feet in diameter. Quotations by and about servicewomen are etched on it. Like diary entries, they give a voice to women who have served their country honorably.

Directions: Answer the questions.

1. This selection is MAINLY about

- A how a memorial honors American servicewomen.
- B Arlington National Cemetery.
- C a speech given to dedicate a memorial.
- D the progress women have made in gaining rights.

2. What is the purpose of the quotations etched on the memorial?

- A to explain the monument more clearly
- B to express thanks for the contributions of women
- C to **provide** first-hand descriptions of the experiences of servicewomen
- D to describe the effects of war on women

3. Which statement BEST expresses the feelings of gratitude shown by the government toward servicewomen?

- A A four-acre memorial was built in Arlington National Cemetery to honor servicewomen.
- B Vice President Gore thanked all servicewomen for their bravery.
- C The fountain and reflecting pool symbolize life.
- D Two million women have served in the armed forces.

4. The selection talks about the voices of servicewomen. Why do you think this is important? What do you think you can learn from listening to their stories?

5. What are the features of the memorial? Describe them and tell why they are appropriate to honor women in the military. Use information in the selection and the photographs to write your answer.

Tip

You have to think about the entire passage to choose the best answer.

Write to a Prompt

In “A Salute to Servicewomen” you read how America honored the women who have served in the American armed forces.

Think of a time you or someone you know has been honored or thanked for doing something. Write a one-page story about this event and how you (or the person honored) felt about it.

Be sure to include a beginning, a middle, and an ending.

Giving and Receiving


Last Friday we had an assembly for all the classes in school. This one was outside. That is very unusual.

Ms. Jones, the principal, stood beside a big oval plot filled with flowers planted in three circles of red, blue, and gold. She said, “This is a special occasion.” We were dedicating our new school flower garden.

Our fifth-grade class was especially proud. We had worked on the garden after school every day for weeks. This was our project to give something to our school. In just a week, we would leave Tyler School behind forever.

Then Ms. Jones surprised us. She called our class up to stand with her. “We will not forget what you did for us,” she said.

Then she gave each of us a paper. It read, “Certificate of Caring.” I was so proud! Making the garden was fun, but knowing how much our school appreciated it was the best.



My story has a clear sequence of events.

Writing Prompt

People who have helped their country, their community, or their family deserve recognition. Think of a time when you thanked someone for doing something special for you, your class, or your family. Write a one-page story giving details about what you said and did. Tell how the person responded and how you felt afterwards.

Writer's Checklist

- Ask yourself, who will read my story?
- Think about your purpose for writing.
- Plan your writing before beginning.
- Use details to support your story.
- Be sure your story has a beginning, a middle, and an ending.
- Use your best spelling, grammar, and punctuation.