

BBC

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Private Peaceful

by Michael Morpurgo

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PRIVATE PEACEFUL

by Michael Morpurgo

Age 9 - 12+

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Teacher's Notes written by Caroline Garland



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Introduction

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 a story he was sharing with them and how he decided to create something for exciting for them instead.

Michael has gone on to become one of the country'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 has won numerous awards, including 'The Blue Peter Award' for *Private Peaceful*.

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>

National Curriculum in England - Programme of Study for English 2014

Upper KS2 Reading Comprehension

Pupils should be taught to:

Maintain positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read by:

- 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
- increasing their familiarity with a wide range of books, including myths, legends and traditional stories, modern fiction, fiction from our literary heritage, and books from other cultures and traditions recommending books that they have read to their peers, giving reasons for their choices
- identifying and discussing themes and conventions in and across a wide range of writing
- making comparisons within and across books
- learning a wider range of poetry by heart
- preparing poems and plays to read aloud and to perform, showing understanding through intonation, tone and volume so that the meaning is clear to an audience

Understand what they read by:

- checking that the book makes sense to them, discussing their understanding and exploring the meaning of words in context
- asking questions to improve their understanding
- drawing inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence
- predicting what might happen from details stated and implied
- summarising the main ideas drawn from more than one paragraph, identifying key details that support the main ideas
- identifying how language, structure and presentation contribute to meaning

Discuss and evaluate how authors use language, including figurative language, considering the impact on the reader.



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Distinguish between statements of fact and opinion.

Retrieve, record and present information from non-fiction.

Participate in discussions about books that are read to them and those they can read for themselves, building on their own and others' ideas and challenging views courteously.

Explain and discuss their understanding of what they have read, including through formal presentations and debates, maintaining a focus on the topic and using notes where necessary provide reasoned justifications for their views.

Provide reasoned justifications for their views.

Upper KS2 Notes and guidance (non-statutory)

Even though pupils can now read independently, reading aloud to them should include whole books so that they meet books and authors that they might not choose to read themselves.

The knowledge and skills that pupils need in order to comprehend are very similar at different ages. Pupils should continue to apply what they have already learnt to more complex writing.

Pupils should be taught to recognise themes in what they read, such as loss or heroism. They should have opportunities to compare characters, consider different accounts of the same event and discuss viewpoints (both of authors and of fictional characters), within a text and across more than one text.

They should continue to learn the conventions of different types of writing, such as the use of the first person in writing diaries and autobiographies.

Pupils should be taught the technical and other terms needed for discussing what they hear and read, such as metaphor, simile, analogy, imagery, style and effect.

In using reference books, pupils need to know what information they need to look for before they begin and need to understand the task. They should be shown how to use contents pages and indexes to locate information.

The skills of information retrieval that are taught should be applied, for example, in reading history, geography and science textbooks, and in contexts where pupils are genuinely motivated to find out information, for example, reading information leaflets before a gallery or museum visit or reading a theatre programme or review. Teachers should consider making use of any library services and expertise to support this.

Pupils should have guidance about and feedback on the quality of their explanations and contributions to discussions.

Pupils should be shown how to compare characters, settings, themes and other aspects of what they read.

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KS3 Reading and writing

Reading at Key Stage 3 should be wide, varied and challenging. Pupils should be expected to read whole books, to read in depth and to read for pleasure and information.

Pupils should continue to develop their knowledge of and skills in writing, refining their drafting skills and developing resilience to write at length. They should be taught to write formal and academic essays as well as writing imaginatively. They should be taught to write for a variety of purposes and audiences across a range of contexts. This requires an increasingly wide knowledge of vocabulary and grammar.

Opportunities for teachers to enhance pupils' vocabulary will arise naturally from their reading and writing. Teachers should show pupils how to understand the relationships between words, how to understand nuances in meaning, and how to develop their understanding of, and ability to use, figurative language.



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Pupils should be taught to control their speaking and writing consciously, understand why sentences are constructed as they are and to use Standard English. They should understand and use age-appropriate vocabulary, including linguistic and literary terminology, for discussing their reading, writing and spoken language. This involves consolidation, practice and discussion of language. It is important that pupils learn the correct grammatical terms in English and that these terms are integrated within teaching.

Teachers should build on the knowledge and skills that pupils have been taught at key stage 2. Decisions about progression should be based on the security of pupils' linguistic knowledge, skills and understanding and their readiness to progress to the next stage. Pupils whose linguistic development is more advanced should be challenged through being offered opportunities for increased breadth and depth in reading and writing. Those who are less fluent should consolidate their knowledge, understanding and skills, including through additional practice.

KS3 Reading Comprehension

Pupils should be taught to:

Develop an appreciation and love of reading, and read increasingly challenging material independently through:

- reading a wide range of fiction and non-fiction, including in particular whole books, short stories, poems and plays with a wide coverage of genres, historical periods, forms and authors
- choosing and reading books independently for challenge, interest and enjoyment
- re-reading books encountered earlier to increase familiarity with them and provide a basis for making comparisons

Understand increasingly challenging texts through:

- learning new vocabulary, relating it explicitly to known vocabulary and understanding it with the help of context and dictionaries
- making inferences and referring to evidence in the text

- knowing the purpose, audience for and context of the writing and drawing on this knowledge to support comprehension
- checking their understanding to make sure that what they have read makes sense

Read critically through:

- knowing how language, including figurative language, vocabulary choice, grammar, text structure and organisational features, presents meaning
- recognising a range of poetic conventions and understanding how these have been used
- studying setting, plot, and characterisation, and the effects of these
- understanding how the work of dramatists is communicated effectively through performance and how alternative staging allows for different interpretations of a play making critical comparisons across texts
- studying a range of authors, including at least two authors in depth each year.

Department for Education

EPISODE 1: FIVE PAST TEN**Synopsis:**

Each episode begins with a brief passage in which the speaker - Thomas 'Tommo' Peaceful - relates something of his present circumstances, before he begins to recollect events from the past. In the first of these we learn that he is young, is alone and that the night ahead is meaningful to him. For some reason he wishes to remain awake and alert. The subsequent episode openings gradually provide more information about his circumstances through a series of hints and clues. But the precise nature of Tommo's circumstances are not revealed until the final episode. There is an additional clue that can be deduced from the soundtrack - which has the sounds of shells exploding when Tommo speaks in the present.

After his brief opening reflection Tommo then begins his recollection of his childhood, beginning with his first day at school. Throughout we learn about his family. Charlie, his older brother, protects and comforts him. Big Joe, his eldest brother, is cared for at home by his mother. We discover he is different in some way.

Tommo describes his two contrasting teachers - Mr Munnings and Miss McAllister - and how he copes with his first day at school. The episode ends with Tommo's description of the death of his father, for which he feels responsible.

Characters:

Tommo
Charlie
Mother
Father
Big Joe
Molly
Mr Munnings

Themes:

Time
Fears
First experiences
Nature
Authority
Loss

Guided reading:

Identify how we meet the speaker. How does the author introduce the main character of the story? Explore how he uses present tense and then past tense to move between time periods.

What can we tell of Tommo's circumstances from his opening words? Where might he be? Why might he want to remain awake all night? (What can we tell from the soundtrack?)

Identify the characters introduced in the first episode. Consider how they are related and what those relationships look like. Identify where close bonds are illustrated using the text to explain.

Find evidence of the relationship between Charlie and Tommo. What does Tommo think of his older brother? How does the author paint a picture of him?

What do we learn of Tommo's first day at school? How does it compare to school today? Make comparisons between your memories and Tommo's first day at school.

Explore the kindness of characters not related to Tommo. Look at Molly's actions and why she helps Tommo.

Look more closely at the character of Big Joe. He doesn't go to school because of his learning difficulties. Discuss how this would be different today.

Compare the two teachers - Mr Munnings and Miss McAllister. Identify similarities and differences. Gather opinions on the way Mr Munnings punishes children. Decide whether it was reasonable to use corporal punishment because attitudes were different at the turn of the century or whether it has always been wrong. Revisit this in later episodes when discussing court martial law.

Clarify the events which lead up to the death of Tommo's father. Make a visual timeline.

Who is the Colonel and why does he have an impact on their daily lives? What do Charlie and Tommo think of the Colonel? Do you think he might have an influence on them in the future now their father is dead?

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EPISODE 2: TWENTY TO ELEVEN

Synopsis:

In the present, Tommo has food but doesn't want to eat it. The uneaten stew becomes the spring-board for further childhood memories...

We learn that Big Joe had meningitis as a newborn baby and that Joe has a very kind nature, loving everything and everyone, especially nature.

We learn of the tricks the brothers Tommo and Charlie play on Big Joe and how Molly, a school friend, becomes like a member of their family.

But the Peacefuls live in a tied cottage - tied to the job of the late Mr Peaceful - and now the Colonel, as the local land owner, can compel Mrs Peaceful to take a job caring for the Colonel's wife up at the 'Big House'. This will allow them to pay for their upkeep.

Grandma Wolf arrives to look after the three boys while their mother is out at work. Tommo tells us she is mean and cruel to them. And he feels that he is to blame for the sadness in his family because he feels responsible for the accident that killed their father.

Characters:

Tommo
Charlie
Mother
Big Joe
Grandma Wolf
Molly
The Colonel

Themes:

Blame
Change
Loss
Control and power

Guided reading:

What more do we find out about Tommo's present circumstances from the opening of the episode? Why could he have food and not wish to eat it? Could it have been given to him? Who could have given it to him?

During his recollections Tommo thinks of his family and how vulnerable Big Joe was as a baby. What does the author tell us about how children with special needs were cared for at that time? Big Joe doesn't go to school. Would that happen today?

How does Morpurgo paint a picture of childhood in the days Tommo and Charlie are growing up? What kind of childhood is it?

Molly becomes an important part of the boys' childhood. What does she bring to the story? What have you found out about her?

The family's circumstances change when Mrs Peaceful is compelled to start working for the Colonel. Why does she have to do this? Does this seem fair? How does this change affect Big Joe as well as Tommo and Charlie?

What does the character of Grandma Wolf bring to this early part of the story? Is she like any other characters we have met so far?

Despite Grandma Wolf's behaviour, Tommo believes the family's suffering is his fault. Explain why this is?

EPISODE 3: NEARLY QUARTER PAST ELEVEN

Synopsis:

Tommo in the present sees a mouse and memories of childhood continue...

He tells of the battle he and Charlie had with Grandma Wolf over mice in the house throughout the winter and of her cruelty towards the children.



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We learn that Molly is an only child and that her family are 'god fearing and strict' and that her father also works for the Colonel, as a groom.

Mrs Peaceful loses her job when the Colonel's wife dies suddenly and for a time the family has no income and the children go hungry. Charlie decides they should do some poaching on the Colonel's land, with Tommo and Molly standing guard.

Tommo describes 'the miracle' of the Colonel giving Grandma Wolf her old housekeeping job back and of Mrs Peaceful being given some sewing work by him, enabling them to stay on in the cottage.

Tommo and Charlie form a close bond with Molly - and so they are deeply concerned when she falls ill with Scarlet fever.

Characters:

Tommo
Charlie
Mother
Big Joe
Molly
Grandma Wolf
The Colonel

Themes:

Fate
Cruelty
Love
Risk
Luck

Guided reading:

Look for evidence that paints a picture of Grandma Wolf. What is she like and how does she influence the family? Think about the era in which Grandma Wolf was raised and worked. What do we learn of her relationship with the Colonel and his family? Tommo calls her 'Wolfwoman'. Why do you think he does this? What does this tell us about his memories of her?

What does it mean to be 'in service'? Explore jobs local villagers would have done for the local gentry.

What do we know of Molly's family? How are they linked to the Colonel?

Tommo in his opening reflection thinks of happy times when Charlie, Molly and he played together. The author shows Charlie as a risk taker. Gather evidence of this to use later in the story.

EPISODE 4: TEN TO MIDNIGHT

Synopsis:

Tommo's memories of saying his prayers at the end of Episode 3 lead him to reflect on God and the likelihood of an afterlife at the beginning of Episode 4. His hope that 'there is a heaven' is clearly linked to his circumstances, but how is not yet clear.

Tommo then recalls an evening spent poaching: on this occasion Tommo falls asleep and so they are caught in the act by Lambert, the Colonel's bailiff. Lambert marches the two boys to the Colonel and he, supported by Grandma Wolf, determines their punishment should be a 'sound hiding' followed by cleaning out the hunt kennels.

When Mrs Peaceful learns of the proposed punishment she speaks to the Colonel and persuades him not to beat the children. Instead they must clean the kennels every weekend until Christmas. However, the boys enjoy their time in the kennels and become fond of one foxhound in particular, called Bertha.

Molly finally returns to them but she is different. Pale, with short hair and more adult. Tommo tells us his love deepens for her.

Molly and Charlie leave school for jobs in the 'Big House' and Tommo is alone in the classroom. Tommo feels he is losing Molly and one day he sees Charlie and she walking, hand in hand.



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Then Tommo relates the day of the yellow aeroplane. Charlie, Molly and he are outdoors when a plane - the first they have ever seen - lands near them and they talk to the pilot.

Finally Charlie tells Tommo that he's about to be in trouble. He has taken Bertha - stolen her - to prevent the Colonel from shooting her. Charlie has hidden the dog, but knows that in the morning his actions will be discovered.

Characters:

Tommo
Charlie
Mother
Big Joe
Molly
Grandma Wolf
The Colonel
Gamekeeper Lambert
Mr Munnings

Themes:

Poaching- breaking the rules
Love
Fate - justice and injustice
Change

Guided reading:

At the start of the episode Tommo reflects on death and the possibility of an afterlife and we begin to sense some kind of impending event. Revisit the title of each chapter. How is time being measured and used to lead the reader through the story? Discuss the idea of time running out and not having enough time to do the things you wish. Revisit the life of Tommo's father and how it was cut short by its suddenness.

In his recollections Tommo describes poaching and how taking animals from the Colonel's land helps the family survive. Debate the decision to go poaching. What are the rights and wrongs? Gather opinions from pupils.

The theme of punishment is revisited once the boys have been discovered. Discuss what is threatened by the Colonel. Would this be allowed today? How does this event change their lives?

We learn more of the relationship between Grandma Wolf and the Colonel. They are in agreement concerning the boys. What seems strange about this relationship?

Molly recovers from her illness but how has she changed? Her relationship with Charlie also changing and this has an impact on the dynamic between the three. Consider how each of them might be feeling.

The event of the yellow aeroplane marks a change in development. Discuss with pupils what this signifies in the world for technology and progress.

At school Mr Munnings thinks Tommo is lying about this event. Why would he not believe them? Ask pupils to think of an amazing event they have witnessed and explore the feelings this brought about, for example, Felix Baumgartner's record breaking jump from space. Describe the sense of awe and wonder we have from such events. How do these events help us to think differently about the future? How might some people be afraid of these events?

The theme of theft is revisited when Charlie takes - steals - Bertha, the foxhound that the Colonel no longer wants. Discuss the conundrum of taking something unwanted being theft. What are pupil's thoughts and feelings about this? What happens to unwanted animals now?

EPISODE 5: TWENTY-FOUR MINUTES PAST TWELVE

Synopsis:

At the start of the episode Tommo refers to seeing larks over no-man's-land and we learn for the first time that - in the present - he must be a soldier in World War 1.

In Tommo's next recollection the Colonel arrives at the cottage to find out what Charlie has done with Bertha. Their mother negotiates with him and pays sixpence for the dog. However, Charlie



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is dismissed from his job. Later he goes to work for Farmer Cox and as a result Tommo sees even less of his brother.

Molly stops visiting and Mrs Peaceful realises that her parents must be responding to stories - presumably put about by the Colonel and the Wolf-woman - that her son is a thief.

Charlie is determined to keep in contact with Molly and enlists Tommo as his go-between delivering letters to and from her. It is from Molly's overheard conversations up at the 'Big House' that Tommo first hears of the impending war.

Tommo leaves school and joins his brother working at Cox's farm. On returning home one day they discover Molly and her mother at their house. Charlie's letters have been discovered along with their love for each other and their secret meetings. Tommo didn't know of their meetings and feels betrayed by them both. They have kept matters secret from Tommo in order to protect his feelings.

One evening Bertha goes missing and does not return. Tommo goes in search of her in Fords Cleave Wood and hears a shot ring out. He finds Bertha dead outside his father's old shack with the Colonel standing over her. Charlie and Molly run from the shack. Their meeting place has been discovered.

Characters:

Tommo
Charlie
Mother
Big Joe
Molly
Grandma Wolf
The Colonel

Themes:

Injustice
Authority
Love and secrets

Guided reading:

For the first time we learn that Tommo in the present is speaking to us as a World War 1 soldier when he mentions 'no-man's-land'. Discuss what and where no-man's-land is. Where could we find out more about no-man's-land?

The Colonel intrudes on their lives again. How does Mrs Peaceful protect her sons? What kind of mother do you think she is? What qualities does she demonstrate through this episode and the ones preceding?

We learn that Molly is banned from meeting with the boys but Tommo becomes a go-between with letters. What does the author reveal about their relationship that perhaps Tommo doesn't know? When they are discovered through Charlie's letters Tommo feels betrayed. Why is this? Look more into his feelings for Molly and compare them to Charlie's feeling for her.

Identify the evidence in the episode about the War. How much do we find out from what the children are aware of?

Talk about children leaving school and starting physical labour. How does this compare with expectations for children today at 14?

At the end of this episode the author leaves us with the shocking event of Bertha being shot by the Colonel. At the same time Charlie and Molly's secret meeting at the shack in the wood is revealed. Explore all the characters involved and their feelings at this point. Tommo's feelings at being betrayed, Charlie's and Molly's at being discovered, Big Joe's at the loss of Bertha...and the Colonel's.

Mrs Peaceful has previously paid sixpence to the Colonel for ownership of Bertha. Why then does the Colonel kill the dog?

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EPISODE 6: NEARLY FIVE TO ONE

Synopsis:

Tommo in the present sees a new moon rising and wonders if those back home will also be seeing it...

Tommo's next recollection is how Big Joe goes missing following the shooting of Bertha. The whole village is alerted to Joe's disappearance, including the Colonel up at the 'Big House'. The Colonel calls in the police to assist and it is agreed that if anyone finds Big Joe the church bell will be rung.

All night people search for Big Joe, dreading the worst. Molly thinks she knows where he is and directs Charlie and Tommo to search for him in the church bell tower - on the grounds that Big Joe appears to associate the tower with heaven.

Tommo finds Big Joe there asleep and Charlie rings the bell. The family and other villagers are relieved that Big Joe has been found.

Characters:

Tommo
Charlie
Mother
Big Joe
Molly
Grandma Wolf
The Colonel

Themes:

Injustice
Love
Innocence
Loss

Guided reading:

Tommo, writing in the present, wishes for 'the impossible'. Now we know he is involved in the War what could this be? Do we yet know what is happening to him? Gather ideas and opinions from pupils.

Talk about the consequences of the Colonel's actions on Big Joe. Discuss Big Joe's challenges and how he would find it hard to understand these actions.

The villagers come out to help find Big Joe. What does this tell us about the attitudes of the people of the village? Can you compare it to any events today? Have people's attitudes stayed the same or changed? The Colonel also helps. Do our opinions of him change with this?

Identify how the villagers will alert everyone when Joe is found. Compare this to modern day communication. What would be the barriers they would encounter that wouldn't happen today?

Charlie and Tommo find Big Joe when he is near death. Explore Tommo's feelings about death from his father and Bertha. How might he feel at the risk of losing Big Joe? If Big Joe had died who would be to blame?

EPISODE 7: TWENTY-EIGHT MINUTES PAST ONE

Synopsis:

Tommo thinks of the church steeples no longer standing in the battlefields where he is and refers specifically to the damaged steeple of the church in Albert. He thinks of the church again at home.

After Big Joe is found life is settled except for the talk of war. The Colonel speaks of horses and men being needed urgently. They hear of the terrible battle on the Marne. Meanwhile, on returning from their work, Charlie and Tommo find Molly in tears with their mother. Her parents have thrown her out as she is going to have Charlie's baby. They are married - very quietly - and Tommo mourns the loss of his beloved Molly. He feels he must get away and spends as much time as he can away from home working for Farmer Cox.

On an errand to Hatherleigh he sees a military parade drumming up volunteers to serve in the

War. An old woman pushes Tommo to join up and mocks his hesitation, calling him a coward.

At home later Charlie and Tommo talk to a tearful Molly. The Colonel has paid Mrs Peaceful another visit and if Charlie does not enlist they will lose their cottage. Charlie believes he must agree and Tommo says he will join him in volunteering. Molly is full of fear and asks Tommo to look after Charlie. Shortly after they take their first ever train ride when they go to Exeter to enlist.

Characters:

Tommo
Charlie
Mother
Big Joe
Molly
Grandma Wolf
The Colonel
Conscription Officer
Old woman

Themes:

Broken promises
Pride
Duty

Guided reading:

In the episode opening Tommo refers to the church in Albert. Where is this? What evidence do we have that he is far away? What do we know of World War 1 and young soldiers?

The episode begins with the Colonel discussing the War in the local pub after the villagers celebrate finding Big Joe alive. Would you expect to find the local gentry drinking in the pub with villagers? Why might the Colonel want to talk about the War with them? The Colonel has an army background so discuss what his opinion might be of war. He states more men are needed so how might he want to influence the local people?

The author introduces the shock of Molly's pregnancy through her being thrown out of her home. We know Molly's parents are deeply religious. If appropriate discuss pupil's opinions on this dilemma for Molly.

Consider the implications for Tommo's relationship with Charlie and Molly when they marry quietly. Find evidence that Tommo feels betrayed again by them.

All is turned upside down by the arrival of war and Molly's pregnancy. Compare the two events and their impact on the family.

Tommo sees a military parade intended to encourage the people of Hatherleigh to volunteer for service. It is an amazing sight for him but this is contrasted against the old woman mocking him. Explain how Tommo feels, using evidence from the book and explore why he doesn't reveal that he is underage.

Charlie is forced to enlist by the Colonel. Explore how he is able to use blackmail and the injustice of this. Explore why the Colonel would believe it is right to send young men - little more than boys - to war. What knowledge do pupil's have of the history of the War? What sort of risk will be facing Charlie and Tommo? Revisit this later when Charlie and Tommo are forced to fight in unreasonable conditions.

Tommo says he will go with Charlie to enlist in Exeter. We know he is underage but no one discusses this. Why do you think this is?

Find information about underage soldiers enlisting. How does the official age that one could enlist then compare to now? Make links to modern day conflicts and the risks young men are put under. Debate the issues this raises.

Usually it is Charlie protecting Tommo but Molly asks Tommo to protect Charlie. Why do you think she is so insistent the younger brother take the lead?



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EPISODE 8: FOURTEEN MINUTES PAST TWO

Synopsis:

Tommo checks the time on his watch, wishing time would stand still. He thinks back now to his army training and the bullying he and Charlie sustained at the hands of Sergeant 'Horrible' Hanley.

Tommo recounts the process of joining up, the uniforms that don't fit, the boots that are too big. He sees many of the lads he grew up with at home. Their training at Salisbury Plain is full of marching, stitching and polishing. As they train with rifles they hear guns sounding from over in France and are afraid.

Tommo and Charlie suffer seasickness on the journey to France and are met by scenes of the injured on the quayside when they arrive.

At Etaples they meet Sergeant 'Horrible' Hanley who targets both boys. When Hanley realizes Tommo is underage he bullies him. Charlie challenges Hanley to protect Tommo and is arrested for insubordination. He is given Field Punishment Number 1 by the Brigadier who warns him that ultimately insubordination is punishable by death. Charlie is lashed to a gun wheel as the others march past. Tommo thinks of him as Jesus on the cross and sings a hymn to himself as he marches.

Characters:

Tommo
Charlie
Sergeant Hanley

Themes:

Underage soldiers
Bullying
Punishment

Guided reading:

Time is referred to frequently by the author. Consider why this is so in this episode. Tommo talks about wishing time would stand still. Discuss the passing of time, the timeless childhood he and his brother had together, compared to time rushing past now.

Tommo is little more than a boy and yet he is a soldier. Countless similar young lives were lost in World War 1. Explore what the impact of this was on life back home in the UK.

Tommo recounts the joining up process and it is clear the equipment provided was poor. How do you think this would affect the young soldiers heading off to war? What might the consequences be for them?

Why does Tommo talk of 'pretending' to be a soldier during training at Salisbury Plain? Why do they only look like soldiers?

The recruits write 'cheery letters home'. Why do you think they are cheery at this stage? Do they know what is in store for them yet?

Tommo tells of the terrible journey across the English Channel. This is the first time he and his brother have left home let alone gone to another country. How might they be feeling as they make the crossing?

The author refers the horses stowed below. Make links to his other text *War horse*. What do we know of the use of animals in World War 1? (The BBC Schools' website has a section devoted to animals in the War.) Revisit the childhood of Tommo and Charlie and their relationship with animals, especially their compassion for Bertha the hunt dog.

Bullying and intimidation by those in authority is a theme throughout the book. On their arrival in Etaples how does Sergeant Hanley affect the boys? Tommo's underage status is known but he isn't sent home. What do you think should happen to him and why doesn't it?



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Charlie is found guilty of insubordination after challenging Sergeant Hanley. Is Charlie standing up for others or is he guilty of being a troublemaker? What do we already know that could support your argument? Charlie's punishment is to be lashed to the wheel of a gun. Is this from the imagination of the author or is there evidence that these punishments did happen? Where could you find out?

At the end Tommo thinks of Charlie as Jesus. Why do you think the author creates this comparison through Tommo?

NB. It was common for British soldiers to Anglicise French and Belgium place names. The Belgian town of 'Ypres' was generally known as 'Wipers' (and this pronunciation appears in the story). For this reason Tommo pronounces 'Etaples' in a very Anglicised way.

EPISODE 9: A MINUTE PAST THREE

Synopsis:

Tommo regrets falling asleep and the precious lost time. He finds himself singing 'Oranges and lemons' like Big Joe to stay awake...

Tommo recalls the time when his company left Etaples to move up to the front line. The singing keeps spirits up. The soldiers begin to see the evidence of war for the first time, shattered villages, field hospitals and empty coffins. Captain Wilkes, once a choir master, is kind and considerate and treats the men well. Letters arrive from home for Tommo. At a final night in the local pub Tommo meets Anna - the daughter of the proprietor - and she reminds him of home and Molly.

The next night they march to the trenches seeing soldiers returning the other way. Together Charlie and Tommo are on sentry duty and he is disappointed to not see any enemy. Tommo tells of the misery in the trenches and of his pride in Charlie who looks out for all of them.

Tommo recounts patrols in no-man's-land and their mission in to enemy trenches to capture a prisoner. The Captain - 'Wilkie' - is shot and carried by Charlie to safety, despite the shells falling on them.

Later Tommo and Charlie go to visit Wilkie in hospital but discover he has been sent back to Britain to recuperate. He has left his gold wrist watch for Charlie as a gift for saving his life.

Characters:

Tommo
Charlie
Captain Wilkes
Anna

Themes:

Coping
War songs
Life before being a soldier
Contrasting characters

Guided reading:

As Tommo's night passes we understand his reflections are getting closer to real time events.

Singing to raise spirits is mentioned twice. Tommo alone uses Big Joe's 'Oranges and lemons' for comfort and the soldiers marching use singing to raise their morale as they near the front line. Discuss why singing helps them to cope? Do pupils know any World War 1 songs? Look at a sample and explore the words and how they help those fighting or left behind at home. There are plenty of examples to share on the School Radio website here:

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01n4ldk

There is a contrast between the signs of war Tommo sees as they march and the comforting letters they receive from home. The visit to the pub and meeting Anna seem more normal events. How do these more ordinary moments in the episode compare to the terrible things they are starting to see around them, especially the soldiers they pass returning from the front who look 'haunted'?



Private Peaceful by Michael Morpurgo

On sentry duty Tommo is excited about the prospect of seeing the enemy. Why might this be? In his position would you be excited or fearful?

Captain Wilkes is a key figure in this episode. Why is he such a contrast to Sergeant Hanley? A mission to no-man's-land is successful but also brings casualties. What do we learn about no-man's-land and the risks taken when following senior officers' orders? Charlie is heroic in his actions. How does the Captain recognise this? What do you think other officers might think of the Captain's generosity?

We hear from Tommo that before the War Captain Wilkes was a choir master. Why do you think the author decided to make Captain Wilkie a choir master?

EPISODE 10: TWENTY-FIVE PAST THREE

Synopsis:

Tommo in the present reveals that he has just turned down offers of help from other soldiers and the padre...

Tommo thinks back to the second time they went up to the front line at 'Wipers' (Ypres). The constant bombardment and loss of Wilkie as leader lowered morale. The new trenches were in very poor condition - and they could smell the stench of death all around and see the bodies of abandoned corpses in no-man's-land.

The constant bombardment terrifies Tommo and he is actually relieved when it is time to go 'over the top' led by a new officer - Lieutenant Buckland. Tommo is deafened by the shells and loses sight of Charlie during the attack.

Later, back in the trench, Charlie does not return and Tommo assumes his brother must be dead. He imagines Charlie telling him not to fall asleep on sentry duty as he could be shot for it.

Charlie suddenly appears in no-man's-land and falls, injured, into the trench. Charlie's foot has been wounded and Charlie knows he'll be sent home to recover. He's full of joy at the prospect of some time at home and the hope of being there to see his as yet unborn child.

Tommo is shocked at the departing of his brother and feels abandoned by him. He meets Anna - the girl from the pub - and they talk of the War and home and share a brief kiss. For a moment all is calm. On returning to camp Tommo learns that the new sergeant is to be 'Horrible' Hanley, hated more even than the enemy.

Characters:

Tommo
Charlie
Captain Wilkes
Anna
Sergeant Hanley

Themes:

'Wipers'
Enemies
Cruelty of fate

Guided reading:

We now know Tommo is waiting somewhere alone. He is measuring the passing of time and is offered a padre (a military chaplain). On what occasions might a padre be called to offer comfort to someone? What does this lead us to conclude about Tommo's situation? Tommo is keen to remain alone. What might be going through his mind during this time?

In Tommo's reflections we are confronted with the horrors of the soldiers' daily lives. Explore first hand records and the recollections of Tommo. How much research do you think the author did and how well has he conveyed the realities of the front line trenches at Ypres in his fictional narrative? Tommo imagines Charlie warning him not to fall asleep on sentry duty. How might soldiers in World War 1 be punished for making mistakes while on duty?



Private Peaceful by Michael Morpurgo

Charlie is injured and is going to be sent home. Tommo is upset to be abandoned. How does this event advantage Charlie and disadvantage Tommo?

At the end of the episode there is a contrast between Tommo meeting Anna in a moment of calm with the arrival of Sergeant Hanley to the camp. How does the author make the reader feel at this point?

EPISODE 11: NEARLY FOUR O'CLOCK

Synopsis:

Morning arrives for Tommo with his fear of death. Someone is going to lose their life but it is not necessarily clear who...

Tommo's thoughts return to the front line where it has become quiet. The threat of a gas attack is ever present and when it comes Tommo is full of fear. As he tries to escape the cloud of gas his mask comes off and he breathes the gas. A German soldier discovers him but allows Tommo to escape. In hospital he sees the bodies of those who did not escape the gas attack, including one of his friends.

Letters arrive for Tommo. He reads them aloud to Pete because he has no letters. One, from Tommo's mother, gives the news of the baby's arrival. The child is named Tommo. Charlie is with them on leave but has clearly not spoken of the horror of the War to them. Pete is disgusted by this and feels betrayed. The second letter is from Charlie and Molly. In the letter Charlie explains his reasons for hiding the truth about the War from the family.

On a night of leave from the front line Tommo returns to 'Pop' and looks for Anna. He discovers she has been killed by a stray German ('Boche') shell. He visits her freshly-dug grave.

Charlie returns from leave and in the trench everyone feels safer that he is among them again.

Charlie meets Hanley for the first time since his return. To Tommo Charlie talks of the two different worlds: life in the trenches and life at home.

The constant shelling returns and despite the soldiers' attempts to cope with it Tommo loses control and screams in terror. Charlie comforts him and sings 'Oranges and lemons' to calm him.

The company goes over the top again and Tommo suddenly feels a pain in his head. He falls to the ground believing that he is dying...and relieved to be doing so.

Characters:

Tommo
Charlie
German Soldier
Pete

Themes:

Compassion
Protection
Contrasts - home/front line
Lying
Surprises

Guided reading:

Tommo now reveals that someone is going to die. Who do you think this is going to be and why? How do you think this death will come about considering the information that we've been given?

Tommo takes us through the events of a gas attack. What makes this such a frightening event? How does the author convey this? Compare Tommo's account to a first hand account from a soldier in the War. How successfully does the author convey the reality of a gas attack in his story?

The surprising event of a German soldier allowing Tommo to live raises a lots of questions. Discuss why he might have done this? What might life be like in the trenches for the German soldiers? This is followed by Anna's death from a German shell. How do these two events make the reader feel?

Charlie returns from home. How does this affect the morale of the soldiers?



Private Peaceful by Michael Morpurgo

Tommo is injured in a battle and believes himself to be dying. Do pupils really think Tommo might be dying at this point? How do we know that can't be the case? How do you think the story will move forward from this point?

EPISODE 12: FIVE TO FIVE

Synopsis:

Sixty five minutes remain and Tommo questions what he should do with the time. We learn from him for the first time that a Private Peaceful will be shot for cowardice at six o'clock that morning: 25 June 1916...

Tommo's recollection returns to the frontline where he fell. He realizes his head is wounded and that he is lying in no-man's-land buried beneath the earth where no-one has seen him. He struggles but cannot get free and fears he will die until hands dig him out. He hears Charlie's voice. The company shelters in a nearby abandoned dugout in the middle of no-man's-land.

Charlie knows they are pinned down by enemy fire and wants them to stay put. But Hanley is also there and demands the men continue the attack, despite almost certain failure. Tommo knows he can't go on. During a lull in the fighting Hanley demands the men to make ready. Charlie argues with him that they should not risk their lives in such futile circumstances; Hanley is adamant they will continue and threatens Charlie with a court martial. Charlie insists he will stay to look after Tommo and Hanley presses his threat again. Then Hanley and the others attack in a hail of bullets, leaving Charlie and the injured Tommo in the dugout.

Charlie talks to Tommo about the chance of him not making it home. He makes Tommo promise he will care for Molly and his child. He gives Tommo the wrist watch.

Tommo wakes later to see Hanley has made it back to the dugout. Many others do not return

from the fighting. Slowly they make their way back to the trenches. Tommo sees his brother arrested and taken away. He doesn't see him for the next six weeks.

Characters:

Tommo
Charlie
Sergeant Hanley

Themes:

Futility
Value of life
Nature

Guided reading:

In the penultimate episode the author reveals that a Private Peaceful will be shot for cowardice. Do pupils know yet who it will be? (There are two 'Private Peacefuls'!) Give evidence from the story to explain your view.

Tommo thinks again of nature and home. He hopes that what will happen will take place outside with the sound of the birds? Why do you think this is important to him?

Tommo is nearly killed and is rescued by Charlie. What do we learn of the risks soldiers endured?

Finally Tommo recalls the events that lead up to Charlie's arrest and the charges against him. Tommo explains the argument between Hanley and Charlie. Discuss the intentions of both and who you believe was right. Give evidence to support your argument.

Charlie is very defiant in this episode. He has been defiant to authority before (Mr Munnings at school, the Colonel, Molly's parents). Do you think he has always made the right choices?

What does a 'court martial' mean? What do you think the consequences will be of this for Charlie based on what you have heard from Tommo's reflections all night?

Charlie gifts the gold wrist watch to Tommo. Why do you think he does this?



Private Peaceful by Michael Morpurgo

EPISODE 13: TWENTY-SEVEN MINUTES TO SIX

Note: this episode has been created from the latter half of Episode 12 in the original story.

Synopsis:

Tommo's recollection of events from the past have all but caught up with his reflections in the present. Tommo reveals he only knew the day before of his brother's death sentence. He is given twenty minutes to see Charlie.

When they meet Charlie insists on reading a letter to Tommo from Molly about little Tommo and Big Joe. It is clear she doesn't know about the court martial or Charlie's death sentence.

Charlie insists Tommo must tell the truth of what happened when he returns home. He explains the injustice of the court martial, with no witnesses called in his defence. Charlie says the history of his insubordination and being shot in the foot has gone against him. (Soldiers were accused of shooting themselves in the foot as a way to be sent home injured). The brigadier at the court martial had called Charlie a 'worthless man' and this wounds him the most. Charlie is resigned to the outcome and comforts Tommo. They spend time talking about home and the promise Tommo has made regarding Molly and the baby.

Tommo finally expresses the guilt he feels concerning their father's death and Charlie assures him it was not his fault.

The time draws near for Tommo to leave and Charlie passes him letters for home. They hold each other, humming 'Oranges and lemons', then sing louder. Charlie says he'll be singing the tune as he stands before the firing squad. Their time is up and Tommo must leave.

Tommo returns to the camp and discovers Hanley has died in a freak training-ground accident. He is relieved at the justice but the camp is subdued.

Wanting to be alone Tommo goes to a barn to spend the night - the same barn from which he has been making his recollections.

Tommo sees the time moving to six and plans to go outside so he can sense the world alongside Charlie at the end.

At one minute to six the past finally catches up with the present. Tommo thinks of the proud way he knows his brother will face the firing squad. Tommo hears the volley of shots and knows it is over. As he returns to camp all the soldiers are standing to attention.

Tommo collects Charlie's things and visits his burial place. Shortly he will be going to a new 'push' on the Somme...but he is determined to survive because now he has promises to keep.

Characters:

Tommo
Charlie

Themes:

Rules
Injustice
Cruelty
Punishment
Respect
Promises
Forgiveness

Guided reading:

Why has Charlie not told Molly of what will happen to him? He then states that Tommo must tell the truth of what has happened to him. Why do you think Charlie wants to conceal the truth himself but be sure that Tommo reveals it?

The author explains a range of 'facts' about the court martial process and the behaviour of soldiers accused. How can we check fact from fiction?

Explore views on the way soldiers were treated in the First World War. What were the attitudes at the time and why? Through Charlie's story the author explores the idea of fairness. What was fair or unfair in these events? What other events in previous episodes have been unfair? How does this unfairness affect the reader at this part of the story.



Private Peaceful by Michael Morpurgo

Charlie and Tommo can't physically be together at the end. How does the author unite them when the moment comes? How does this link home and their childhood to this moment? How well do the last shared minutes of the brothers affect the reader? What emotions has the author wanted to bring about?

Tommo decides to confide his 'secret' about their father's death. Why does he choose to do this now?

On Tommo's return to camp we suddenly learn Hanley has been killed in a freak accident. How does this make you feel? Why do you think the author decides to add this at this particular moment in the story? Do pupils really think it was a freak accident? Discuss the themes of justice and fairness in this final part of the story.

Finally in the present, Tommo steps outside and imagines how Charlie will die, before hearing the volley of shots that kill him. Why do you think the author tells of the event through Tommo rather than first hand? Do you think this was a good choice?

On his return to camp his fellow soldiers are standing to attention. What does this tell Tommo about their feelings for his brother? How does this affect the closing moments of the story?

Tommo is left reflecting on his promise to his brother. Morpurgo chooses to leave Tommo on the frontline. Why do you think he does this? What do you think will happen next for Tommo? What significance should we attach to the fact that he will shortly go to the Somme?

Exploring the text further

Discussion and debate

- Explore and compare the similarities and differences of rural Devon to France and Belgium.
- Frame the narrative through the present tense telling.
- Explore the main narrative through past tense telling.
- Explore past memories framed by imminent death.
- Explore the themes of fair play and loyalty.
- Identify themes, parallels and symbols you think the author is using.
- Discuss the text as a historical source. How accurate is it? Can it be trusted? How can we check the accounts within included by the author?
- Identify the author's attitudes to war. Research his experiences and family life which has influenced him. How does he convey his opinions through *Private Peaceful*?

Writing

- Compare story openings with other Michael Morpurgo books. Consider similarities and differences.
- Create a chart of characters (a mind map) tagging them with key information and connecting them showing their relationships to each other.
- Explore time point stages - map the events on a timeline built up throughout reading the story. Explore how time moves quickly and slowly. Continue to add key information using sticky notes.
- Write in role as child and adult. Mimic the style used by the author where we move backwards and forwards through time.
- Make a 'comparisons and differences' grid of two selected characters - eg Tommo and Charlie; Mr Munnings and Sergeant Hanley.
- Make a 'comparisons and differences' grid of two selected scenes in the same way.
- Create character profiles for Charlie and Tommo. How are each *Private Peaceful* the same or different? Record quotes from the text to support ideas given.

- Explore the difference between narrative and recount. Pupils attempt to write two versions of an event in their lives using both text types.
- Write a letter in role using any main character from the story.
- Create a diary extract.
- Study and mimic the style of the author in describing dramatic scenes - eg a funeral, passing soldiers returning from the front.
- Create newspaper articles reporting on the war. Explore different view points and opinion that might be portrayed. Explore propaganda and how this would influence reporting at the time, the enemy, the public at home. Write an article on deserters from the Allied forces and convey opinion at the time. Explore how challenging this is to your own sense of fairness.
- Illustrate a scene tagging text on to areas of the drawings. This could be descriptive vocabulary, key quotes, speech from characters.
- Create a leaflet or poster encouraging young men to join up.
- Create a report on the conditions at the frontline in role as Captain Wilkes or Sergeant Hanley.

Poetry

- Use the text to read and discuss the poetry of Wilfred Owen.
- Make comparisons between the account of the War given in *Private Peaceful* and the themes and ideas Wilfred Owen explores.
- Write your own poems on the theme of war using Wilfred Owen's techniques.

Drama

- Recreate the trial of Charlie. Place pupils in the position of prosecutor and defence. Encourage them to argue opinions that they may or may not hold. Evaluate afterwards their feelings about arguing 'from both sides'.
- 'Hot seat' any character from the text. Interrogate their feelings, thoughts and opinions.
- Explore how *Private Peaceful* would adapt for radio, theatre and film. Discuss the challenges of each medium and which might be the most successful. (The story has already been filmed, adapted for radio drama and adapted as a one-person performance for the theatre).

- Create monologues that pupils perform through study of the stage and radio productions.

History

- Gather facts about World War 1 on a range of issues - recruitment, underage soldiers, propaganda, frontline conditions, courts martial, shell shock.
- Explore key political and military persons who influenced decision making.
- Research the process of a court martial and the laws compared to those today. How was being shot for cowardice justified?
- Use the primary sources of soldiers' accounts of life on the frontline to understand their experiences. Link these to events in the book identifying fact and fiction.
- Research conscientious objectors - who they were and what were the challenges they were met with.

Citizenship and Rights

- Compare the rights of soldiers in World War 1 to soldiers who join up today.
- Explore different types of authority. Compare those illustrated in the story and whether these relationships still exist today.
- Use the old lady in the story who accuses Tommo of cowardice at the recruitment rally to initiate discussion on public opinion and how we are influenced by the media and those in authority.

PSHE

- Explore the theme of heroes and villains in fiction and fact.
- Explore the various portrayals of bullying in the story.
- Explore fairness and loyalty through the characters and compare to life experiences - eg school, family, authority.



Private Peaceful by Michael Morpurgo

Links

www.bbc.co.uk/schools/0/ww1/

The new offering from BBC Schools about WW1 which launched at the start of 2014

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01n4ldk

Resources from BBC School Radio helping schools to create a WW1 performance

www.bbc.co.uk/ww1

A portal to the BBC's current broadcasts focusing on WW1

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

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

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

The homefront and the descent into war

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

Take a virtual tour of life in a trench

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

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

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

Listen to WW1 soldiers describe their experiences first hand

www.westernfrontassociation.com/

www.1914-1918.net/

www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/FWWgas.htm

Information about gas attacks in WW1

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/index.htm

NB The BBC is not responsible for the content of external websites