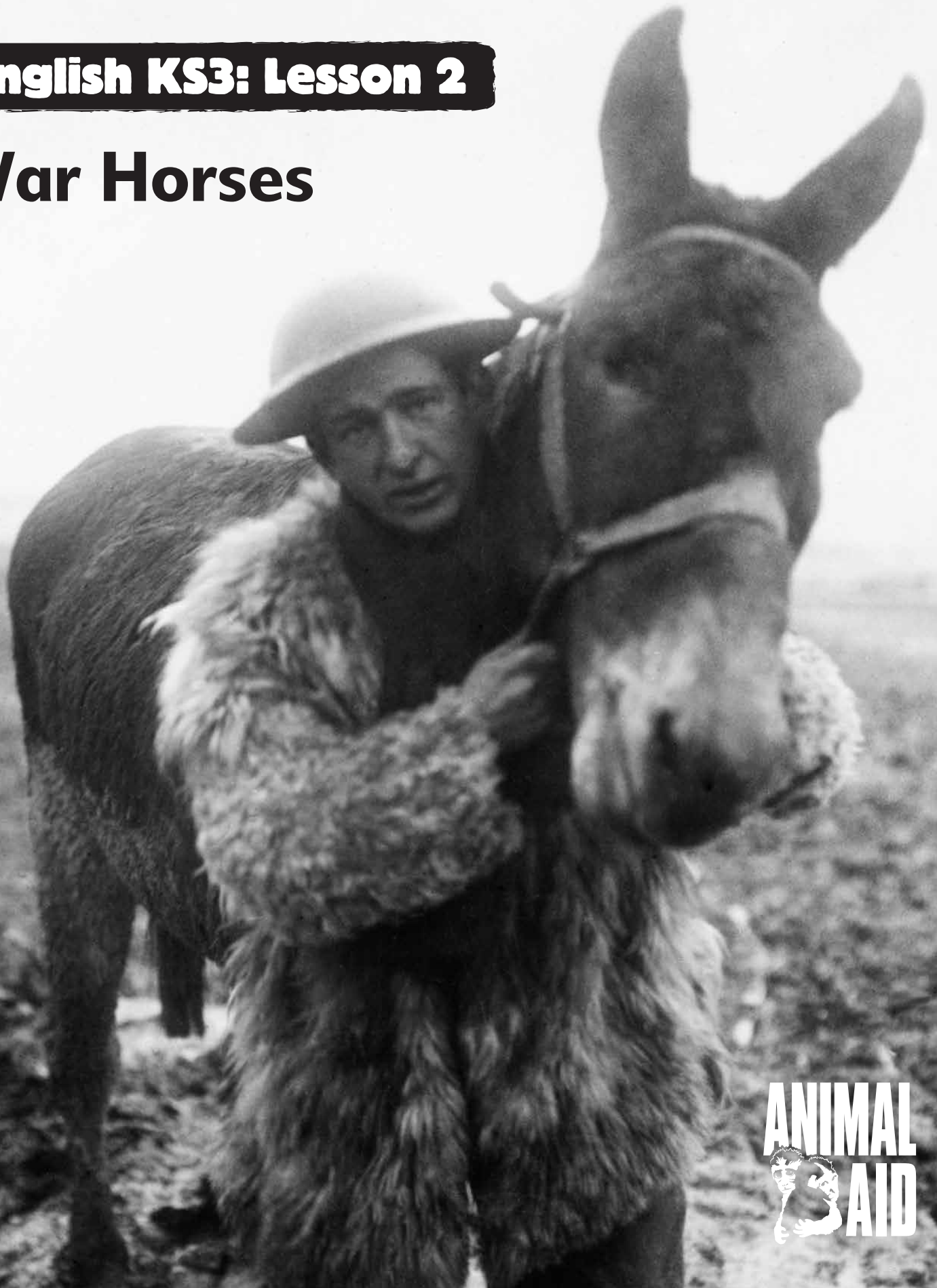


# The Animals' War

English KS3: Lesson 2

## War Horses





## English KS3

# The Animals' War Lesson 2: War Horses



**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 is the second of two lessons, looking at the role of animals in the conflict.

### ■ Aims and Objectives:

- Recap the roles of animals in World War One and make links to the term empathy.
- Consider a literary presentation of a horse's experience of war, using an extract from *War Horse* by Michael Morpurgo.
- Analyse the language devices used by the writer to effectively convey Joey's experience of the war.

### ■ Resources:

1. Resources sheet 1: image of horse outline to project onto the whiteboard (PowerPoint slide)\*
2. Factsheet: *Animals in WWI part one – War Horses\**
3. Resources sheet 2: extract from *War Horse* by Michael Morpurgo (chapter 15, pages 119 – 123)
4. Resources sheet 3: grid with key phrases to analyse.  
(\* available as download from website)

### ■ Learning tasks:

#### Starter Activity (10 minutes)

- Ask students to take out their notes from the research on horses in World War One which they were asked to complete for homework. Each student takes it in turn to write a different fact on the board inside the outline of the horse (Resource sheet 1).
- Lead a discussion of their responses, then hand out the factsheet: *Animals in WWI part one – War Horses* and ask students to read it and highlight any facts that they didn't already know from their research of the topic.
- Introduce the objectives for the lesson.
- Recap the definitions and examples of empathy provided last lesson.

#### Textual analysis of an extract from *War Horse* by Michael Morpurgo (45 minutes)

- Hand out copies of the extract from chapter 15 (Resource sheet 2), briefly set the context (taken from a novel told from the horse, Joey's perspective) and read it to the class.
- Ask students, working with a partner, to identify/highlight three words or phrases from the extract, which use language powerfully to convey the thoughts and feelings of Joey as he experiences war. Each pair should be ready to justify the reasons why they have selected these phrases to another pair when teamed up into a small group to discuss.



- Hand out copies of the textual analysis grid (Resource sheet 3) and ask students to work individually through the task. Each phrase has been selected as a good example of how the writer uses language effectively to convey Joey's experience of war. A list of language devices is included to help students with the matching activity. Once completed, students may pair up to compare their responses. Allow enough time for each pair/student to feedback on a key phrase to the rest of the class. Students who complete the task early can find their own phrases to analyse in the same way, or they can start to write up their short essays (see extension/homework task).

**Plenary (5 minutes)**

- Recap the language devices used by Morpurgo in the extract, which best convey Joey's thoughts and feelings with regards to his experience of war.

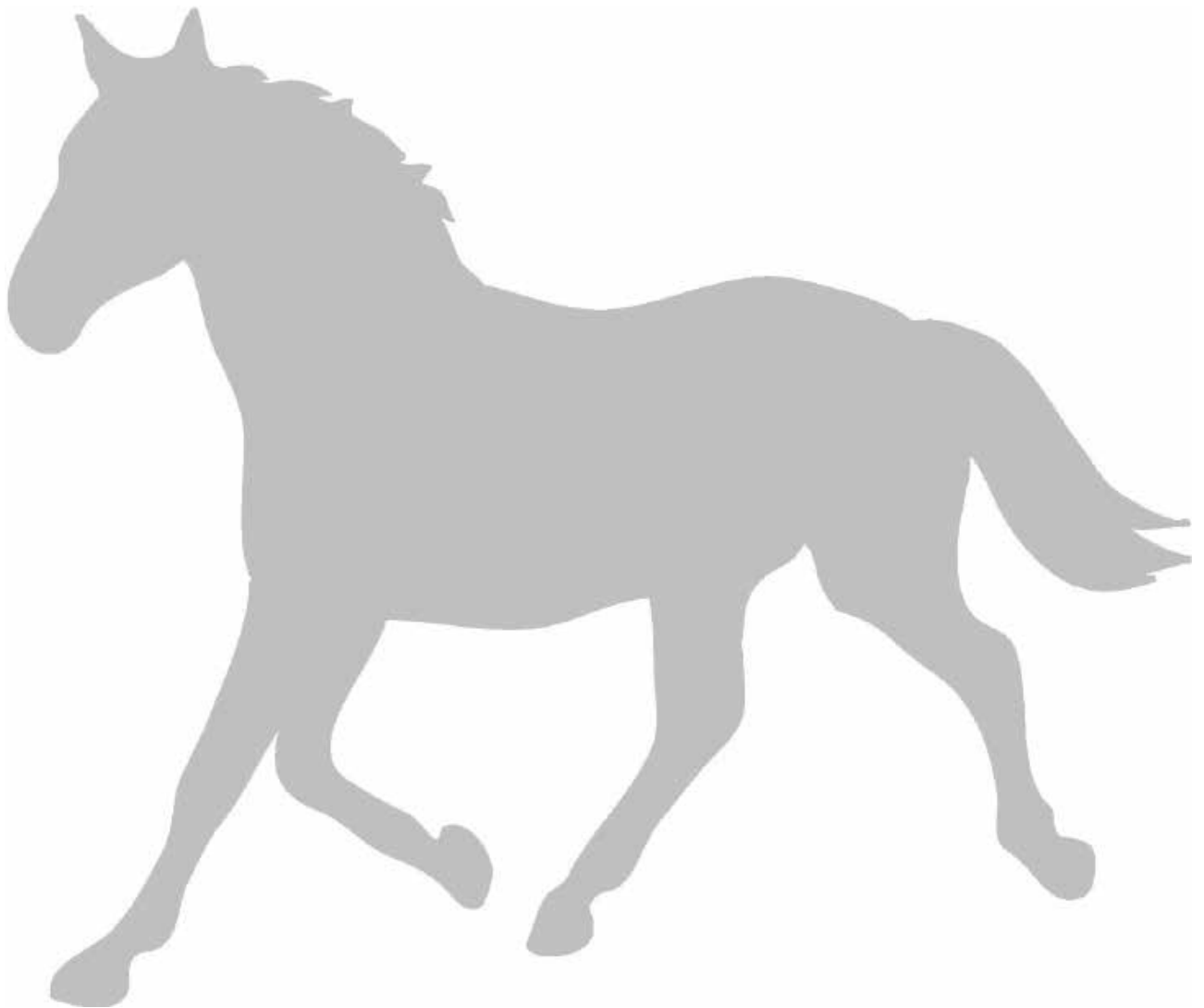
**Extension Task/Homework**

- Ask students to write a short analytical essay using five of the phrases selected from the list as examples. The essay should answer the question: How does Morpurgo use powerful language to convey Joey's experience of war in this extract from *War Horse*? Students can use their analytical grids with notes to plan the response and should write it using a critical sentence structure (Point, Evidence, Explain). They should be reminded to take care with spelling, punctuation and grammar.



**Resource sheet 1** Horses in the First World War

**Write a fact from your research notes inside the outline of the horse below:**





**Resource sheet 2** Fiction text: Extract from *War Horse*  
by Michael Morpurgo (chapter 15, pages 119-123)

Although at the time I did not know it as such, the first tank I ever saw came over the rise of the hill with the cold light of dawn behind it, a great grey lumbering monster that belched out smoke from behind as it rocked down the hillside towards me. I hesitated only for a few moments before blind terror tore me at last from Tophthorn's side and sent me bolting down the hill towards the river. I crashed into the river without even knowing whether I should find my feet or not and was half-way up the wooded hill on the other side before I dared stop and turn to see if it was still chasing me. I should never have looked, for the one monster had become several monsters and they were rolling inexorably down towards me, already past the place where Tophthorn lay with Friedrich on the shattered hillside. I waited, secure, I thought, in the shelter of the trees and watched the tanks ford the river before turning once more to run.

I ran I knew not where. I ran until I could no longer hear that dreadful rattle and until the guns seemed far away. I remember crossing a river again, galloping through empty farmyards, jumping fences and ditches and abandoned trenches, and clattering through deserted, ruined village, before I found myself grazing that evening in a lush, wet meadow and drinking from a clear, pebbly brook. And then exhaustion finally overtook me, sapped the strength from my legs and forced me to lie down and sleep.

When I woke it was dark and the guns were firing once more all around me. No matter where I looked it seemed, the sky was lit with the yellow flashes of gunfire and intermittent white glowing lights that pained my eyes and showered daylight briefly on to the countryside around me. Whichever way I went it seemed it had to be towards the guns. Better therefore I thought to stay where I was. Here at least I had grass in plenty and water to drink.

I had made up my mind to do just that when there was an explosion of white light above my head and the rattle of a machine-gun split the night air, the bullets whipping into the ground beside me. I ran again and kept running into the night, stumbling frequently in the ditches and hedges until the fields lost their grass and the trees were mere stumps against the flashing skyline. Wherever I went now there were great craters in the ground filled with murky, stagnant water.

It was as I staggered out of one such crater that I lumbered into an invisible coil of barbed wire that first snagged then trapped my foreleg. As I kicked out wildly to free myself, I felt the barbs tearing into my foreleg before I broke clear. From then on I could manage only to limp on slowly into the night, feeling my way forward. Even so I must have walked for miles, but where to and where from I shall never know. All the while my leg pulsed with pain and on every side of me the great guns were sounding out and rifle-fire spat into the night. Bleeding, bruised and terrified beyond belief, I longed only to be with Tophthorn again. He would know which way to go, I told myself. He would know.

I stumbled on into the night guided only by the belief that where the night was at its blackest there alone I might find some safety from the shelling. Behind me the thunder and lightning of the bombardment was so terrible in its intensity, turning the deep black of night into unnatural day, that I could not contemplate going back even though I knew that it was in the direction Tophthorn lay. There was some gunfire ahead of me and on both sides of me, but I could see away in the distance a black horizon of undisturbed night and so moved on steadily towards it.



My wounded leg was stiffening up all the time in the cold of the night and it pained me now even to lift it. Very soon I found I could put no weight on it at all. This was to be the longest night of my life, a nightmare of agony, terror and loneliness. I suppose it was only a strong instinct to survive that compelled me to walk on and kept me on my feet. I sensed that my only chance lay in putting the noise of the battle as far behind me as possible, so I had to keep moving. From time to time rifle fire and machine-gun fire would crackle all around me, and I would stand paralysed with fear, terrified to move in any direction until the firing stopped and I found my muscles could move once more.

To begin with I found the mists hovering only in the depths of the craters I passed, but after some hours I found myself increasingly surrounded in a thick, smoky, autumnal mist through which I could see only the vague shades and shapes of dark and light around me. Almost blinded now I relied totally on the ever more distant roar and rumble of the bombardment, keeping it all the time behind me and moving towards the darker more silent world ahead of me.



**Resource sheet 3** Textual Analysis Grid Extract from  
*War Horse* by Michael Morpurgo)

- Match a language device from the list below to each phrase in the grid (words have been underlined in places for guidance). The first example has been completed for you.

SHORT SENTENCE, ADJECTIVES, PERSONIFICATION, METAPHOR, IMAGERY, ASSONANCE, LIST OF THREE, VERB, ALLITERATION, ONOMATOPOEIA.

- Complete the last column by analysing the phrase and thinking about how the writer uses language to effectively convey Joey's experience of the war.

Phrase from the text	Language device	Effect on the reader
A great grey lumbering monster that belched out smoke behind as it rocked down the hillside towards me.	Personification	The tank is personified as a monster to make it sound more menacing, with words like 'belched' and 'rocked' conveying its violent actions. This makes Joey's experience of war seem truly terrifying.
Blind terror tore me at last from Tophorn's side and sent me bolting down the hill towards the river.		
I ran I knew not where.		
A lush, wet meadow [...] a clear, pebbly brook.		
The sky was lit with the yellow flashes of gunfire and intermittent white glowing lights.		
The rattle of machine-gun split the night air.		
I felt the barbs tearing into my foreleg before I broke clear.		
Bleeding, bruised and terrified beyond belief.		
Surrounded in a thick, smoky autumnal mist through which I could see only the vague shades and shapes of dark and light around me.		
Roar and rumble of the bombardment.		