

The Animals' War

History KS3: Lesson 8

Heroes or victims?





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Lesson 8: Heroes or victims?



Lesson Plan Duration: one hour

■ Context of Lesson:

The Centenary of the First World War is an ideal opportunity to look at the role of animals during this time. There is a difference of opinion over the use of animals during WWI. Some people consider that the animals involved in the conflict were heroes, while other people argue that they were victims.

■ Aims and Objectives:

- Know that people have different interpretations regarding the role of animals such as horses, dogs and pigeons used in WWI.
- Understand how historical evidence is used to make contrasting arguments concerning the use of animals in WWI.

■ National Curriculum coverage:

- KSt3: The First World War. Understand how evidence is used rigorously to make historical claims, and discern how and why contrasting arguments and interpretations of the past have been constructed.

■ Resources (links and downloads available from website):

- 1 a) Trailer for the *Valiant* film: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0361089/?ref_=ttpl_pl_tt
b) Still from the *Valiant* film
- 2 'Barbed wire scene' from *War Horse* film: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-_s81WQxfY
- 3 Resource sheet 1: *Silent Heroes and Victims of War* texts (Sources 3a & 3b)
- 4 Resource sheet 2: Accounts (Sources 4a - 4e)
- 5 Resource sheet 3: Posters (Sources 5a, 5b and 5c)
- 6 Resource sheet 4: Media covers (Sources 6a, 6b and 6c)
- 7 Resource sheet 5: Photos (Sources 7a, 7b, and 7c)
- 8 Resource sheet 6: Paintings (Sources 8a and 8b)
- 9 Animal Aid booklet: *Animals: Hidden Victims of War*:
<http://animalaid.org.uk/images/pdf/booklets/war.pdf>

■ Learning tasks:

Starter (10 minutes)

- If you have access to the internet show trailer for the *Valiant* film. If you don't, use the still from the film available on the website.
- Ask students, in pairs, to discuss the clip showing a fictional depiction of pigeons in war then ask the class whether the clip portrayed the animals as heroes or victims. Based on their knowledge of animals in WWI, how realistic do they think the film is?
- If you have access to the internet, show the *War Horse* 'barbed wire scene'. Again, in pairs, discuss whether Joey the horse is represented as a hero or a victim, or both. Is the portrayal more realistic than the previous clip? Why do students think this?



Main (50 minutes)

- Ask students to work in groups of four.

1) Extracts presenting different interpretations of history (10 minutes);

- Provide each group with copies of Resource Sheet 1. Ask them to discuss the meaning of the two extracts: What is the point that each is making? How do the interpretations of the role of animals differ?
- Explain that each presents a different interpretation of how animals were used in WWI. Some people consider that the animals who 'served' in WWI were heroes because they were brave, while other people argue that they were victims because they were taken and used and didn't choose to fight.

2) Do you think that the animals were heroes or victims? (40 minutes);

- Provide each group of students with copies of some, or all, of Resources 4 - 8 (Resource sheets 2 - 6).
- Ask students to carefully study the sources and then to sort them into groups that will help you answer the question: **Do you think that animals were heroes or victims?**

If scissors are available, ask students to cut out the sources from the sheets so that they can be arranged in order, or into groups.

- Students may, for example, sort the sources into groups:
 - 1) that support the case that animals were 'victims'
 - 2) that support that case that animals were 'heroes'
 - 3) that could be used to support either or both

They might also sort the sources into 'primary' and 'secondary'; 'more reliable' and 'less reliable'; or any other grouping that helps them answer the question.

- Ask them to decide which evidence they would give *most* weight to, and which *least*?
 - Which **three** pieces of evidence would you choose to answer the question? Why?
 - Do you think people in 1918 would feel the same way as you do today about the part played by animals in World War One? If you think they would feel differently, why is that?
 - Why do you think it took until 2004 for a memorial to animals in war to be built in London?

Plenary (10 minutes)

- Gather feedback, discuss contributions and summarise students' conclusions regarding whether animals in WWI were heroes or victims.

Homework/extension

- a) Investigate what happened to animals after the war. Write a critical piece for a magazine or blog entitled: 'Was there a heroes' return for animals who fought in WWI?'
- or b) Produce a PowerPoint (using evidence) arguing the case for animals in WWI being heroes, victims, or both.



Resource sheet 1 *Texts extracts concerning animals in war*

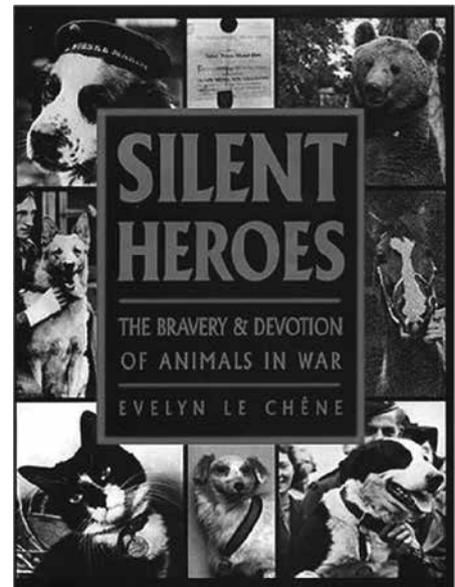
Silent Heroes – The bravery & devotion of animals in war

by Evelyn Le Chêne 1997

An account of the many courageous animals who went beyond the bounds of training and duty to display selfless acts of devotion in war.

Evelyn le Chêne places each animal's heroism in the context of the battle or campaign in which they served, including maps and a wealth of archive photographs to evoke the valiant deeds of the brave animals to have served their country.

3a



Animals: the hidden victims of war

booklet produced by Animal Aid campaign group 2010

This booklet is dedicated to the animals who have lost their lives in the course of human conflict.

Animals living in conflict zones have no choice. Like many humans, they are victims of wars not of their making and over which they have no control.

Animals in wars are not heroes; they are victims. They do not give their lives; their lives are taken.

3b





Resource sheet 2 Personal accounts - sources 4a - 4e

4a) **Private David Polley, 189th Machine Gun Coy, MGC, 1916**

To me, one of the beastliest things of the whole war was the way animals had to suffer. It matters not to them if the Kaiser ruled the whole world; and yet the poor beasts were dragged into hell to haul rations and gear over shell-swept roads and field paths full of holes to satisfy the needs of their lords and masters. Bah! Many a gallant horse or mule who had his entrails torn out by a lump of shell was finer in every way than some of the human creatures he was serving.

Source: Tommy's Ark, Richard Van Emden, p180

4b) **Private Thomas Hope, 1/5th King's Liverpool Regiment, 1917**

I have long since become accustomed to wounded humanity. Their plight evokes pity and the desire to help, but a wounded animal leaves me with a feeling of loathing, loathing towards myself and the civilised humanity, which I represent. Too often have I seen reproach in the eyes of a dying horse, and outraged frailty in the flutterings of a wounded carrier pigeon.

Source: Tommy's Ark, Richard Van Emden, p240

4c) **Extract from *Animal Heroes of WWI* by Harold Baynes**

In his 1927 book Baynes tells us that the British pigeon No. 2709 was given up for lost since a night had passed from the time that it had been dispatched from the front to divisional headquarters some nine miles away, but:

She was not dead – it was not time to die yet. Somewhere she had lain out in the wet all night, and in the grey of the morning, she staggered into the loft, and died before the officer on duty could read the message she had brought.

4d) **Private Fred Lloyd, Army Veterinary Corps, 1918 (at the end of the war)**

At the depot, we classified the horses to see what was coming home and what wasn't. There were three grades, and peacetime vets were saying which ones were fit to go back to England, these went into quarantine; the next grade was to be sold to the farmers, and the others were for food. If they weren't fit, we'd take them by train or, if they were, we'd take them by road. We used to go right up to Paris with horses, each man leading four to sell to the French for food. In the slaughterhouses, we led them on to scales four at a time and weighed them up. We sold them by weight.

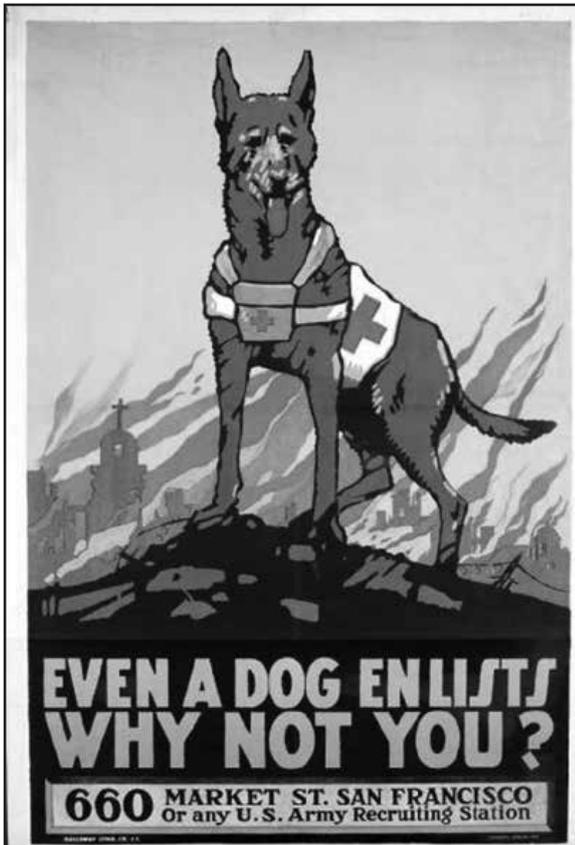
Source: Tommy's Ark, Richard Van Emden, p302

4e) **Obituary to Sergeant Stubby, mascot of US 102nd Infantry, 26th Division printed in *New York Times* in 1926:**

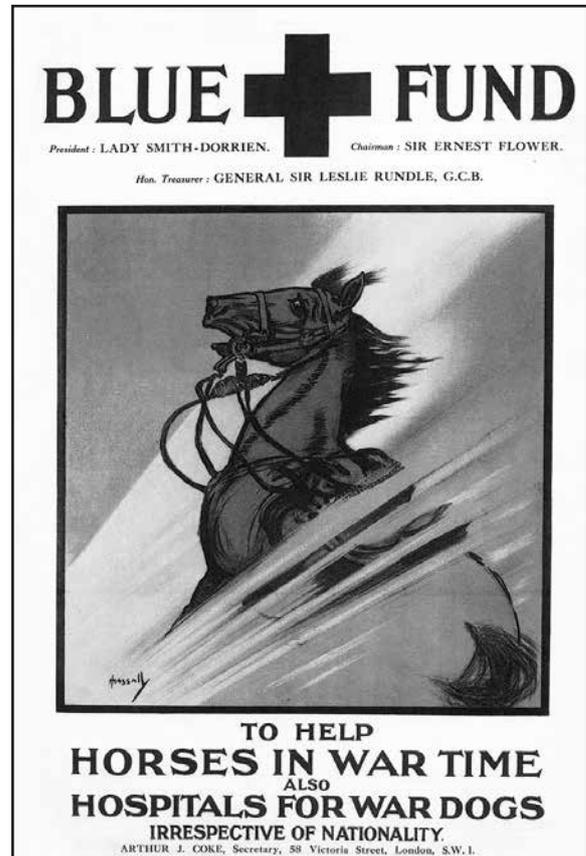
On Feb. 5, 1918, he entered the front lines of the Chemin des Dames sector, north of Soissons, where he was under fire night and day for more than a month. The noise and strain that shattered the nerves of many of his comrades did not impair Stubby's spirits. Not because he was unconscious of danger. His angry howl while a battle raged and his mad canter from one part of the lines to another indicated realization. But he seemed to know that the greatest service he could render was comfort and cheerfulness.



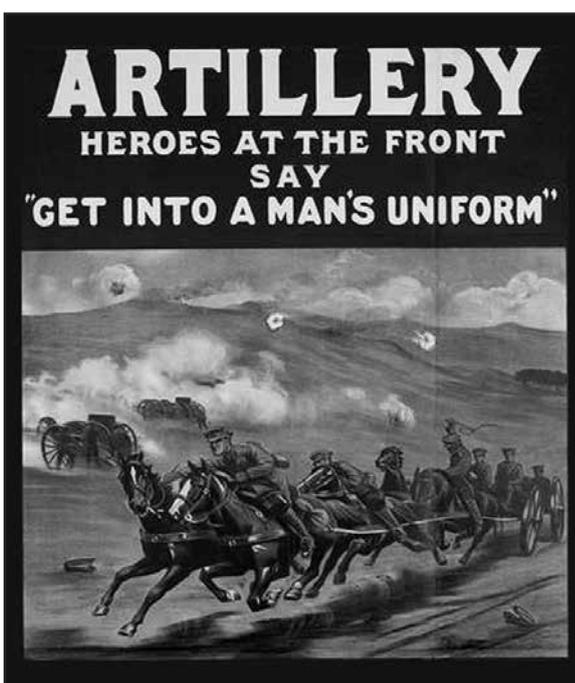
Resource sheet 3 Posters - sources 5a, 5b and 5c



Source 5a) Even a dog enlists poster



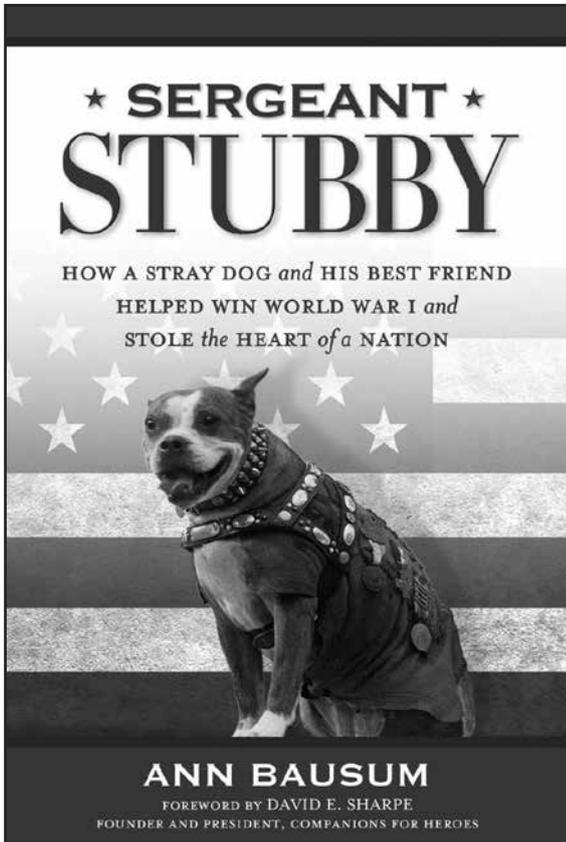
Source 5b) Blue Cross Fund poster



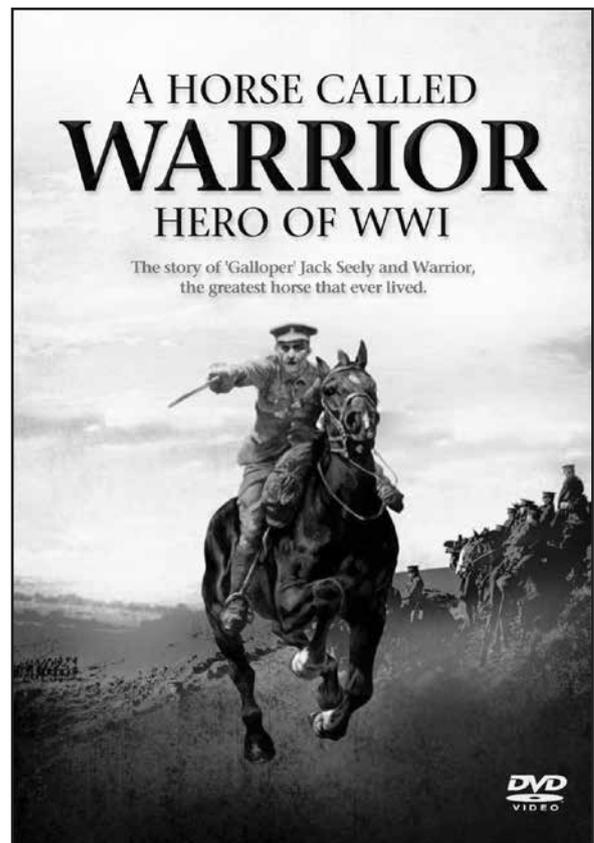
Source 5c) Heroes at the Front poster



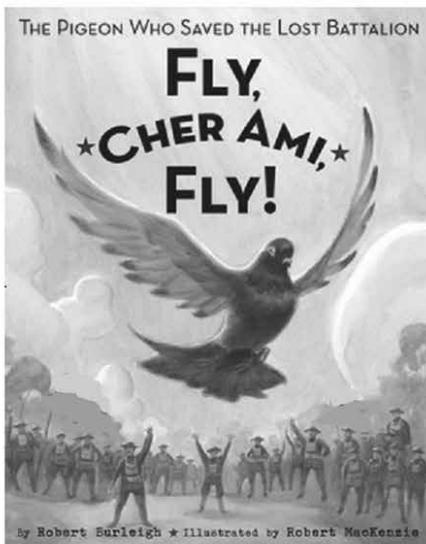
Resource sheet 4 Media covers - sources 6a, 6b and 6c



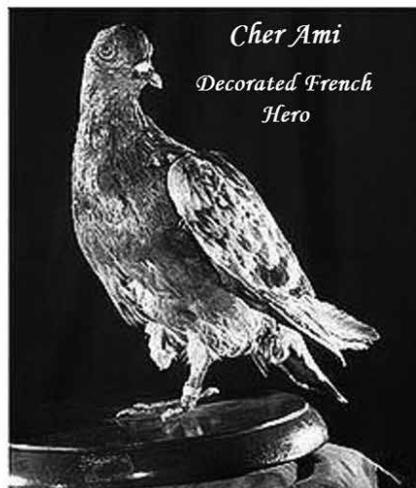
Source 6a) Sergeant Stubby book cover



Source 6b) A Horse called Warrior DVD cover



Croix de Guirre
Medal of Honor



Source 6c) Fly Cher Ami Fly book cover



Resource sheet 5 Photographs - sources 7a, 7b and 7c



IWM

Source 7a)
WWI photograph of dogs injured
by mustard gas



IWM

Source 7b)
WWI photograph of horses killed
by artillery shells



IWM

Source 7c)
WWI photograph of a mule team
stuck in the mud during the battle
of Passchendaele



Resource sheet 6 Paintings - sources 8a and 8b



Source 8a)
Painting:
Charge of Flowerdew's Squadron
by Alfred Munnings, 1918



Source 8b)
Painting: **Goodbye Old Man**
by Fortunino Matania, 1916