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War Horse Novel Study
By Michael Morpurgo

Story Summary:

Joey is a six month old gangling colt who is sold at an auction to a drunken farmer who bought him to spite a neighbor he disliked. Fortunately for Joey, the farmer had a son who fell in love with him instantly and raises him with great love and care. Albert trains Joey to plow fields along with Zoey, another farm horse, successfully in order to help his father win a foolish bet he made when he was drunk.

War breaks out in Europe. Albert's father is desperate for money to pay his mortgage and sells Joey to the army. Joey is taken away from Albert to become a cavalry horse. While being trained for the cavalry Joey meets Topthorn, a beautiful black stallion, who will also be a cavalry horse. They become great friends and are seldom apart.

On the battlefield in France, the horses lead a cavalry charge into enemy machine gun fire and many soldiers are killed or wounded. German troops take Joey and Topthorn are taken to a farm where they meet Emilie, a young French girl, who cares for them. During their stay at the farm, the horses pulled a farm cart that carried injured men from the battlefield to the army hospital. Later Joey and Topthorn are taken from the farm and used to pull a heavy artillery gun. Sick and very exhausted Topthorn collapses and dies on the battlefield.

Joey is very distraught and runs off and ends up in "no man's land" which is an area that separates enemy lines. While wandering in the area looking for food, Joey is saved by two soldiers. A German soldier and a Welsh soldier realize Joey has a problem and flip a coin to see which side will help him. Joey is taken to a British veterinary hospital where he is reunited with Albert who is now a soldier in the British army.

Unfortunately Joey's life is still in danger as he has acquired tetanus from the barbed wire wound. Months of tender care by Albert and the other troopers and his will to live help him to survive this deadly disease. When the war finally comes to an end, Joey and Albert have another hurdle to jump. All the horses that are still alive after the war will not be returning home with the troops on the ships.

All the horses are to be auctioned off to local farmers and butchers. The troopers all contribute money to a collection made by Sergeant Thunder in an attempt to buy Joey for Albert. Unfortunately, a local butcher outbids Sergeant Thunder. It seems that Joey's future is doomed until Emilie's grandfather steps in and outbids the butcher.

Emilie's grandfather has kept the promise he made to her before she died. He has bought Joey and plans to take him home until he finds out how much Albert loves Joey. He then decides to sell Joey to Albert for a penny and makes him promise to love and care for Joey for the rest of his life.

Learning Expectations:

- To introduce students to the writings of Michael Morpurgo.
- To make students aware of the effects that World War I made on people, countries, and animals.
- To provide students with a reading experience in which the narrator is an animal.
- To provide practice in a wide variety of reading, writing, and grammar skills.
- To have students discover and interpret new vocabulary and colloquial expressions.

Teacher Notes Include:

- At A GlanceTM
- Learning Expectations
- Story Summary
- Author Biography
- World War Information for the Teacher
- Teacher Input Suggestions
- Glossary of Difficult Words for Each Chapter
- Old English Sayings/Meanings

Reproducible Booklet Cover

Author Notes worksheet

Chapter One

Chapter Two

Chapter Three

Chapter Four

Chapter Five

Chapter Six

Chapter Seven

Chapter Eight

Chapter Nine

Chapter Ten

Chapter Eleven

Chapter Twelve

Chapter Thirteen

Chapter Fourteen

Chapter Fifteen

Chapter Sixteen

Chapter Seventeen

Chapter Eighteen

Chapter Nineteen

Chapter Twenty

Chapter Twenty-One



Name: _____



Chapter One

A. Answer the questions with sentences.

1. Who is narrating the story?

2. Describe the young horse's appearance.

3. Why was the horse sale a terrifying event for the young horse?

4. Why was the young horse difficult to sell?

5. Who bought the horse? Tell why.

6. What was Albert's father suppose to buy at the market?

7. Why will Albert's father never be the young horse's master?

8. How did the young horse suffer on his trip to the owner's farm?



Chapter One

9. How do you know horses are able to communicate with one another?

10. Describe how Albert befriended the young horse.

11. What did Albert name the young horse and why?

12. What problems may Albert have with his father?

B. Word Study: Record each group of words in alphabetical order.

1. gangling, glimpse, gritted, gently, groom

2. hubbub, harsh, halter, hauled, huddled

3. strength, stamina, screamed, stranded, struggle

4. thoroughbred, thirteen, through, tailboard, touch

5. lunge, lone, lacked, life, leant

6. exhaustion, excited, echoing, eating, enough

7. memories, master, market, mane, managed

8. bucket, bidding, barney, brought, beaming



Answer Key

Chapter One:

- A.**
1. Joey, the horse, is telling the story.
 2. The young horse was almost six months old and a gangling, leggy colt
 3. His mother was sold and taken away from him and he would never see her again.
 4. He was very young and no one wanted to pay good money for a spindley-looking, half-thoroughbred colt.
 5. Albert's father bought him for three guineas to annoy a man he did not like and he was too drunk to know what he was doing.
 6. He was supposed to buy a calf to suckle old Celandine.
 7. Albert's father treated the young horse in a very cruel manner. Only one man would ever be his master.
 8. He was dragged on a short rope attached to the tailboard of a farm cart. He was soaking wet from exhaustion and the halter had rubbed his face raw.
 9. Zoey nickered at him in kindness and sympathy that calmed Joey and soothed his spirit.
 10. Albert rubbed Joey down until he was dry. He talked and touched him gently. He put salted water on the sores on his face and body and fed him sweet hay and water.
 11. Albert named him Joey because it rhymed with Zoey's name.
 12. Student Response will vary.
- B.**
1. gangling, gently, glimpse, gritted, groom
 2. halter, harsh, hauled, hubbub, huddled
 3. screamed, stamina, stranded, strength, struggle
 4. tailboard, thirteen, thoroughbred, through, touch
 5. lacked, leant, life, lone, lunge
 6. eating, echoing, enough, excited, exhaustion
 7. mane, managed, memories, market, master
 8. barney, beaming, bidding, brought, bucket