

## **KS3 English Scheme of Work**

*Written in 2008 by Louise Elstone and Sam Haseler from Ellen Wilkinson School*

This scheme of work is intended for use with students studying English at KS3.

Teachers will need to refer to *War Horse*, the play, by Nick Stafford and *War Horse*, the novel, by Michael Morpurgo as well as some of the other accompanying resources on the War Horse website.

There are four areas of exploration which can be delivered in any order, or independently, according to your preference. They are as follows:

- 1. What inspires people to write novels/plays in the first place?**
- 2. Songs of War: the music and poetry of WW1**
- 3. Transformations: the adapting process, from page to stage**
- 4. Dramatic Devices: (including puppetry)**

Each area is divided into two sections: **EXPLORE** and **ACTIVITIES**.

EXPLORE sections contain topics for discussion in class.

ACTIVITIES sections have suggestions for reading, writing, speaking & listening, as well as drama exercises.

At the end of the document there are suggestions for assessment tasks and for cross-curricular activities.



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### 1. What inspires people to write novels/plays in the first place?

#### EXPLORE

Read the article by Morpurgo 'A life of writing'

Read the author's note at the beginning of the novel. Morpurgo writes as though he has been inspired by a real painting of Joey. In the article mentioned above, he talks of a painting of a cavalry charge, but the painting of Joey is fictional. What effect does using the author's note, to add immediacy to the story, have on the reader?

Read the letter from Matthew Beaumont Parrington – Tom Morris' (one of the directors of *War Horse*) great-grandfather – to his son, about looking after horses during war.

Discuss stories and advice handed down through generations of families. Why might these be particularly powerful stimuli for writers/theatre-makers?

#### ACTIVITY

Ask students to bring in an object linked to one of the family stories/traditions that they have researched – medals, jewellery, traditional clothing, farm equipment, books etc – or an object, artwork or text that could inspire them in the way Morpurgo was inspired by the painting.

Tell the story of your object and how it came to be owned by you or your family. This could be conducted as a speaking and listening exercise, or a piece of written work.

Introduce the idea of anthropomorphism – what qualities would your object have if it was human? What stories might it have to tell? For example, a torch could be an explorer; a leader of an oppressed people; an investigative journalist; or someone who is able to switch their emotions on and off.

It may be interesting to swap objects with another person to see how their object inspires you.

As homework, speak to family members about some of their own family legends. This could inspire some creative writing or be used to create a display: of family recipes, traditions, myths, photographs, for example.

### 2. Songs of War: The music and poetry of WW1

#### EXPLORE

Why do people write poetry and songs? In what ways are poems and songs similar? How do they differ?

Explore the links between the lyrics of modern songs and poetry. Students could bring in their own examples.

#### ACTIVITY

Look at The War Horse Songbook, by John Tams, that can be found at the back of the playscript.

Look at the contrasts between the positive and optimistic lyrics of 'The Scarlet and the Blue' and the third stanza of 'Rolling Home'.

Explore why so many of the lyrics written by Tams make reference to ploughing, harvest and farming in general.

Read the poem 'A Private' by Edward Thomas which also talks about a 'ploughman dead in battle'

#### EXPLORE

Listen to some of the songs from the First World War (there are many links online) and discuss the contrasts between the rousing songs sung to inspire recruitment and keep a feeling of jubilation alive, and those that describe a more cynical view of the war. Some suggestions:

- 'Pack Up Your Troubles in your Old Kit Bag'
- 'Oh! What a Lovely War'
- 'But for Gawd's Sake Don't Send Me'
- 'Are We Down Hearted?'
- 'Bombed Last Night'

(Book resource: When this Bloody War is Over: Soldiers' Songs of the First World War by Max Arthur)

#### ACTIVITY – DRAMA

Read the poem 'Dulce et Decorum Est' by Wilfred Owen and discuss the experiences described.

Explore the significance of the title before reading the poem and predict what the poem will be about.



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Look at the colour code used to describe the different senses in 'Dulce et Decorum Est'. Look at the use of direct speech and how this creates immediacy.

Hand out the following lines from the poem and the play to groups of three or four:

*Ambush! Machine Gun! Break line! Fall Back!*

*Albert! Gas! ... Narracott! Narracott! Gas! Gas mask on!*

*Gas! Gas! Quick, boys!*

*An ecstasy of fumbling fitting the clumsy helmets just in time*

*Bent double like old beggars under sack, knock kneed, coughing like hags*

*Halt! Enemy spotted!*

*Where the hell's all that coming from?*

*Many had lost their boots but limped on, blood-shod*

*All went lame; all blind; / Drunk with fatigue*

Read and discuss the lines. Which lines do you think come from the poem and which are taken from the play? Are some easier to spot than others? Why is this?

Prepare a dramatic presentation of the lines using speech/action/freeze frame or other dramatic devices.

Read the stage directions on page 35 of the play of War Horse describing the first sight of Calais. How would you choose to show this on stage? What devices can you use to show the change in mood from being on the boat, to being confronted with the sights the soldiers witness on arrival?

(Teacher Note: – in the production, the use of song and silence are significant)

In groups, perform scene 18 of the play. Discuss how David and Albert are feeling and how they try to keep their spirits up.

### EXPLORE

Look at some of 'Woodbine Willy's poems such as 'The Spirit' which uses contrasts between the stark realities of war and the

need to "carry on", and 'The Secret' which uses humour.

(Teacher Note: – you could link this idea to use of humour as a dramatic device in the plays e.g. the use of the goose puppet (if you've already seen the play) and Sergeant Thunder's swearing)

### ACTIVITY – WRITING

Writing Task – you are a young soldier in France in the trenches during WWI, away from home for the first time. Write your diary entry for the first night. Think about what you might see, hear, smell, touch and taste. Remember to include how you are feeling, physically and emotionally, as well as the thoughts that you have about your situation.



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### 3. Transformations: the adapting process, from page to stage

#### EXPLORE – DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Why would someone change a novel into a play?

What sort of decisions do you think need to be made?

You may want to think about: characters, narrators, descriptions, sustaining tension and the passage of time.

(Teacher Note: There are many supporting resources to help students with these questions on the *War Horse* website)

#### ACTIVITY – READING

Read the extract from the novel revealing the announcement of the war (pp 19 & 20)

Highlight the techniques Morpurgo has used to show the different family members' reactions to this news. In a different colour, highlight the parts of this extract that you think are most important and should be included in the play.

Read the section in the play (page 26) when the bells peal and Carter makes the announcement that Great Britain is at war with Germany. Discuss what is different about these two extracts.

Why do you think the writer chose a public setting in the play compared to the private, family setting, in the novel?

Discuss the role of characters who deliver information that would otherwise be given by a narrator as description.

In the play, Nick Stafford has included more information about some of the minor characters who appear in the novel. Albert's mother is a minor character who is not even given a name in the novel.

Discussion questions: Morpurgo suggests certain hardships in her life but gives no real details or explanations. Why do you think he does this?

On Page 8 'Don't speak like that about your father, Albert. He's been through a lot. It's not right,' said his mother. But her words lacked conviction.

Bottom of page 22 from 'There would be long and heated exchanges in the yard...' to 'You've got to try to understand him, Albert. He deserves that much.' (page 23)

Discussion Questions: What do we find out about Albert's mother? What kind of character does she seem to be? How do you expect her to be portrayed in the play?

#### ACTIVITY – READING

In the play, Nick Stafford has chosen to tell us a lot more about Rose Narracott. Why do you think he gave her this name?

Now read the following extract from the play, on page 20 from: Albert: 'If ya hate me so much maybe I should just run away!' to: Rose: 'I really envy you, Albert – your ability ta dream.' (page 22)

Experiment reading it in pairs to show different emotions. The characters could show anger, love, disappointment, sadness, or regret.

Discussion Questions: Which emotions seem to fit best? How do you think the director/actors have chosen to perform this scene?

#### ACTIVITY – WRITING

Read extracts from page 70 of the novel – from 'Still no-one seemed to know quite what to do with us' to 'now get moving' (p 71) and 'The tall officer drew himself up to his full height' to 'You cannot do it Doctor, I will not permit it.' (p 73)

What do you know about Friedrich from the extract taken from the novel?

Why is he there?

Who has he left behind at home?

How does he feel about the war and what is he doing?

Make sure that you have read extract 1 from Mervyn Millar's *The Horse's Mouth* in which Nick Stafford talks about developing Morpurgo's minor characters.



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What techniques do you need to use to describe or introduce a character when you cannot use a narrator or prose description?

Consider how characters introduce themselves; stage directions; other characters' dialogue; use of costume; facial expressions; posture.

Get the students to write a short section of playscript introducing the character of Friedrich. Possible ideas could be: two of the officers in his charge talk about him; Friedrich talks to Joey; Friedrich writes to someone back home and reads as he writes; Friedrich gives a speech to the other soldiers.

If he was writing a letter, would he be able to describe everything that was happening? Or would there be some things he wouldn't be allowed to reveal?

### EXPLORE – THE ENDINGS

Discussion: Why would Nick Stafford and Tom Morris have chosen to present Joey in danger towards the end of the play when this doesn't happen in the novel?

Compare chapter 17 from the novel with scene 29 from the play and discuss the different ways the reunion is presented.

What is different about the two endings?

Which do you think is more effective?

Which do you prefer?

### ACTIVITY – READING

Read the final chapter of the novel.

Discussion Questions: What is the effect of having a second auction at the end of the book?

How is tension created?

How do you think Joey feels at the end of the novel?

How satisfied are you by this ending?

How would you write this differently?

Read Scenes 29 and 30 of the play (where both Joey and Albert end up in the same camp, injured).

Discussion Questions:

How is tension created in these scenes?

Why do you think the writer/director chose to change the ending?

Read extract 2 from *The Horse's Mouth*.

How satisfied are you by this ending?

How would you write this differently?

### EXPLORE – THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE

In the novel, Joey understands all of the characters, whether they speak in English, French or German. Why do you think Morpurgo chose to write the novel this way?

### ACTIVITY – DRAMA

Imagine any scenario, for example meeting a new friend, being told off by a parent, buying some sweets in a shop. All of the characters in your scene speak a language that the rest of the class cannot understand (make up your own gobbledygook language).

Perform your scene using the techniques discussed – can you make yourself understood?



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### 4. Dramatic Devices

#### EXPLORE – COMIC RELIEF

When Albert finds himself in the army, look at how Sergeant Thunder's swearing is used to relieve this tension.

(This could be an effective scene to act out using various dramatic devices to create atmosphere.)

If you have seen the play, discuss the effect of the puppet goose – how did the audience react to it? Why do you think the goose was included?

(Reminder – the goose chases Billy Narracott at the start of the ploughing scene and has the door shut on him at a certain point)

Discuss why this sort of comic relief is necessary in a play that deals with the subject of war. You could link this with the previous question relating to songs the soldiers sing to keep their spirits up.

Link this idea to other plays that you have studied – for instance the use of Dogberry in *Much Ado About Nothing* or Trinculo and Stephano in *The Tempest*.

#### ACTIVITY – DRAMA

Staging: the passage of time.

(If you have seen the play, you might like to consider the following devices for showing the passage of time/other effect)

Create your own performances of scenes from the story which show the passage of time – exploring the use of these dramatic devices:

Joey as a foal growing up to be an adult horse.  
(The puppet for Joey as a foal breaks up to reveal the adult Joey puppet behind him)

Joey learning to plough (seven days).  
(When Albert is training Joey to plough, he tells the audience it is "Day one" etc)

Men signing up to join the army to the point when they arrive in France  
(Ships are carried across the stage to represent the journey across the channel)

Other devices used include:

- Projections on the stage wall show dates and places – Calais 1 November 1914; Marne Valley etc.
- Freeze when the camera flashes at the mustering scene.
- Use of slow motion when Nicholls dies.
- The bodies of soldiers are left on the stage when the scene returns to Devon.

Look at links to Shakespeare, and other playwrights you may have studied, who use references to day and night etc to show the passage of time.

Staging: recreating the auction

Read scene two

Set up a drama activity putting students in different roles during the auction scene at the beginning of the play e.g. as Joey is being bartered over and sold; as Ted is trying to get one over on his brother-in-law etc.

Bring in props and costumes for this activity and set up the room to include the pen in which Joey is being held and decide where the farmers and auctioneer will be positioned.

Try to recreate the sounds and atmosphere of the auction using words from the text or improvisation.

#### EXPLORE – SET DESIGN

Questions: What sort of space do you need to tell this story? If you were telling the story on stage, which scenes would you include? How many different settings would you choose? What scenery and props would you include?

In the production, actors are often used to hold up objects that represent scenery. Why do you think this method was chosen? Do you think it was effective?

#### ACTIVITY – SET DESIGN Part 1

Focus on consecutive scenes with contrasting locations, for instance, scenes one and two.

Build the set in a cardboard box.

Fill in the template of the stage with your set



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ideas including backdrop, scenery objects, where characters will be on stage, lighting and costumes.

### ACTIVITY – SET DESIGN Part 2

Look at some of the pictures showing Rae Smith's designs for the projected backdrop and ask students to label them with denotation and connotation.

Some of the projected images represent pages from Major Nicholls' sketchbook. How do they show the changing scenes within the play? Which parts of the story do you think they show? What do you think they tell you about Major Nicholls' feelings and reactions at different points in the play, and the emotional journey he undertakes?

Discuss how the style of Smith's drawings changes (from pastoral to Vorticist). Discuss the effect of light and dark within the pictures.

In the play, read from page 75 to the end of scene 26.

Draw what you would project behind the action.

Discuss the type of stage lighting you would use to accompany your pictures, or choose different scenes from the play and discuss how lighting could be used to create atmosphere. Consider how different characters could be lit within the same scene.

### EXPLORE – THE PUPPETS

Look at some pictures of the puppets in the play. Why do you think these were created for the play? How do you think they will be used and controlled on stage?

If you've seen the play, how did the presence of the puppeteers affect how you watched the play? Did you forget they were there? Did their presence make the horse seem more real or alive?

### ACTIVITY – THE PUPPETS

Read "Puppet and Character Work" - What do you find interesting about these rules? How easy do you think they are to follow?

Use the puppet rules to create a role play in which Albert teaches Joey to eat oats from a bucket.

Either: In groups of three: Joey; puppeteer (who manipulates the pupil playing Joey) and Albert

In groups of two: Joey and Albert

Or individual activity: Albert and a table or chair to represent Joey

Have a go at making your own puppets and use them to do the activity above.

There is a template that you can use designed by Toby Olie, one of the original Joey puppeteers on the *War Horse* website.

