

A detailed illustration of a brown war horse in a trench. The horse is wearing a harness and has its front legs raised, as if it is struggling or running. The background shows a trench with barbed wire and a cloudy sky. The style is a mix of watercolor and ink.

BBC

War Horse

by Michael Morpurgo

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04rs0qr

Teacher's Notes by Katie Myles

Centre for Literacy in Primary Education

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War Horse by Michael Morpurgo**Introduction****Michael Morpurgo**

Michael Morpurgo was born in 1943. He went to school in London, Sussex and Kent and later to the University of London, where he studied English and French. He became a primary school teacher and it was during his time as a teacher that he realised he wanted to be a writer. Michael has described how his class were bored with the story he was sharing and decided to create something of his own.

Michael has gone on to become one of Britain's best-loved authors of children's literature. He was Children's Laureate from 2003-2005 and became an OBE in 2006. He has written over 100 books and he has won numerous awards, including 'The Blue Peter Award' for *Private Peaceful*.

Of the writing process he has said: 'For me, the greater part of writing is daydreaming, dreaming the dream of my story until it hatches out - the writing down of it I always find hard. But I love finishing it, then holding the book in my hand and sharing my dream with my readers.'

Michael was born during World War 2 and often writes of the divisions, conflicts and injustices of warfare. His own family was deeply affected by war through the loss of his uncle and the break up of his parents. The theme of war is explored in Michael's books *Private Peaceful*, *War Horse* and *Adolphus Tips*.

Michael has established three working farms in Devon, Wales and Gloucestershire where children from inner city schools can come and stay for a week to experience life working in the countryside. Michael now lives with his wife in Devon where he continues to write. You can read more about Michael at:

<http://michaelmorpurgo.com>

Downloading the episodes

Each episode of *War Horse* is available to download for 30 days after broadcast. Simply click on the yellow 'Download' link on each of the episode pages. You'll be offered the option to download either a higher or lower quality version of the episode. The higher quality version will provide a better listening experience; however, if your internet connection is slow you may prefer to opt for the lower quality version. Downloads of the episodes acquired this way may be kept in perpetuity and played with your class as and when you choose, using either a computer or from an mp3 player such as an iPod or smart phone.

Although the download files will no longer be available after 30 days you will still be able to access each episode: simply click the 'play' button in the lower left corner of the main image on each of the episode pages.

Using the episode 'segments'

You will see on the individual episode pages of the website that each episode has been divided into three segments of approximately 5 minutes each. Use these segments to break each episode into shorter sections. At the start of each new session you can navigate easily using the segments to the point at which you ceased listening in the previous session.

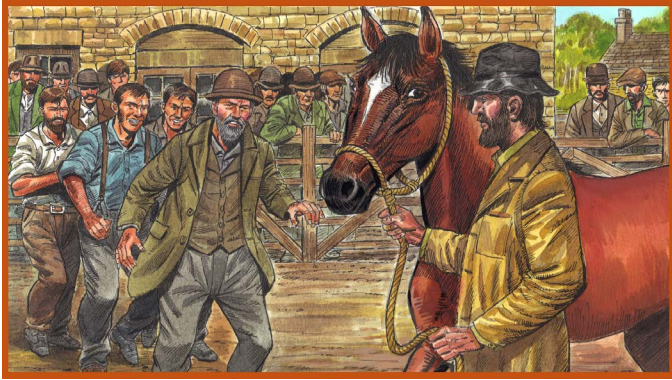
Using these notes

Titles in [blue](#) in these notes have been hyperlinked to the relevant pages of the website, meaning you can navigate with ease from the notes to the audio files online. (NB: you will need to be connected to the internet for this function to be available).

Other abridgements of Michael Morpurgo's stories from WW1 and WW2

You may also be interested in our abridgements of [Private Peaceful](#) and [Friend or Foe](#).

1: A separation



Click on the image to display a larger version online if you are connected to the internet

Synopsis

In this episode the audience are introduced to the narrator of the story - Joey, a horse. He is bought at auction at less than six months of age by a man described as having a voice thick with drink. The man drags Joey home to his farm along with his working horse called Zoey. It is Zoey who first shows Joey kindness.

The man's son, Albert, takes care of Joey and they form a close bond. Albert's father then instructs Albert to ensure that Joey can plough the fields and work on the farm so that he can win a bet he has made with Farmer Easton. Albert works hard to make sure Joey can do this and his father wins the bet.

Some months later comes the outbreak of the First World War.

Before listening

Before listening to the episode you may want to prepare a large timeline so that the class can map the events of the story onto it, supporting their understanding of the chronology of the events and also the events of WW1.

After listening

After listening to Episode 1, consider the use of the horse as the narrator of the story. Explore with the class why they think Michael Morpurgo has chosen to do this. Consider what this device allows the audience to experience that they would not if it was told from another character's perspective.

Begin a 'role on the wall' for the character of Joey. Role on the wall is a technique that uses a displayed outline of the character to record feelings (inside the outline) and outward appearances (outside the outline) at various stopping points across the story. Using a different colour at each of the stopping points allows you to track changes in the character's emotional journey. You can include known facts such as physical appearance, age, gender, location and occupation, as well as subjective ideas such as likes/dislikes, friends/enemies, attitudes, motivations, secrets and dreams.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/guides/zxpc2hv/revision>
<http://dramaresource.com/role-on-the-wall/>

Have a template of a horse cut out and pin it to a learning wall. Ask the class to write on sticky notes words or phrases they would use to describe the character's feelings. These can then be stuck on the inside of the outline and what the children know about the characters' outward appearance can be stuck on the outside. Include quotes and descriptive passages from the audio, as well as impressions from the class.

Using templates of people also begin class profiles on each of the central characters, to be added to as you listen to the episodes. For this one, focus also on Albert and his father and mother. Continue to return to the role on the wall as you read the story, adding information in different colours so that you can track the emotional journey the characters take as the story progresses and how a reader's perceptions of a character can alter as a story progresses.

Following this, begin to explore the bond between Albert and Joey. Consider why this relationship is so significant and how the training for the ploughing builds this bond. Explore why Albert is so deter-

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mined to prove that he can make Joey into a working horse.

Ask the children to consider where and when they think the story is set and what evidence they have to justify their opinions. Explore Albert's hobby (bell-ringing). You may also want to use this as a starting point to consider the way of life for people in the story and how it differs from our lives in the twenty-first century.

Ask the class to consider why Albert's mother's reaction to the declaration of war is so different to his. To support this, you may want to complete some role play.

Ask the children to imagine that they are different characters in the village and to imagine what that must have been like for the people in the village knowing that the country would soon be at war. Compare and contrast their different emotions - for example, by comparing the emotions of a young man knowing he would probably be going to war, with the feelings of a mother such as Albert's.

Following the discussion, ask the children to form groups to create a frozen tableau of a scene in which the village finds out war has been declared. After this, complete thought tracking in which each character voices their inner thoughts and feelings.

You could take photographs of the groups in their tableaux and ask them to annotate the pictures following the session. After this the class could complete a diary entry as Albert or his mother, reflecting their feelings following the announcement.

2: A cavalry horse



Click on the image to display a larger version online if you are connected to the internet

Synopsis

At the start of the episode the financial strain Albert's father is under is revealed and Albert and his mother argue about the cost of keeping Joey. Albert is sent to run an errand and while he is away his father takes Joey into the village.

Albert's father shows Joey to Captain Nicholls who then purchases the horse for the army. Albert arrives and realises what his father has done. Captain Nicholls promises to care for Joey and Albert vows to find him again when he is old enough to join the army.

Joey is then trained to work as a cavalry mount by Corporal Samuel Perkins, who uses a whip and spurs on the horse. Captain Nicholls paints a picture of Joey and reveals to the horse his true feelings about the War.

The soldiers and their horses prepare for battle.

Before listening

Consider the pressure on working families like Albert's and the consequences of poverty at the time in which the story is set.

During listening

Pause the episode before Albert's father sells Joey. Consider the actions of the father and ask the children what they would have done in his position. Pose the question to the class: *should Albert's father sell Joey?* Ask the class to discuss in groups what he could do next, prompting them where necessary. Groups could then work with each other to prepare arguments for and against before undertaking a *conscience alley* activity. *Conscience alley* is a useful technique for exploring any kind of dilemma faced by a character, providing an opportunity to analyse a decisive moment in greater detail. The class forms two lines facing each other. One person (the teacher or a participant) takes the role of the protagonist and walks between the lines as each member of the group speaks their advice. It can be organised so that those on one side give opposing advice to those on the other. When the protagonist reaches the end of the alley, they make their decision.

<http://dramaresource.com/conscience-alley/>

One side of the alley argues that he *should* sell Joey, the other side that he should *not*. Choose some children to take turns to listen to the arguments by walking down the alley in role as Albert's father. Following this have a whole class discussion. Listen first to the children who were in role as Albert's father - which side persuaded them? The teacher or another adult, such as a teaching assistant could scribe and record the responses.

The class could then write a note to Albert's father advising him of what to do next, based on the evidence that they have heard during this session. When they have finished their writing, ask them to screw up their note into a ball and throw them across the room. The receiver of the note then writes in role as the father in reply to the note telling them what he is going to do.

Ask the class to consider the language and style used, including emotive language and repetition, and which was the most persuasive note and why. These notes can then be placed on the class working wall.

After listening

Listen to the remaining part of the episode and reflect on the decision Albert's father takes.

Consider the character of Captain Nicholls and what the audience can tell about him from this first encounter. Ask the class to begin a role on the wall, comparing and contrasting him with Albert. Ask the class if they think he will be able to keep his promise. Ask the class to reflect on Captain Nicholls' feelings about the War and the doubts he reveals. Ask the class to consider why his opinions differ from those of the men around him.

In this episode he admits his fears to the horse. Consider the relationship between Joey and Captain Nicholls and the way in which it is similar to the relationship Joey had with Albert. You may want to return to the consideration of Joey as narrator and further explore the way in which this authorial choice adds to the audience's experience.

In this episode Joey is treated very differently by Corporal Perkins to the way in which Captain Nicholls and Albert treat him. Consider the trust and devotion shown by Joey to those who treat him with affection and care. Compare this to the way he behaves when made to feel fear. You may then want to have a wider discussion around this idea - when we feel respect born out of fear as opposed to out of trust. Ask the class to consider why Joey responds to kindness and to reflect on when they perform at their best and what supports this.

You may also want to ask the children to consider what they know about WW1. Ask the class to complete a table in which they record:

- what they know
- what they think they know
- what they would like to find out

Then gather the class and compile notes and ideas. This can support assessment for learning, guiding the following sessions and any cross curricular learning that will take place during the sequence. This point would be a good opportunity to begin a cross curricular project on WW1 to support pupils' understanding of the story as it unfolds.

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3: The Western Front



Click on the image to display a larger version online if you are connected to the internet

Synopsis

At the start of this episode Joey meets Tophorn, another horse, who is to become his closest friend. The horses travel to France by boat and as they disembark they are faced with the sight of the wounded soldiers returning from the front line.

The squadron travel into the countryside, towards the fighting. Eventually they find themselves in battle. Nearly a quarter of the squadron are killed in this first encounter, including Captain Nicholls. Joey is then given to Trooper Warren, who cares for him with the same affection as Albert had done.

The horses are used more frequently for transporting mounted infantry and as the winter sets in Trooper Warren has to look after Joey carefully to ensure he survives the cold.

After listening

Explore Joey's friendship with Tophorn with the class and compare and contrast the relationship between the horses to the relationship between the men and also between the men and the horses, as the story progresses. Continue to reflect on this central theme of *friendship* and *loyalty* as the story unfolds.

Reflect on the scene in which the men depart from the boats and witness for the first time the wounded soldiers returning from the Front. Explore using role play: begin by asking pupils to create a *frozen tableau* of the scene, some of the group playing the role of the soldiers arriving and some of the group enacting the role of the injured. Ask them to consider their facial expressions and body language and to think carefully about how they can convey their emotions.

Then ask the class to bring the scene to life for a moment, showing the contrast between the noise of the journey aboard the ship and the silence that followed as the soldiers witness the wounded men. Following this, reflect on the soldiers' shock at seeing the wounded and ask the class to consider why this was such a surprise to them.

At the end of the session ask the class to reflect on the sudden death of Captain Nicholls. Explore the fact that a quarter of the squadron died in the first battle and reflect on the impact this would have had on the morale of the soldiers.

In this episode the audience meet another of Joey's 'owners', Trooper Warren. Begin another role on the wall for this character. Again, compare the different people that Joey has a relationship with and the bond of friendship, trust and loyalty that develops. Consider why Trooper Warren is also so devoted to Joey.

The role of the horses changes in this section of the story. Ask the class to explore why this might be and what it tells us about the way in which the War is unfolding.

4: Prisoners of war



Click on the image to display a larger version online if you are connected to the internet

Synopsis

The horses survive the winter through the kindness shown to them by their owners. Trooper Warren receives letters from home and reads them aloud to the horses.

The horses are led once again into battle and this time find themselves in no-man's-land and the horrors of the War are revealed through the descriptions of battle. The men and horses find themselves among the German troops and are taken as prisoners of war.

The horses are separated from their riders and put to work pulling carts filled with German wounded.

After listening

Reflect on the letter Trooper Warren receives from his mother and the role of letters more generally in keeping up the morale of the soldiers during the War. Ask pupils to consider what the soldiers may have written back and ask them to reflect on whether they think the soldiers would have been honest about their experiences. If possible, examine some examples from the period and also explore the censorship of letters. Following this, ask the children to write in role as Trooper Warren back to his mother.

In this episode Joey is ridden into battle again. To support pupils' understanding of this, use dramatic visualising to create images of the scene.

Listen to this section of the episode again but this time ask the children to close their eyes and invite them to try to visualise the scene. After this, ask class to 'stand' in the middle of the battle and to describe what they see, each from their viewpoint (they will be facing different ways).

Then give pupils pieces of paper and appropriate and available art materials - such as charcoal - and ask them to sketch the scene they pictured. You could listen to this section again several times while they draw their pictures. After they have completed their drawings pupils could annotate the pictures with key vocabulary or phrases which support their understanding or interpretation.

Ask the class why these words or phrases in particular stood out for them: what made them so vivid or memorable? What mood or sense of place is created by the author through the descriptions? Read aloud some of their annotations, discussing particularly effective words or phrases that either confirm or add meaning to the artwork.

Following this ask pupils to consider how the men and horses were able to keep going in the face of such danger and how it must have felt to charge over the wire into the battle.

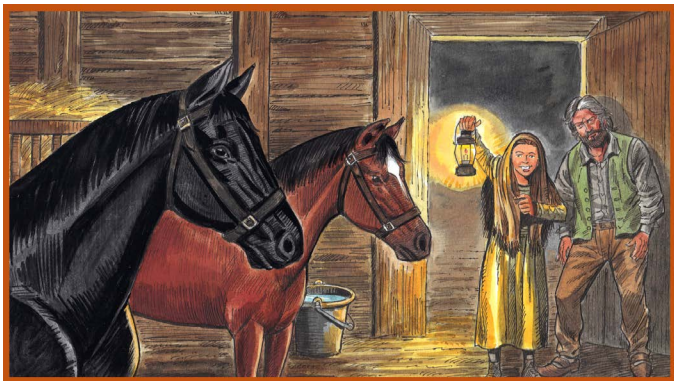
Captain Stewart's opinions reveal the feelings of many soldiers who considered it futile for both men and horses to be sent into battle against barbed wire and machine-guns. Reflect on the broader theme of using animals in warfare and whether or not individuals in the class agree with this.

The two soldiers have become prisoners of war at the start of this episode. Ask the class to explore what they think this means and to predict what they think may happen to the men and the horses.

Ask the class to reflect on how Michael Morpurgo humanises the 'enemy' in this episode, drawing evidence from what they have heard.

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5: A brief respite



Click on the image to display a larger version online if you are connected to the internet

Synopsis

In this episode the audience is introduced to Emilie and her grandfather, whose farm has been occupied by the Germans. They care for the horses and Emilie's affection for the two animals mirrors Albert's feelings for Joey.

Emilie is taken ill and her grandfather reveals to the horses what happened to her mother, father and brother, all of whom were killed in the War. He asks the horses to pray for her to get better.

When the horses return to the farm later they find that Emilie has recovered and for a time the intensity of battle diminishes and the horses are needed to work less. They enjoy living on the farm and spending time with Emilie. A German doctor then allows Emilie and her grandfather to keep the horses and they are put to work on the farm.

Finally another group of German soldiers arrives and this group does not appear to be as considerate.

After listening

Complete roles on the wall for Emilie and her grandfather. Reflect on why the horses mean so much to them both. Again, draw comparisons with the all the other 'owners'.

Consider why Michael Morpurgo changes the horses' situation so often throughout the story. After this, assign individuals in the class the different characters: Grandfather and Emilie. The class can then 'hot-seat' in role, to find out more about their experiences, thoughts and feelings.

Give the class time to discuss questions they might ask the different characters beforehand. Ask the class to work in small groups to decide on five questions that they would ask each character. Then ask the groups to refine these questions together, considering which would elicit the best response from the character. Depending on the prior experiences of the pupils this may need modelling first. Then ask the groups to choose their three most effective questions to submit to the hot-seating.

The individuals playing the parts of the different characters will also need time to prepare their story and inhabit the character. Simple signifiers can be useful to support this process, such as a hat.

After the hot-seating has taken place, consider which were the most effective questions and why.

You could record these sessions so that the class can refer to them again prior to writing. You could also take photographs of those in role and ask the children to annotate the pictures following the hot-seating.

You may also want to use this as a starting point to explore what the impact of the War has been on the occupied French population.

6: Working for the Germans



Click on the image to display a larger version online if you are connected to the internet

Synopsis

The horses are taken from Emilie and put to work pulling a gun carriage. Joey and Topthorn work in a group with another four horses, whose health quickly deteriorates as the conditions they are living in deteriorate also. Topthorn becomes unwell and Joey cares for him, hoping he will get better.

Both Joey and Topthorn survive another winter and the horses are made to work again, pulling armaments. They are cared for by a German soldier called Friedrich.

After listening

Consider Emilie's feelings when she has to say goodbye to Joey and Topthorn. Return to the role on the wall for her character and consider the similarities between Emilie and Albert in the scenes in which they have been separated from Joey.

The deteriorating conditions of both the horses and the soldiers are revealed in this episode. The conditions of the horses mirror the conditions of the men; consider what this tells the audience about the way in which the War is progressing.

Immerse the class in the sights and sounds of the trenches and conditions the soldiers had to live in. To support the children's understanding of this play this [sound clip](#) from the BBC School Radio website.

Play the sound clip again and ask the class to note down any words or phrases that come to mind as they listen. Ask them to imagine that they are in these conditions. What would they be able to see, hear, smell and feel?

Show the class a range of photographs of the conditions in which the men and horses were living and continue to play the sounds to stimulate the discussion. Supporting resources can be found here: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/0/ww1/25621757>

Listen again to sections of the episode that focus on the deteriorating experiences of the soldiers and ask the class to add more words and phrases to their collections. When the class have had time to discuss different words and phrases, ask them to describe the feeling or sensation of being a soldier in these conditions on one line on a strip of paper. This could be a word, phrase, or a whole sentence.

Put the class into mixed ability groups and ask them to put their strips together to form a free verse. Discuss with the children editing for cohesion and sense and ensure that they prepare to perform the poem for the rest of the class, thinking about how to use their voices and group dynamics to create effect for the listener.

Once they have created a draft, you may want to encourage the children to look at the poem again to see if they would like to use repetition of words or phrases for impact. Discuss with the class the different aspects of poetry performance that enhance the experience for a reader such as tone of voice, intonation, volume, facial expression and gesture.

Give time for each group to perform their poem. Allow time for those watching to respond to the performances, evaluating the impact of the language and actions on the listeners. What impression of the War is created by the poetry performance?

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In this episode Joey is cared for by a German soldier called Friedrich. Consider the ways in which he is also similar to the other characters that have had a relationship with Joey. Consider the fears he confesses to the horses and his feelings about the War. Reflect on what this reveals about the position the men on both sides found themselves in.

In his conversation with the horses Friedrich says that he wishes he could run away from the War but that he does not have the courage. At this point you may want to explore those who conscientiously objected to the War and the way in which they were treated by their governments and others.

7: The loss of a friend



Click on the image to display a larger version online if you are connected to the internet

Synopsis

At the start of this Episode Tophorn dies, Joey is devastated and remains with his friend even after shelling begins and he finds himself in the middle of a battle. Friedrich also remains with him and then he is also killed in the unfolding battle.

The next morning Joey is frightened by the appearance of a tank and he runs in panic away from Tophorn. In his terror he runs into no-man's-land. The men on both sides try to encourage him over to their side of the wire but he remains where he is.

Two men then risk their lives to enter the battlefield to try to get Joey.

During listening

Joey remains with Tophorn after his death and during the attack that they are under, revealing that Tophorn was his 'best and dearest friend'. Reflect on the impact this event will have on Joey and also allow the class to explore their own feelings at this point in the story.

In this episode Joey finds himself alone for the first time in the story and in his panic he runs into no-man's-land. As the class listen to the episode ask them to close their eyes and invite them to try to visualise the scene in their mind's eye.

After listening

Following the episode, ask the class to write a memorial plaque for Tophorn reflecting his contribution to the War and the ways in which he will be remembered.

Focus the children's attention on the parts of the story that describe the setting. Consider what images this conjures up in pupils' minds. Which choice of words or phrase helped them to see the scene in their mind's eye. Ask the class to talk about what they imagine, clarifying, recasting and enriching their descriptions and drawing on those in the episode.

Through discussion, draw out from the class the way in which the author has chosen particular language and sentence structure to support the creation of this setting in the reader's imagination.

Ask the class to predict what they think will happen next, given that both a German and a British soldier have approached Joey in the middle of the battlefield.



War Horse by Michael Morpurgo

8: The toss of a coin



Click on the image to display a larger version online if you are connected to the internet

Synopsis

Joey finds himself between the German and British lines and two soldiers - one from each side - risk their lives trying to get him to come over to their trenches. The soldiers speak to each other in the middle of no-man's-land and explore the futility of the fighting.

Joey is won by a toss of a coin by the British soldier who takes him back to a field hospital with stables. Coincidentally it is Albert who is given Joey to clean and take care of and the two friends - man and horse - are finally reunited.

After listening

Reflect on the conversation that takes place between the two soldiers at the start of the episode and consider how the story explores the idea of the futility of war.

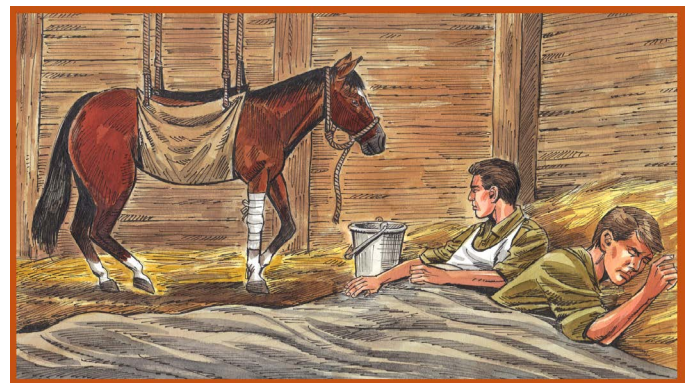
The soldiers suggest that they have shown that any problem can be resolved between people if only they can trust each other. Reflect on how the theme of trust is repeated throughout the story.

Albert is reintroduced into the story during this episode. The anticipation builds as the mud is washed off Joey and his markings are revealed before the two characters are finally reunited. Consider how

Michael Morpurgo intensifies the reuniting of the two characters during this scene.

Reflect with the class on how both characters feel at being reunited and what Albert discloses about what has happened to him in the years that they have been separated. At this point ask the class to write a letter home in role as Albert to his parents informing them of what has happened.

9: Illness and recovery



Click on the image to display a larger version online if you are connected to the internet

Synopsis

In this episode Joey becomes dangerously ill with tetanus. Initially it is suggested that Joey is put down but Albert's friend David convinces those in charge to give Albert the chance to save him. Albert, David and the other soldiers care for Joey every day and night until he is finally better.

During this time, Albert reveals to Joey what has happened to him in the intervening years: he talks about his mother and father and also 'his girl', Maisie.

At the end of this episode Albert's closest friend, David, dies after being hit by a stray shell. Following this Albert vows that he and Joey will get home.

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Consider the impact Joey's illness has on the soldiers and why they devote so much attention to him. Reflect on why the men spend so much time and energy trying to make him better.

Consider what this reveals about the importance of the horses to the army but also the relationship the men have with one another and with the horses in their care.

Reflect on the effect that David's death will have on Albert.

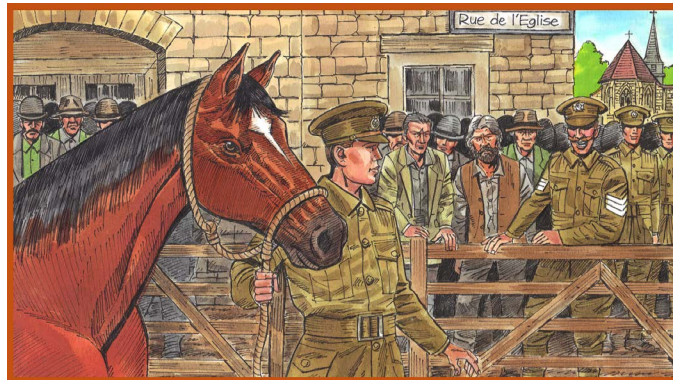
Ask the children to consider the emotional journey Joey has undergone since the start of the story. Create a graph of emotion on which the class can track Joey's emotions.

Ask the children to think about the emotional range of his character and to select words to demarcate the y axis of your graph. Spend some time thinking about the most suitable words to use, for example, is it 'sad'? Or could you describe the emotions experienced better by using words such as 'forlorn', 'desolate' or 'spiritless'?

Use a thermometer image to build up a scale of suitable words, perhaps in small groups, and share these as a whole class, selecting appropriate vocabulary for your graph. Then use the main events of the story as the x axis and then graph the emotional state of the character at each of these main events to form your graph.

Display these graphs and orally retell the story of Joey's emotional journey so far.

10: Happily ever after



Click on the image to display a larger version online if you are connected to the internet

Synopsis

The War ends at the start of the episode but it is revealed that the horses will not be coming home with the soldiers but are to be sold at auction. The men are horrified at this and club together to raise what money they have to try to buy Joey at the auction so that Albert can take him home.

The soldiers outbid by Emilie's grandfather who has come to the auction to buy the horse in memory of her. He speaks to Albert and tells her about the time when Joey lived with them. He reveals that Emilie has died, but that she made him promise to find her horses (both Joey and Topthorn) and look after them.

Emilie's grandfather offers to sell Joey to Albert for one English penny, if he promises to love him as much as Emilie did. Albert agrees and finally takes Joey home to England.

After listening

Consider why the end of the War is an anti-climactic part of the story.

It is revealed that the army has decided to sell the horses rather than returning to Britain with them. Consider the soldiers' opinions of this and why they believe the horses to be war veterans. Explore why the men try so hard to buy Joey and reflect on the broader themes of friendship and loyalty explored throughout the story which culminate in this final act.

Reflect on why the army has chosen not to honour the horses' contributions. Following this you may want to explore how animals have been recognised for their bravery both in conflict and in other situations, such as mountain rescue.

Contemplate the actions and wishes of Emilie's grandfather, specifically his desire that Emilie will live on in people's hearts. Ask the class to design and draw a memorial for Emilie to go in the town or farm where she lived, including an epitaph. In this session it would be useful to look first at existing memorials and tributes before the class plan and design their own. This would also be a good opportunity to explore with the class how WW1 is commemorated and how we remember those who died in war.

Display all the different roles on the wall that you have created throughout the different sessions. Compare and contrast all of the characters that have cared for Joey and explore the similarities which exist between them all.

Discuss pupils' responses to the ending of the story - what they liked or disliked, anything that puzzled them or any connections they can make. This may also be a good opportunity to recommend further reading to the children so that they can continue to explore the themes of the story.

Exploring the text further

Literacy

Through their experience of this text the class will encounter language that they may not be familiar with. For example, language relating to equestrianism, to warfare and also language that may have dropped out of common usage or that is part of a regional dialect. The class could dedicate a section of a working wall to collecting examples of vocabulary used in the episodes that they are unfamiliar with. They can look up the definitions and this could provide a starting point to explore the morphology and etymology of certain words.

Consider screen and stage adaptations of the book and compare and contrast the way the different mediums present the same story.

Conduct an author study exploring Michael Morpurgo's body of work and consider what experiences may have influenced his writing. For example *Private Peaceful*:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01n4ny7>

Or *Friend or Foe*:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p043gvrq>

History

The class could also develop their understanding of the period through a study of different objects from the time. If your school has a library or local resources centre they should be able to provide you with a range of real objects for the children to explore. Otherwise you could have a laminated set of pictures. Give the children a range of objects, such as a helmet, a compass, a recruitment poster, a medal. Ask them to consider what the objects are and what they were used for. Then give them time to research the objects and to find out what they are. As inspiration, the children could explore the BBC resource *The History of the World in 100 Objects*:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00nrt2>

War Horse by Michael Morpurgo

Following this ask the children to write short descriptions of the different objects including captions and labels. The class could then create their own topic display in the class which can be added to as they discover more about the topic.

You may want to explore the 'artefact' referred to at the start of the published version of the story - the painting of Joey by Captain Nicholls. Ask the children to find out if this really exists and if the story is based on a real painting or if this too is fictional. Use this as a starting point for considering the value of primary and secondary sources of information.

Explore WW1 including the trenches, ranks of soldiers, prisoners of war and conscientious objectors.

Research the changes in warfare that took place during WW1 and the impact that changes in technology have had on how wars are fought.

Consider how young people lived during the period and how different this is to young people's lives now. For example, looking at trades young people went into which are much less common now, such as blacksmiths, grocers, etc.

PSHE

Explore the central themes of friendship, loyalty, bravery and courage.

Consider the special relationships between humans and animals portrayed in the story

Citizenship and Rights

Consider the act of conscription, comparing it to the way in which people in this country can now choose if they want to join the armed forces.

Explore remembrance services and traditions with a focus on the centenary of WW1 and how this occasion was marked by different events.

Reflect on the use of animals in the service of humans, such as in the armed forces, for rescue services and also for those with disabilities.

Links

BBC Schools website about WW1:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/0/ww1/>

BBC Schools: how to stage your performance of the play Archie Dobson's War (which includes many sound effects relating to WW1):

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01n4ldk

A portal where you can find all the BBC's content focusing on WW1:

www.bbc.co.uk/ww1

Interactive animations from the BBC, including a 'Night patrol':

www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone/launch_animation_movies.shtml

The homefront and the descent into war:

www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/britain_wwone/

Take a virtual tour of life in a trench:

www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone/launch_virtual_tour_trench.shtml

An interactive map of western Europe before, during and after the War:

www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone/launch_animation_western_front.shtml

www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone/soldiers_stories_gallery_05.shtml