

The Animals' War

English KS5: Lesson 2

Birdsong





English The Animals' War

KS5 Lesson 2: *Birdsong*



Lesson Plan Duration: one hour

■ Context of Lesson/Key Ideas:

- The centenary of the First World War is an ideal opportunity to look at the role of animals during this time. This lesson will focus on how the canary is linked to the characters of Stephen and Weir and how it is tied in with how they behave in the extract.

■ Aims and Objectives:

- To focus on the canary and how it links in with the characters of Stephen and Weir.
- To analyse language/ structure.

■ Resources:

- Passage from *Birdsong* concerning canaries in the mines (pages 299-307)*
- Resource sheet 2: Relationships – canaries and humans (from last lesson)
- Resource sheet 3: List of quotations
- Illustrations concerning the construction of mine shafts and photos of canaries and tunneling from *Mines and Tunnels* Powerpoint*
- PowerPoint 5: *Mines and Tunnels*
(* available as download from website)

■ Differentiation:

- Resource 3 will provide more support, if necessary.

■ Learning tasks:

Starter Activity (10 minutes)

- Recap the purpose of the two lessons. Students should have completed Resource 2 from Lesson One as preparation for this next lesson. Ask students to share ideas.

Main/Development (50 minutes)

- The purpose of this second lesson is to get students to write a longer piece of writing. This will look at the way the canary links in with the characters of Stephen and Weir and how it affects their relationship.
- Provide students with the following statement: *Stephen and Weir's relationship changes throughout the extract. With references to the text, explain the role of the canary and how it affects the men.*

a) Ask students to discuss the statement

b) Provide Resource 3: list of quotations linked to the statement

c) Students respond to the statement, making references to language (and structure if necessary)

You may wish to direct students with a time or word limit, according to their ability. It would be helpful if students had at least 25 minutes to work on this. It is useful for examination practice.

Plenary (5 minutes)

- Students could share their ideas/read out their response. A possible extension activity would be to ask students to research the role of animals in literature, such as George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. This will depend on the individual teacher's decisions and the response of the class.



Resource sheet 3 List of Quotations

- He picked up a canary in a small wooden cage and turned to face Stephen.
- Stephen hesitated, glancing at the cage. 'Of course not. I merely – (in response to Weir's question 'Are you frightened?')
- The bird was chirping, though whether from fear or happiness he could not say. Stephen shuddered at the sound.
- Anything was bearable provided he did not have to come too close to that bird.
- The canary let out a small living sound.
- 'The bird's gone,' he said. 'Let's go.'
- Weir spat through his pain. 'You cannot under any circumstances leave a bird free. Ever. It's in the handbook. I'd be court-martialled. Find the bird.'
- 'Well, kill it. It's only a canary. Come on. I want to turn round. I'm getting cramp. I want to get out of here.' There was a silence. Weir made no movement. Eventually he said, 'I can't kill it. I can't do it.'
- 'No! It's too risky passing it back to me. It might escape.'
- ... Weir, who released the bird into the handkerchief.
- The small canary suspended from his mouth made feeble movements and its yellow feathers protruded from the handkerchief...