

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

## War Horse

by

### Michael Morpurgo

### Book Information

Michael Morpurgo, War Horse  
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Book Level: 5.9  
Interest Level: MG

Joey the horse recalls his experiences growing up on an English farm, his struggle for survival as a cavalry horse during World War I, and his reunion with his beloved master. The plot contains violence.

**Topics:** Animals, Horses; Wars, World War I

### Main Characters

Albert Joey's trainer and friend who is determined to find Joey after he is sold from the farm

Albert's father a man who becomes cruel when drinking and who sells Joey to save his farm

Captain Nicholls the officer who buys Joey from Albert's father and rides Joey into battle

Corporal Samuel Perkins the man who trains Joey for war

Emilie an ill young girl who grows stronger through her friendship with Joey and Tophorn

Joey a horse who travels from his farm in Devon into the battles of World War I and finally returns to his Devon farm

Tophorn a huge, sleek horse who befriends Joey as they head toward battle

Zoey a horse who befriends Joey on the farm

### Vocabulary

**canter** an easy gallop used in pleasure riding; in horseback riding, a mild pace, faster than a trot but slower than a gallop

**convoy** a fleet of vehicles or ships traveling together, often escorted to provide protection

**devotion** unquestioning love, affection, or loyalty; dedication

**instinctively** by natural impulse; without thinking; as a reflex; naturally; involuntarily

**khaki** made of a yellowish-brown to olive-drab twilled cloth, especially used by the military; yellowish-brown or olive-drab

**mortgage** a loan extended to purchase property; the transfer of ownership of property that hinges on satisfactory repayment of a loan

**ominous** threatening; menacing; foreshadowing, suggesting, or warning of danger, evil, or ill fortune; arousing fear or dread; scary or frightening; sinister

**ration** a set amount, as in food; an allotted portion; an allowance

**remnants** those which are left after a part of something is removed, destroyed, or used up; small parts or portions that are left after the main part of something no longer exists; fragments or scraps; traces

**stamina** resistance to fatigue, weakness, or discouragement; the ability to withstand hardship; physical, mental, or emotional strength or endurance

### Synopsis

Joey (the narrator of the story) is a colt who has been cared for and trained by Albert, a young English farm boy. At the outbreak of World War I, Albert's father sells Joey to the cavalry to help pay the mortgage. The boy is devastated and promises that he will someday find Joey. Joey, who is shipped to France, experiences army life and the disastrous consequences of a cavalry charge into machine guns. Throughout the war, Joey serves on both sides and has several owners--some who treat him well and some who do not. While serving the Germans, Joey's friend Tophorn dies. Joey stays by his friend's side until tanks come and frighten him. He bolts and ends up in no-man's-land, between the trenches, where he is injured on barbed wire. By a coin toss, he again becomes the property of the English. Joey is taken to a veterinary hospital, where he is reunited with Albert, who is a veterinary orderly. Because of the kindness of a French farmer who cared for Joey during the war, Joey is able to return to England with Albert.

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## Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

### Literary Analysis

How would the story have been different if Albert instead of Joey had been telling it?

*The reader would not have known many of the things that happened to Joey in France. More emphasis would have been placed on relationships between human characters. The reader would know more about what Albert was doing before he joined the Veterinary Corps and his experiences in the war.*

### Inferential Comprehension

Think about the conversation between the Welshman and the German who tossed a coin to decide Joey's fate. How did they feel about the war?

*They thought it could be ended if a couple of regular people sat down to talk about it. They realized that although they were supposed to be enemies, they were more alike than they were different. They were tired of the fighting and the killing.*

## Teachable Skills

**Responding to Literature** Responding to Literature

**Understanding Hist/Cultural Factors** Understanding Historical and Cultural Factors

**Understanding the Author's Craft** Understanding Author's Craft

**Understanding Literary Features** Understanding Literary Features