



AN EAGLE IN THE SNOW
by MICHAEL MORPURGO
Teaching Resource Kit (KS2 & KS3)

An Eagle in the Snow is the extraordinary story of the man who could have stopped World War Two. Included in this Teaching Resource Kit are activities and discussion points designed for Key Stage Two and Key Stage Three children.

Book Synopsis:

1940. Barney and his mother, their home destroyed by bombing, are travelling to the country when their train is forced to shelter in a tunnel from attacking German planes. There, in the darkness, a stranger on the train begins to tell them a story. A story about Bobby Byron, the most decorated soldier of WW1, who once had the chance to end the war before it even began, and how he tried to fix his mistake. But sometimes the right thing is hard to see – and even harder to live with...

More about the book: <https://www.michaelmorpurgo.com/book/an-eagle-in-the-snow>

CONTENTS

- **Classroom or Homework Activity:** Writing challenge
- **Billy's World:** Life in 1914
- **Chapter Quiz:** What happens in *An Eagle in the Snow*
- **Structural Analysis:** Exploring how *An Eagle in the Snow* is constructed
- **Exploring Themes:** The main ideas behind the story
- **Holding a Debate:** Moral dilemmas in *An Eagle in the Snow*
- **Creative Writing Tasks:** From *An Eagle in the Snow*
- **Glossary:** Vocabulary and language activities
- **Teacher's Notes:** Historical events within the book
- **Teacher's Notes:** Cross-curricular mind map

Activity: Class Writing Challenge

Notes for Teachers:

This is designed for all Key Stage Two and Key Stage Three children as a classroom activity or homework. There is no minimal word limit, but we would suggest a maximum of about 200 words.

Some Year 3 children might need some support with understanding the subject matter of the book. It might be that teachers wish to present the book in the context of guided reading sessions where understanding can be carefully monitored and supported.

All teachers know that children respond differently to different stimuli. There are therefore two options from which the children should select one task. The first task asks children to focus more on description of emotions and feelings; the second task focuses more on action-focused creative writing.

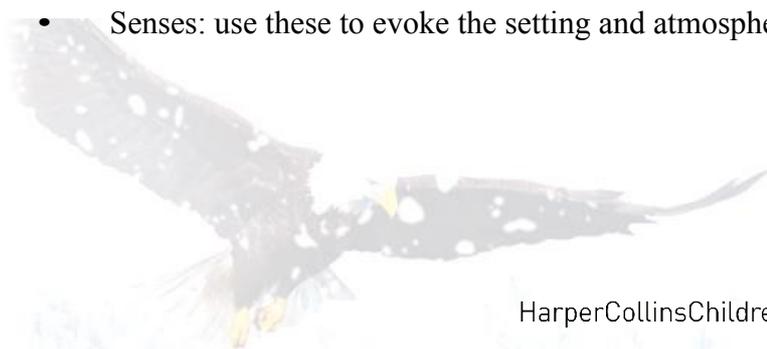
Extract 1:

We were all tramping through a village-a place called Poperinghe it was, just outside Ypres in Belgium-when he saw her by the side of the road. She was sitting there hugging her knees, rocking herself, and whimpering. We all saw her as we came marching by. She was barefoot, shivering, and you could see there was no hope left in her.'

Task: Imagine that you are this girl, Christine. Include this moment in a piece of writing showing Christine's side of the story.

Points to consider:

- Your tense use – which will you have throughout your narration?
 - The present tense, as if you are still on the street?
 - The past tense, as if you were in hospital, remembering events?
 - Might you use both both present and past tense and include a flashback?
- Use of the first person narrator.
- What effect do you want to have on your reader? How are you going to achieve this?
- Description of body language to show emotions, for example, *'hugging her knees, rocking herself and whimpering'* instead of 'she felt scared'. How might you show fear? Relief?
- Sentence starters: Challenge yourself to begin with similes ("like...") or metaphors ("as...as...")
- Senses: use these to evoke the setting and atmosphere



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Activity: Class Writing Challenge

Extract 2:

“You all right, son?” said the stranger opposite, leaning forward. Ma answered for me again, and I was relieved she did this time, for there were tears filling my mouth too, and I couldn’t have spoken even if I’d wanted to.

“We was bombed out,” Ma explained to him. “Bit upset he is”.

Task 2: Imagine you are Barney, sitting on the train, remembering the raid.

Points to Consider:

- Use of first person narrator.
- Which tense will you use? Will it change?
- How are you trying to make your reader feel? How will you use your words to create the panic and fear of the shelter?
- What could you hear/see when you emerged? Can you create your own details to show individual suffering: i.e. *“Mrs McIntyre was sitting on the pavement, outside her shop, her stockings in tatters, her legs bleeding. She was staring into space, fingering her Rosary bead, her lips moving in silent prayer”*
- Sentence length - try and include some short sentences to add drama and excitement.
- How will you use the senses to make the scene come alive? Can you include onomatopoeia?



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Billy's World: Life in 1914

Imagine a world with no electricity, no cars or planes, no mobile phones and no internet. Life in Britain in 1914, when Billy is a young man, was considerably different to how it is now. Since then there had been two World Wars, the atomic bomb, and man has landed on the moon. It is difficult to think of another 100-year period where there had been so many fundamental and dramatic changes to the world order. 1914 was a bench mark-after the war, things were never going to be the same again.

Great Britain in the world:

In 1914 Great Britain (which then included all of Ireland) was still the most powerful nation in the world- just. The British Empire spread from Canada, through Africa and India to Australia and New Zealand. It totalled 456 million people, one fifth of the total world population and covered one quarter of the world's land mass. Raw products from the Empire would be brought back to England's factories where they would be manufactured into goods for export to the rest of the world. Guarding the sea-lanes to ensure no disruption to this trade was the British Navy, at that time larger than the next two largest navies combined, being France and Germany. Aviation (planes) was in its infancy.

The population of Great Britain in 1914 was 46 million. Now that number stands at 64.6 million. There was minimal immigration. If you were born in 1914, your life expectancy as a female was around 53, and for males 50. This has changed dramatically thanks to improved health care; in 2012 the average life expectancy for a female was 83 and a man, 80.

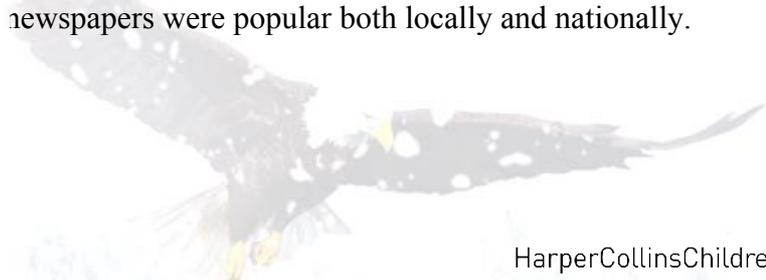
The country had very clear class distinctions and how you lived and the standard of living you enjoyed very much depended on which class you were lucky or unlucky enough to be born into. Life was a lottery (although it was said that you won the lottery of life by being born British).

Life in 1914 for the working classes:

If you were a factory worker or a farm worker life was not easy. There was little security at work and the quality of housing was poor with basic or non-existent bathing and toilet facilities. Electricity was not available for all (and would not be until after the war)- you had gas if you were lucky. There was no central heating.

Holidays abroad for the working classes were unheard of; a trip to the seaside would be the most they could hope for. They did not own motor cars; locally they would either walk or use a horse or cart, for longer trips go by steam train .This meant that people often spent their whole life living in the same village or town. The larger cities had buses and trams and in London the Underground had been started in 1868. There were no combine harvesters or tractors - harvesting was by hand or else by using horse pulled machinery.

If you did not own your home or were a woman you had no vote and it would take the Great War (WWI) to change this. Labour saving devices such as dishwashers and deep freezers did not exist nor the modern concept of frozen food. Silent movies were just being introduced but the musical hall remained the main centre of entertainment for the city working classes. There were no radios or record players but newspapers were popular both locally and nationally.



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Billy's World: Life in 1914

Life as a child in 1914:

In all likelihood you would leave school at 12 to go to work unless you were lucky enough to get a place at a Grammar School. Teachers and older children could beat the younger children. The National Health Service as we understand it did not exist- if you were sick your parents would need to pay for a doctor. Dental care was appalling. In poor districts infant mortality was 40% higher than in better off areas. In the cities, the high air pollution, known as smog, would continue to be a serious problem until the late 1950s. You would not have had a telephone or a computer. Communication would be by letter. However, despite most children leaving school at 12, Literacy rates were remarkably high.

So you can see that notwithstanding the country's position on the world stage for the poor or disadvantaged it was not a good time and life was hard. However, life for the emerging middle class and for the upper class was rather more congenial.

Life for the middle and upper classes in 1914:

Whilst obviously they also did not have the modern labour saving devices what they did have was staff and, in some cases, lots of them. Staff came cheap and you did not have to be rich to employ a maid and a cook whilst the big country houses would have maids, valets, tweenies, cooks, butlers, gardeners, grooms gamekeepers, housekeepers, nannies, footmen etc. They could afford to pay for medical care and in all likelihood their sons would be educated privately at a Public School while daughters would have a governess. Motor cars were becoming more common. Trips to Europe would be commonplace. Many of the families who owned the big estates would intermarry thus preserving their landholdings. It is said the country was owned or governed by 150 families and it would take two world wars and a Socialist government for this to materially change to the society in which we live today.



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An Eagle in the Snow Chapter Quiz: Questions

Part One

Chapter 1:

1. What was Ma knitting?
2. To where is the train travelling?
3. How old is Barney?
4. What was the name of the city in which Barney had lived?
5. What was the name of Grandpa's horse?

Chapter 2:

1. How had Barney hurt his arm?
2. Who are they going to live with?
3. Which Regiment is Barney's father in?
4. What was the name of Barney's road?
5. What type of plane attacked the train?

Chapter 3:

1. What made the train squeal?
2. What is the brand of matches the stranger has?
3. Why have they stopped in the tunnel?
4. How many matches did the stranger have to start with?
5. What was the name of the stranger's friend?

Part Two

Chapter 1:

1. What was the name of Billy's school?
2. What was Billy's hobby?
3. Where did Billy go for his holiday?
4. To where did Billy cross the sea?
5. In what year did he leave Africa?

Chapter 2:

1. In which country did the soldiers find themselves back in Europe?
2. To where did Billy carry the girl?
3. What was the name of the girl?
4. What brand of cigarettes did the soldiers smoke?
5. What did Billy carry for luck?

Chapter 3:

1. What rank was Billy?
2. In which year did the First World War end?
3. What did the soldiers have to cross at Marcoing?
4. What did the German officer give Billy when he surrendered?
5. What medal was Billy given?

Part Three

Chapter 1:

1. Where had Barney's father fought in the WW1?
2. What job did Barney's Grandpa do?
3. What did Billy carry into Westminster Abbey?
4. Where did Billy get a job after leaving the army?
5. Who was Billy looking for on his holiday?

Chapter 2:

1. What job was Christine doing?
2. What was he drinking in the café in Ypres?
3. Who did Christine like going to see at the cinema?
4. What was the name of the German Fuhrer?
5. Why did Billy recognise him?

Chapter 3:

1. How many matches are there now left?
2. What did Hitler do which Billy recognized?
3. How many years had Christine been with Billy?
4. What did Christine do?
5. What rank had Hitler been in the army?

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An Eagle in the Snow Chapter Quiz: Questions

Part Four

Chapter 1:

1. Where had Hitler invaded?
2. What has Barney's mother lost on the train?
3. What did Billy and Christine stop doing?
4. When did the British Prime Minister meet Hitler?
5. What was the Prime Minister's name?

Chapter 2:

1. Who is Billy asked to speak to on the phone?
2. What does Hitler have on the wall?
3. How did Billy feel after his conversation with Mr. Chamberlain?
4. Where did Hitler invade in March 1939?
5. What did Billy hide in his suitcase?

Chapter 3:

1. On which mountains was Hitler's mountain home?
2. Why did Billy say he was going to Germany?
3. What was the name of the Nazi sign hanging on buildings?
4. What did Billy draw on the mountains?
5. How did the locals refer to Hitler?

Chapter 4:

1. What has the eagle caught?
2. What were the men around Hitler wearing?
3. What knocked Billy down?
4. How many people are in the carriage when the train gets going?
5. What does Ma do?



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An Eagle in the Snow Chapter Quiz: Answers

Part One

Chapter 1:

1. Socks
2. London
3. 10
4. Coventry
5. Big Black Jack

Chapter 2:

1. Playing football
 2. Aunty Mavis
 3. The Royal Engineers
 4. Mulberry Road
 5. A Messerschmitt 109
-

Chapter 3:

1. The brakes stopping the train.
2. Swan Vestas
3. To hide from the plan attacking them
4. 5
5. William Byron (Billy Byron)

Part Two

Chapter 1:

1. St Jude's Elementary School.
2. Drawing.
3. Bridlington.
4. Africa (Cape Town)
5. 1914

Chapter 3:

1. Private
2. 1918
3. A canal
4. His pistol
5. The Victoria Cross

Chapter 2:

1. Belgium
 2. The Field Hospital
 3. Christine
 4. Woodbines
 5. A black pebble from Bridlington
-

Part Three

Chapter 1:

1. Palestine
2. Delivered coal with his horse
3. The coffin of the Unknown Soldier
4. At a car factory in Coventry
5. Christine

Chapter 3:

1. Two
2. Push his hair back with the flat of his hand
3. Over ten years
4. Try to persuade him it wasn't his fault
5. Corporal

Chapter 2:

1. A glass of beer
2. She was a teacher
3. Douglas Fairbanks Junior
4. Adolf Hitler
5. He was the man he'd spared at Mercoing

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An Eagle in the Snow Chapter Quiz: Answers

Part Four

Chapter 1:

1. Austria
2. Her knitting needle
3. Going out and to the cinema
4. Sept 1938
5. Mr Chamberlain

Chapter 2:

1. The Prime Minister, Mr Chamberlain
2. A painting of Billy as a soldier, carrying a wounded man to hospital
3. Extremely happy and relieved
4. Czechoslovakia
5. A pistol

Chapter 3:

1. The Bavarian Alps
2. To draw
3. The Swastika
4. Eagles
5. 'Der Fuhrer'

Chapter 4:

1. A hare
2. Black uniforms
3. An Alsatian dog
4. Two
5. Lights the last match



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Structural Analysis:

Exploring how *An Eagle in the Snow* is constructed

Notes for Teachers

Linking to the National Curriculum: Reading books that are structured in different ways; identify how structure, language and presentation contribute to meaning. Explain and discuss understanding of what has been read, including through presentations and debates, maintaining a focus on the topic and using notes where necessary.

Task:

Work as an individual, pair or group to explore, then create a presentation to explain to the class, how *An Eagle in the Snow* by Michael Morpurgo is structured.

Use the following table and questions beneath to help you make notes and organise your findings. The first three chapters have been completed for you:

Chapter title and extra information e.g. dates/settings	Who is telling the story?	Which part are they telling? (summarise the chapter in one or two sentences)	How are they telling the story? Other notes or clues to show structure
Part one-chapter 1 The 11:50 to London	Barney-1 st person narrator	Sitting on a train, he is remembering the horrors of the bombing.	Use of flashback, a story within a story. Flips back in time and then returns to the train setting.
Part one-chapter 2.	Barney	Moving from the past to describing events on the train.	Other characters are being given a voice, adding their perspective on events.
Part one-chapter 3.	Barney, hands over to the stranger at the end.	The attack on the train.	The narration is past on to the stranger for Part 2.

Exploring Themes: The main ideas behind the story

Notes for Teachers

Linking to the National Curriculum: To identify themes and conventions in a wide range of books.

Task:

Suited to individual, paired or small group work (2 – 4)

The theme of a story is its central idea. There can be one or many themes within a book. The theme is often woven all the way through the story and it is reflected in the character's actions and interactions.

Listed in the table below are some themes that you might identify in *An Eagle in the Snow* by Michael Morpurgo. For each, note whether you agree that this is a theme you recognise within *An Eagle in the Snow*. Then for the themes you agree with, make notes of evidence from the text that supports the idea.

Theme	Agree? Why?	Evidence?
<i>'Just do what you think is right and you can't go far wrong'</i> (Ma)		
You have to do what you're told- you have no choice.		
One person can put a stop to war.		
Soldiers respect each other, even if they are on different sides.		
<i>'After a war's over, you can talk about the rights and wrongs of it, but in the middle of a battle, soldiers don't ask themselves those questions'</i>		
Light and dark		
Heroism/bravery		
Hope		
Forgiveness and Redemption		
Guilt: 'No ghosts in this story...but it was a haunting, a real live haunting'		
Hidden truths		
Mercy and kindness		
<i>'He knew that would depend on fate ...'What will be will be' he thought'.</i>		
<i>'His moment had come'</i>		

Holding a Debate:

Moral Dilemmas in *An Eagle in the Snow*

Notes for Teachers

Linking to the National Curriculum:

- Participate in discussions, presentations, performances, role-play, improvisations and debates.
- Articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions
- Listen and respond appropriately to adults and their peers
- Maintain attention and participate actively in collaborative conversations, staying on topic and initiating and responding to comments
- Consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others

Task:

Suited to small group and whole class work.

Use the pairs of ‘perspective’ cards below to encourage groups to consider different viewpoints of some of the events from *An Eagle in the Snow* by Michael Morpurgo:

Each group should think about, discuss, expand on and make notes about the three arguments provided that they can use to defend and argue the viewpoint their group has been given in a class debate. Where possible, they should think of their own extra points to add to their argument.

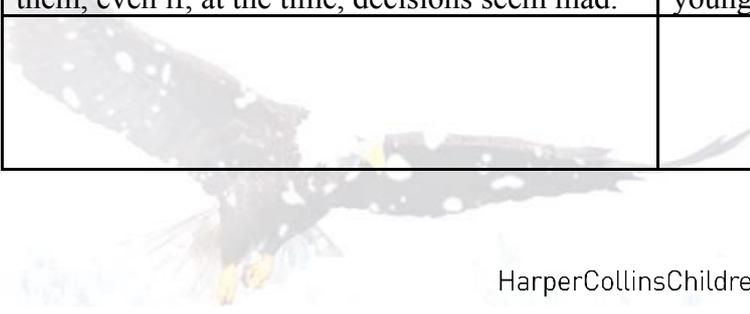
Discuss sensible rules for holding a debating session: taking turns, not interrupting, respecting the view of others, not using personal or derogatory remarks, remaining professional, using evidence and reasoning to support points.

Hold a class debating session getting groups with opposing viewpoints of the same debate topic to argue their cases in front of the class.

Questions for debate:

Question 1: “*Well, I did what they said. Got no choice, had I?*”

Was Billy right? Should we always do what those in positions of responsibility tell us to do?

Agree	Disagree
If soldiers started questioning orders there would have been chaos and Hitler’s regime would have prevailed.	We are all responsible for our own morality and should act accordingly if we don’t think something is right.
In the war, if you were a soldier and disobeyed orders you could be shot. Billy had no choice.	‘The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.’ If Germans had stood up to Hitler, evil might have been stopped.
People with responsibility have more expertise and ‘the big picture’ of events. You need to trust them, even if, at the time, decisions seem mad.	Some people might be given responsibilities they’re not equipped to handle (many officers were very young, almost boys)
	

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Holding a Debate: Moral Dilemmas in *An Eagle in the Snow*

Question 2: *'The problem is that your best is not enough. Sometimes, what seemed right at the time, turns out to be wrong.'*

'As far as Billy was concerned, the whole war is his fault'

Do you agree with Billy?

Agree	Disagree
If he had killed Hitler, none of this would have happened.	How was he supposed to know the soldier would turn into an evil maniac?
He had another chance in the mountains and didn't take it.	Even if he had killed Hitler in the mountains, there were plenty of other Nazis who would have instigated war.
The soldier was the enemy- he should have killed him or taken him prisoner. It wasn't his call to spare him.	It had nothing to do with Billy. The Second World War was inevitable following the condition in which Germany was left after 1WW and the policy of appeasement followed by Chamberlain and other countries.

Question 3: *'...he had only done what he thought was the right thing at the time; to be merciful was good, surely, even towards an enemy.'*

'By this one act of human kindness, you may well have helped the cause of peace.'

Is it always best to be kind over anything else?

Agree	Disagree
If everyone chose to be kind, the world would be a wonderful place.	Sometimes you need to 'be cruel to be kind'. Ie. Killing a suffering animal.
There would be no poverty or hunger as everyone would share all they had.	You need to look at the big picture. To benefit more of society, you might need to be unkind to some. (i.e. Hitler's troops)
People would be happier- they'd connect with those in need by being kind to them and increase their sense of self-worth.	Things that seem unkind at the time might be the best thing for someone in the long run ie. Sending children out of London, separating them from their parents, to escape bombs during WW2.
	

Holding a Debate: Moral Dilemmas in *An Eagle in the Snow*

Question 4: *'To be a hero,' he said, 'you got to be brave, and I weren't any braver than anyone else.'*

Do you agree with Billy's definition of what it is to be a hero?

Agree	Disagree
If you go along to fight and are too scared to leave the trenches, you are not being heroic.	If you are willing to sacrifice your life for your country, you are a hero, no matter how brave you are in battle.
Just because you survive, you are not a hero. Surely, if you'd really been a hero you would have been even braver, taken more risks and would have therefore died.	You can't measure bravery. Different people find different things terrifying.
If you're not braver than anyone else, you're just doing your job as a soldier and therefore you are not a hero.	People can be heroes in other ways than being brave. For example, Billy is Christine's hero, just by carrying her to hospital. Hitler would have been many Germans' hero.



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Creative Writing Tasks

Notes for Teachers

Linking to the National Curriculum:

- Continuing to read and discuss an increasingly wide range of fiction, poetry, plays, non-fiction and reference books or textbooks.
- Reading books that are structured in different ways and reading for a range of purposes.
- Understanding what they have read by drawing inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence.
- Identifying the audience for and purpose of the writing, selecting the appropriate form and using other similar writing as models for their own.
- Preparing poems and play scripts to read aloud and to perform, showing understanding through intonation, tone, volume and action in narratives, creating settings, characters and plot in non-narrative material, using simple organisational devices (for example, headings and sub-headings).

Task:

Suited to individual work

Use the writing inspiration cards below to provide pupils with a creative writing task linked to *An Eagle in the Snow* by Michael Morpurgo.

After reading Chapter 1 and 2

Imagine you are Barney's grandpa. Write a diary entry for the day you found Big Black Jack.

'He cried silently, his whole body shaking'

Consider:

Describing the happy days you'd had with Big Black Jack delivering coal.

Your concern for Barney in the air raid.

Your feelings toward the enemy.

After reading Part 1 Chapter 2 and 3,

Imagine you are the train; using personification, write a poem recalling events from the train's point of view.

'The train was gathering speed now, getting into its stride, sounding happier. Diddle-dee da, diddle-dee da, diddle-dee -dee ,diddle da. I loved that sound, loved that rhythm.'

Consider:

Describing bombed out Coventry as you begin your journey.

Zooming through the peaceful countryside.

The German plan attack.

Escape into the tunnel.

Can you use onomatopoeia?

Challenge: Can you depict the rhythm of the train using rhythm in your poem (see *Night Mail* by WH Auden as an example.)

Creative Writing Tasks

After reading Part 2 chapter 1

Imagine you are a recruiting officer. Design a poster to attract people to sign up.

Consider:

Using short, emotive phrases to grab attention.

What slogan will be appealing?

Can you use alliteration?

After reading Part 2 chapter 2

Write a play script for the scene between Billy, the Major, the Sergeant and the girl.

Consider:

What dialogue will you add in?

How can you convey the characters motives and personalities through their speech?

What stage directions will you use?

After reading Part 2 chapter 2 and 3

Pick either the Battle of the Somme or Camrai and write a newspaper report on events. Incorporate any research you have undertaken.

Consider:

What will be your headline? (can you use alliteration?)

How will you structure your article (headings, sub-headings)

Who will you quote?

How will you keep the readers' attention?

After reading Part 2 chapter 2.

You are Billy, recovering in hospital from your wound. Write a letter to your friends at the front.

Consider:

How will you describe where you are?

What are you feeling?

After reading Part 2 chapter 3;

You were a witness to the events at Marcoing. Write a personal diary entry describing the day's events.

You might be:

- Billy
- A British Soldier
- The German soldier who is set free.

Focus on creating suspense and tension. Use onomatopoeia, ellipsis and short, rhetorical questions to achieve this effect.

After reading Part 4 chapter 3 and 4.

Write a poem based on the Eagle, soaring in the sky and pouncing on a hare.

Consider:

The use of symbolism, simile and metaphor.

The use of powerful verbs 'swoop', 'plunge' to evoke the strength of the eagle.

Glossary: Vocabulary and Language Activities

Notes for Teachers

Linking to the National Curriculum:

- Use dictionaries to check the spelling and meaning of words
- Selecting appropriate grammar and vocabulary, understanding how such choices can change and enhance meaning

Word and context	Meaning
Blighty; <i>'a blighty one'</i>	A slang word for 'Britain'
Cape Town	A city on the southern coast of South Africa.
Convoys: <i>'Convoys of ambulances passed us by'</i>	a group of ships or vehicles travelling together, often accompanied by armed troops for protection
Goose Stepping: <i>'Goose-stepping soliders'</i>	Often associated with fascism, a special marching step where troops swing their legs out in front of them in unison without bending them. Hitler's Nazi troops used to 'goose-step' on parade.
Hectoring : <i>'Hitler swaggering, hectoring, bullying, threatening'</i>	To bully or torment, to be overbearing and blustering.
Messerschmitt 109	A German fighter aircraft, used by the Nazis in the Second World War.
Mules: <i>'...horses and mules lying dead'</i>	The offspring of a male donkey and a female horse. They were often used for transporting goods during the war.
No Man's land : <i>'You had to climb out, crawl across No Man's Land on your belly.'</i>	The land under dispute between two different sides. It lay between the British trenches and the German trenches.
Passchendaele	An area near Ypres in Belgium, scene of a huge battle which took place between July –November 1917
Rickety: <i>'the rickety old shed still standing'</i>	Likely to fall or collapse.
Reveling: <i>'Hitler standing there, reveling in his power.'</i>	To take great pleasure or delight.
Rosary beads: <i>'fingering her Rosary beads, her lips moving in silent prayer'</i>	A string of beads used by Catholics for counting prayers.
Spitfire	A single-seater fighter aircraft, used by the British and other Allied countries during and after the Second World War.
Swastikas <i>'There were swastikas everywhere'</i>	The official emblem of the Nazis party and the Third Reich.
SS <i>'And there were more guards too, in black uniforms mostly. SS, Billy thought'</i>	Founded by Adolf Hitler in April 1925 as a small personal bodyguard, it was headed by Heinrich Himmler and earned a reputation for terror.

Glossary: Vocabulary and Language Activities

Tasks:

1. Split children into groups. Each group has cut-outs of the word and definition. One child picks a slip. They have to read out the word and three definitions (one of which is true). Children award themselves points according to how many people they tricked/ whether they guessed the correct definition.
2. Dictionary practice; find the word and put it into a new sentence, illustrating your understanding of it.
3. Ask children to start their own dictionaries, adding in words that are new to them in as they read the book.
4. Matching pairs. Separate the words from the definitions. Ask children to use a dictionary to match up the pairs.



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Teachers' Notes for Historical Events in *An Eagle in the Snow*

Origins of World War 1.

There were many underlying causes for the war and this lack of clarity is one reason why people thought it was unnecessary. However, to put it at its simplest:

In 1914 the major powers in Europe were Germany, France, Russia, Austria-Hungary and Britain. In previous years there had been tensions between these countries over territorial and colonial issues which by 1914 had left tension running high. Matters were further confused by the forming of alliances over the two previous decades by these countries for the purpose of mutual defence:

- Russia, France and Britain (The Triple Entente)
- Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy (The Triple Alliance)
- Bulgaria and Serbia were currently hedging their bets, sitting in the middle of these two sides.

What triggered the First World War?

On 28 June 1914 the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-the heir presumptive to the Austro-Hungarian throne -was visiting Sarajevo in Serbia when Serbian separatists assassinated his wife and him. Egged on by Germany (where the Kaiser was dominated by the generals) Austria-Hungary issued various punitive demands to Serbia and Germany came out in support of its ally, Austria-Hungary. On 28 July, as Serbia had not agreed to all these demand Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia.

Russia meanwhile was mobilising in support of Serbia and Germany began to mobilise in support of Austria-Hungary. France then began to mobilise in support of its ally Russia.

On 1st August, 1914, Germany declared war on Russia and, on August 3rd when France declined to remain neutral, declared war on France.

What had Britain been doing throughout all of this?

Throughout all this Britain had been trying to act as a mediator. Both the Czar of Russia and the Kaiser were first cousins of George V. Possibly Britain could have stayed out of the war but, when the Germans said that they would not respect Belgian neutrality in their campaign against France, the decision was made that this was no longer an option.

At midnight, on 4th August 1914, Britain declared war on Germany at midnight 4 August.

On August 6 Austria-Hungary declared war on Russia so now everyone was at war with each other.

What happened during the Battle of the Somme?

By 1916 the fighting on the western front had reached a stalemate with both sides in their trenches neither making any significant progress in winning the war. The Battle of the Somme was part of an overall Allied plan to break the deadlock and hopefully shorten, if not win, the war. It was in fact made up of a number of smaller battles.

The battle started on 1st July 1916 and went on until 18th November on both sides of the River Somme in France. It was one of the largest battles of the war in which over 1,000,000 men were killed or wounded. The British Army lost 57,470 men killed or wounded in the first day. To put this into context, that is over half of the capacity of Wembley stadium and doesn't even take into account the number of German soldiers also killed.

Teachers' Notes for Historical Events in *An Eagle in the Snow*

At the end of the battle the Allied forces had managed to advance only 6 miles against a determined and well-trained German army. However, the German casualties (465,181) were so great that this led to serious political and military changes at home, a lowering of national morale as well as being a severe drain on limited manpower resources (Remember Germany was also fighting the Russians at this time).

The Outbreak of World War II

Unlike WW1 the causes of WWII are pretty straightforward and are entirely attributable to the ambitions of one man, Adolf Hitler, the spread of fascism in Italy and militarism in Japan.

In the early 1930s Germany was a financial mess with galloping inflation, high unemployment and a weak and ineffective government. The previously affluent middle classes were being reduced to ruin and the country was ripe for takeover which is precisely what happened when the Nazi party, led by Hitler seized power in 1933. Hitler argued that the punitive penalties imposed by the Allies at the Treaty of Versailles on Germany in 1919 after WW1 were to blame for the state of the country.

His philosophy was based on the need for Germany to be great again, the need for "living space" and the establishment of a "master race". He was helped in his ambitions by the weakness of the major powers who followed a policy of appeasement instead of confrontation. Britain's Prime Minister at the time, Neville Chamberlain fervently believed in this policy. The horrors of the First World War, 'The War to end all wars' where an entire generation of young men had been wiped out was still vividly remembered and there was a dread of entering another. (The meeting between Hitler and Chamberlain, where Chamberlain was assured by Hitler of 'peace in our time' takes place in *An Eagle in the Snow*).

Therefore, when Germany began to rearm in direct contradiction to the Versailles Treaty, and in 1936 remilitarised the Rhineland, annexing Austria in March 1938 and the Sudetenland in October 1938, no-one did anything to stop him.

In March 1939 German troops marched into Prague and it was only then that the allies started to take fright and begin to mobilise. As Germany's attentions turned to Poland, Britain and France committed themselves to an alliance with Poland.

When Hitler then proceeded to invade Poland, the British government issued an ultimatum; withdraw German troops or enter into war with Britain. Hitler did not withdraw and, on 3rd September 1939, Britain declared war on Germany.

"This morning the British Ambassador in Berlin handed the German Government a final Note stating that, unless we heard from them by 11 o'clock that they were prepared at once to withdraw their troops from Poland, a state of war would exist between us.

I have to tell you now that no such undertaking has been received, and that consequently this country is at war with Germany"

Neville Chamberlain's address to the Nation, 3rd September 1939



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Healthy diet: What would you put in the men's rations?

Films:
War Horse - WW1
Hope and Glory - WW2

How has society changed since 1914? Women's rights? Right to vote? Gay rights?

Poetry comparison
'Forever England' – Rupert Brooke
'Dulce et Decorum Est' – Wilfred Owen.

History:

WW1
WW2
Appeasement
Battle of the Somme

An Eagle in the Snow Cross-curricular ideas

'What makes it right to kill someone?'

'Appeasement-was Chamberlain right to try?'

What scientific discoveries since 1914 have changed our lives?

Art: Use contrasting styles and mediums to depict war-torn Belgium or the battlefields with the serenity of the mountains or the beauty of the Eagle.

Complete a map of Europe. As the book progresses, mark on Hitler's troops progress, showing which areas of Europe were under Nazi control.