

Teaching the Book

In 1914, Joey, a beautiful bay-red horse with a distinctive cross on his nose, is sold to the army and thrust into the midst of World War I on the Western Front. Told from the point of view of a brave war horse, this award-winning book provides opportunities to teach historical fiction, summarizing, and domain-specific vocabulary. Students will engage in activities ranging from writing from the point of view of an animal to researching World War I to taking a quiz that compares their personalities to those of animals.

Theme Focus: Historical Fiction

Comprehension Focus: Summarize

Language Focus: *War Horse* Vocabulary

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Morpurgo has written over 100 books. He has always been involved with children—as a teacher, father, grandfather, and as the founder, with his wife, of Farms for City Children, a charity that enables city kids to share his passion for animals and the countryside.

Born in 1943, he attended schools in London, Sussex, and Canterbury. He went to London University to study English and French, then taught at a primary school in Kent where he discovered what he wanted to do for children. “I told them the kind of story I used to tell my kids—I could see there was magic in it for them, and realized there was magic in it for me.”

Morpurgo’s book, *Kensuke’s Kingdom*, won the Children’s Book Award, judged by over 20,000 children in England. Morpurgo followed with *Private Peaceful* and *The Amazing Story of Adolphus Tips*. Originally published in 1983, *War Horse* was a runner up for the Whitbread Award.

Michael Morpurgo lives in Devon, England with his wife, Clare. For more information, visit: www.michaelmorpurgo.com.

BOOK STATS

Grade Level Equivalent: 5–8

Ages: 10+

Lexile Measure®: 1090L

Pages: 176

Genre: Historical Fiction

Subject/Theme: World War I, Animals, Courage

Common Core State Standards	Reading	Writing	Listening & Speaking	Language
Grade 5	RL.5.1, RL.5.2, RL.5.4, RL.5.6, RL.5.9	W.5.3	SL.5.1, SL.5.5	L.5.4, L.5.6
Grade 6	RL.6.1, RL.6.2, RL.6.4, RL.6.6, RL.6.7	W.6.3	SL.6.1, SL.6.5	L.6.4, L.6.6
Grade 7	RL.7.1, RL.7.2, RL.7.4, RL.7.6, RL.7.7	W.7.3	SL.7.1, SL.7.5	L.7.4, L.7.6
Grade 8	RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.4, RL.8.6, RL.8.7	W.8.3	SL.8.1, SL.8.5	L.8.4, L.8.6

OVERVIEW

Book Summary

Joey, a half-thoroughbred colt, begins the story with his happy, early days on an English farm. Soon, he is sold at an auction to a farmer with a mean disposition. Luckily, the farmer’s son Albert bonds with Joey, and they grow devoted to each other.

The beginning of World War I changes the world and Joey’s life. Albert’s father, who needs money, sells Joey to the army. Joey is transformed from a farm horse into a cavalry horse and travels with the soldiers to the battlegrounds of Europe. Joey experiences the harsh realities of war just as the soldiers do on the front line. He loses his beloved master, is captured by the Germans, lives with a French family, and is then thrust back into the war, whereupon English soldiers rescue him from a no-man’s land. But even in the desolation of the trenches, Joey’s courage touches the soldiers around him and he is able to find warmth and hope.

The inspiring end of the story reunites Joey with Albert on the battlefields and—later—on the farm where they first formed their remarkable friendship.

Get Ready to Read

Pre-Reading Activities

Movie Trailer *War Horse* was made into a major motion picture by director Steven Spielberg. Preview its trailer to decide if you would like to use it to introduce the book to students: <http://bit.ly/Tsbt69>.

War Horses in WWI Introduce students to the historical setting of the book. World War I began about one hundred years ago in 1914. Before then, horses had been a major part of warfare, carrying soldiers in cavalry charges against the enemy. However, by WWI, the use of machine guns made the use of cavalry troops unrealistic and deadly. Horses were still used for logistical support during the war because they traveled through deep mud and rough terrain better than the mechanized vehicles of the time. Joey, the horse of this novel, was one of those war horses.

Vocabulary

War Horse Words The book is full of vocabulary that describes both horses and the weapons, soldiers, and conditions of World War I. Learning the meaning of these words aids students' comprehension of the novel and builds their domain-specific vocabularies. Guide students to learn new vocabulary words by using context clues to figure out word meanings, check definitions in the dictionary, and record other unfamiliar words relating to horses and the war.

Use **Resource #1: Vocabulary Cards** on page 7 and distribute copies to students.

Horses

thoroughbred (p. 2)

bay (p. 5)

reins (p. 17)

dismounting (p. 43)

War

cavalry (p. 29)

artillery (p. 33)

squadron (p. 33)

maneuvers (p. 35)



BIG QUESTION

Critical Thinking Ask students to think about this question as they read. Write the question on chart paper or the whiteboard.

How is Joey the real hero of this book?

STORIA ENRICHMENTS

This Storia e-book has the following enrichments to enhance students' comprehension of the book.

- Word Twister (2)
- Do You Know?
- Word Scramble (2)
- Did You Know?
- Who Said It?

As You Read

Reading the Book

Modeled Reading Introduce students to the unusual point of view of the story by reading Chapter 1 aloud and modeling fluent reading. Prompt students to discuss the point of view in the novel by asking these questions: Who do you think is telling the story? How do you know this? What other characters have you met so far? What have you learned about them?

Independent Reading Assign students to read the book independently. Encourage them to partner with another student to share questions and reactions to the book.

Comprehension Focus

Summarize Remind students that a summary is a short statement of the most important ideas or events in a story. Teach students the steps of summarizing, which include:

1. Identify the main events.
2. Find the most important details about the event.
3. Restate the event and important details in a short summary using your own words.

Make sure to remind students to use their own words when summarizing. Point out that summarizing helps them understand and remember books they have read.

Use **Resource #2: Summarize** on page 8 to model for students how to restate a short summary by using their own words. Pass out copies of the resource for students to use as they read subsequent parts of the book. Then model for students how to summarize a part of the text. Project the organizer on a whiteboard and fill it out as you model summarizing.

Model: I'm going to summarize what happens in the story from pages 1 to 7. The main events in this part of the book are that Joey is separated from his mother and sold to a farmer who doesn't treat him well. Joey realizes he has a friend in the farmer's son, Albert, who cares for him and protects him. What are the important details? First, we learn that Joey is both a beautiful and independent horse. Then we learn that Albert is willing to defy his father to take care of the horse. The horse and Albert have a bond of trust and affection with each other.

Give students a brief oral summary of Chapter 1, by using your own words. Assign them to summarize another chapter (or set of chapters) in the story as they read.

After You Read

Questions to Discuss

Lead students in a discussion of the following focus story elements. Ask them to provide text evidence to support their answers.

1. Historical Fiction How does author Michael Morpurgo communicate how soldiers feel about the war through the viewpoint of a horse? (*Sample answers: The narrator, Joey the horse, describes terrible*

things that he witnesses; the author includes conversations of German and English soldiers that the horse could overhear.)

2. Summarize In two or three sentences, sum up the character of Joey and how he acts on the battlefields of World War I. (*Sample summary: Joey is a brave and noble horse who shows great courage in battle. He also has a great fondness for humans who treat him well and have the intelligence to bond with him.*)

3. War Horse Words Why did the armies stop using horses in cavalry charges during World War I? (*Sample answer: The horses were no match for the machine guns and other artillery that had been developed since the days when cavalry charges were part of warfare.*)

Questions to Share

Encourage students to share their responses with a partner or small group.

1. Text-to-Self Describe how it made you feel when Joey was auctioned off near the end of the book. How does the author make you feel about humans' treatment of horses?

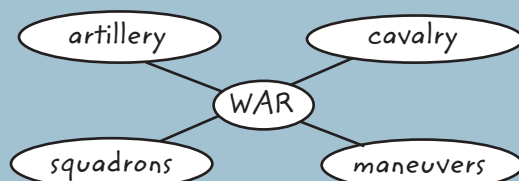
2. Text-to-World How do dogs serve in the military today as horses did in the past? How can they play heroic roles in wars?

3. Text-to-Text What other books have you read that have animals as main characters? Examples

WORDS TO KNOW

Content Area Words

Draw a concept map for each vocabulary concept—Horses and War—using chart paper or a whiteboard. Ask students to describe how each of the vocabulary words connects to the concept and have them suggest additional words from their lists that connect to each of the concepts.



include *Charlotte's Web*, *Call of the Wild*, and *Black Beauty*. Compare one of the books with *War Horse*.

Extension Activities

Reading/Writing Connection

A Different Point of View The entire story of *War Horse* is written from the point of view of a horse. Ask students to experiment with point of view by writing a story from an animal's point of view. Choices include a pet cat or dog or an animal that they see in their neighborhood. Tell students to first choose their animal, then choose the event to describe, and, finally, consider what the animal's point of view might reveal. Remind them that their story can be serious or humorous. Students should refer back to *War Horse* as a model for their writing.

Don't forget the



BIG QUESTION

Critical Thinking Give each student an opportunity to answer the big question. Encourage students to support their answers with details and evidence from the text. Tell them there is no one right answer.

How is Joey the real hero of this book?

Content Area Connections

History Teen Life in 1914 Prompt students to learn more about the history of the period of World War I. Encourage students to research the historical period. Extend the comparison chart and compare teen life in 1914 with today, by downloading the Student Printable, "Eyewitness to History" at: <http://bit.ly/TqeBPw>.

Science Research and Report Assign students to research an aspect of horses—from the different breeds of horses to the wild horses still roaming the American West. Websites such as PBS Nature and National Geographic have facts, photos, videos, and stories about the animals. Set aside a time for students to report on their research, accompanying their facts with technology of slideshows, videos, or PowerPoint presentations.

Arts The Book and the Movie If students are mature enough and have parental permission, consider showing the movie based on the film and compare the two. How are the details of the book and the movie different? How is the movie more effective? How is the book more effective?

Psychology What Kind of Animal Are You?

Many characters in *War Horse* identify and bond with Joey, the beautiful bay horse. Students can find out what kind of animal they are by taking an interactive "pop psychology" quiz on the Scholastic *War Horse* movie site: <http://bit.ly/TqeBPw>. Encourage students to compare their results and critique whether or not they think the quiz accurately compares them to an animal.

BIG ACTIVITY

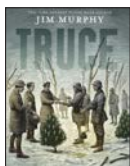
Report from the Battlefield Remind students that during World War I, people relied on newspapers for war news rather than television or the Internet. Assign students the job of being a war correspondent who has witnessed Joey's return to the English troops after being caught in the no-man's land. Ask them to write an article about the event, as well as, about Joey's reunion with Albert.

Make copies of the **Big Activity: Report From the Battlefields** on page 5 and distribute them to students to use as a template for their news article.

READ MORE AND LEARN MORE

Use these books and other resources to expand your students' study of the book or theme.

Subject/Theme Connections



Truce

Jim Murphy

Ages: 9–13

Grades: 4–7

Lexile Measure®: 1160L

Pages: 128

Guided Reading Level: Y

On July 29, 1914, the world's peace was shattered, and soon, most of Europe was fighting in the First World War. But who could have guessed that on December 25, the troops would openly defy their commanding officers by stopping the fighting and having a spontaneous celebration of Christmas with their enemies? This beautiful and heartrending narrative will remind everyone how brotherhood and love reach far beyond war and politics.

Available as a Stora e-book



Dog Lost

Ingrid Lee

Ages: 9–13

Grades: 4–7

Lexile Measure®: 570L

Pages: 208

Eleven-year-old Mackenzie is a very lonely

kid. So when his dad wins a pit bull named Cash in a card game, Mack instantly falls in love with the dog. The two become best friends until, one night, Cash tries to protect Mack from his angry father and gets tossed out onto the street. Cash is a brave, strong pup, but everywhere she turns, people fear her because they think pit bulls are dangerous and mean. This action-packed tale includes many emotional twists and turns, as well as powerful insight into the nature of prejudice. **Available as a Stora e-book**



Ten True Tales: World War II Heroes

Alan Zullo

Ages: 11–14

Grades: 6–9

Lexile Measure®: 850L

Pages: 160

Guided Reading Level: Z

During World War II, everyday citizens fought to protect and preserve the values that made America great. Many of them found incredible courage they didn't know they had—in firefights in the bombed-out fields of France, in dogfights over the flak-filled skies of Belgium, and in hand-to-hand combat on the bloody beaches of Okinawa.

Available as a Stora e-book



Out of the Dust

Karen Hesse

Ages: 11–14

Grades: 5–8

Guided Reading Level: X

Pages: 352

Growing up in the Oklahoma Dust Bowl during the Great Depression, Billy Jo must cope with life-threatening weather and personal disasters. She accepts blame for her mother's tragic death, which also left her hands permanently scarred and damaged her ability to play the piano. This Newbery Award-winning novel, composed entirely in free-verse poetry, demonstrates that hope is always present, even in the darkest of circumstances.

Available as a Stora e-book



Ten True Tales: Battle Heroes

Alan Zullo

Ages: 11–14

Grades: 6–9

Lexile Measure®: 1090L

Pages: 176

Guided Reading Level: Z

In a remote Afghan village, Marine Lieutenant Stephen Boada picks up a chilling Taliban message on his radio scanner: "The Americans will never make it out alive." The book tells the story of Boada and other American heroes who risk their lives daily while serving their country in Afghanistan.

Available as a Stora e-book



Desperate Journey

Jim Murphy

Ages: 10–13

Grades: 5–8

Lexile Measure®: 860L

Pages: 288

Guided Reading Level: V

It's 1848, and times are tough along the banks of upstate New York's Erie Canal. Twelve-year-old Maggie and her Irish immigrant family spend their lives hauling cargo along the canal's 360 miles. Maggie's father lost the family's entire savings, and now they're in danger of having their boat seized. Can Maggie, her nine-year-old brother, and their sick mother overcome the odds to save their boat—and their family? **Available as a Stora e-book**

To find PDF versions of the Stora teacher guides and links to purchase the related books, visit:
<http://teacher.scholastic.com/ereading-resources/>

HORSES

WAR

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Name: _____ Date: _____

RESOURCE #2: Summarize

Use this organizer to summarize a chapter or section of the book.

Pages _____ **to** _____

Events: _____

Important Details:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Summary: Use your own words to summarize the event and the important details.
