

WAR HORSE

A Curriculum for Junior High and
High School Students



Introduction

The movie, *War Horse*, tells the story of a horse named Joey and his fascinating journey as he travels from rural England to Europe during the first World War. This epic adventure provides a wonderful opportunity for students to learn about the historical facts surrounding World War I and what it was like to live during that time period. The War Horse Curriculum will take junior high and high school students through subjects such as vocabulary, geography and composition as they learn about horse care and farming in the early 1900s, political and strategic European alliances, and World War I weapons and warfare. It is an excellent supplement to any American History or World History year of study.

The lessons are divided into junior high or high school difficulty levels, although students can attempt all the lessons if they would like. Additionally, several of the high school level lessons include SAT preparatory vocabulary and critical reading opportunities to turn this study into a rigorous but fun experience! An answer key is provided at the end of this book.

By completing the War Horse Curriculum, students will be able to transform their movie adventure into an enjoyable learning expedition, providing them with a wonderful way to review the material before and after the film.



About the Author

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War Horse Vocabulary

High School

Fascinating Facts About Horses

Typically, a horse needs at least 25 liters (6.6 gallons) of water each day to keep from becoming parched. That is about thirteen times the amount an adult human drinks daily.

When a foal is born, it quickly gains the ability to escape from predators.

Within one hour after birth, a foal intuitively will stand up and then walk. This is not an inconsequential skill in the wild, because a young foal has to be able to travel when the herd travels.

“Horsepower” is an international unit that measures power. It was originally used to compare the power of steam engines with the strength of diligent, hard working draught horses. Though, today, exact measurements differ from between industries, one horsepower is measured as the ability of a horse to pull a specified weight over a certain distance within one minute. Motor vehicles can produce anywhere from a few hundred horsepower to the superfluous amount of several thousand horsepower in the fastest of racing engines. A healthy human can produce about 1.2 horsepower (hp) for a short time and sustain about 0.1 hp indefinitely; skilled athletes are able to maintain about 2.5 hp briefly and 0.3 hp indefinitely.

Easily frightened, horses are wary of their surroundings. The eyes of a horse are located on each side of its head in order to provide a wide range of vision. This enables the horse to see potential dangers while grazing, without having to lift or turn its head, and to take flight if necessary.

The hooves of a horse are made from a protein material called keratin, similar to the protein that makes up human hair and fingernails. Like hair, a horse’s hooves can be cut and shaped without any deleterious results or pain to the animal. As a horse walks and runs, its hooves can wear unevenly, especially if it travels on rocky or paved ground. Because of this, horses need special shoes for protection. Horseshoes are made of metal and are nailed directly onto the hooves once they are renovated by smooth filing and correct shaping.

Instructions:

The information below contains words which are underlined. Look up the definition for each underlined word using its context for clues to its usage and meaning. The vocabulary words are taken from a list of the 100 most common SAT vocabulary words. Write the correct definitions in the spaces provided after the paragraph.

On average, a horse sleeps two and a half to three hours each day. They do not need to lie down when sleeping because of strategically placed bones and ligaments in their legs. The elastic ligaments connect the bones at the joints in a convergence and lock them together in a special position. This enables the animals to be completely relaxed while standing and to retain their energy and vigor without becoming enervated. Though horses will lie down occasionally to sleep, they are often more comfortable standing up.



Vocabulary Word Definitions

Convergence _____

Deleterious _____

Diligent _____

Enervated _____

Inconsequential _____

Intuitively _____

Parched _____

Renovated _____

Superfluous _____

Wary _____

War Horse Geography

Instructions:

On the next page is a map of Europe at the beginning of World War I. Using an atlas or the internet, label the listed countries. Then follow the instructions below to learn how World War I began and which European countries were fighting on each side. You will need a green and a blue colored pencil.

Countries to label:

Albania	Montenegro
Austria-Hungary	Netherlands
Belgium	Romania
Bulgaria	Russia
France	Serbia
Great Britain	Spain
Italy	Switzerland
Luxemburg	

1. In the city of Sarajevo, on June 28, 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria is assassinated by a young Serbian man. Write Sarajevo next to the star in Austria-Hungary .
2. On July 28, 1914, Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia and World War I begins. Color Serbia green and Austria-Hungary blue.
3. Because Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia, Russia, which was Serbia's ally, declares war on Austria. Color Russia green.
4. Germany had made a Triple Alliance Treaty with Austria-Hungary and Italy, promising mutual support in the event of an attack by any other large power. Because Russia declared war on Austria-Hungary, Germany was bound to fight a war with Russia. Color Germany blue.
5. France and Great Britain had made alliances with Russia. This was called the Triple Entente. Now Great Britain and France had to declare war with Germany, because Russia was at war with Germany. Color Great Britain and France green.
6. Fill in the squares of the legend. Color the Allied Powers square green and the Central Powers square blue.

Interestingly, although Italy had an alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary, it remained neutral until 1915, when it entered the war on May 23 on the side of the Allies. Italy's justification for not supporting the Central Powers was that the Triple Alliance was a defensive alliance, but Germany and Austria-Hungary had taken an offensive position in the war. It is also worth noting that the United States entered the war on April 6, 1917, on the side of the Allies.

Europe - 1914

- Allied Powers
- Central Powers



War Horse Reading Comprehension

High School

Answer the questions below after reading the passage. This format is similar to the Critical Reading portion of the SAT exam. High school students are encouraged to time themselves to see how quickly they can complete this section.

Target time: 10 minutes

Trench Warfare in World War I

One battle strategy used extensively during World War I was trench warfare. The combat on the Western Front involved large military maneuvers over hundreds of miles of territory with fast-moving encounters of advance and retreat. Because the land was open ground with no protection, defensive trenches were dug to protect the soldiers from powerful, long-range artillery weapons and rapid-fire machine guns.

Miles and miles of trench systems were burrowed along the lines of battle. As the opposing sides excavated, they would orient their trenches parallel to each other. The trench systems often zigzagged instead of continuing in a straight line, so that an enemy raid could not kill everyone along the length of the trench with a single machine gun's fire. The space between the opposing trenches, referred to as No Man's Land, varied in width along the Western Front, but was typically between 100 and 300 yards. With enemy troops in such close proximity to each other, soldiers could see (and even hear) what was going on in their opponent's trenches.

Trenches were narrow and exposed to weather, making the living conditions uncomfortable and unhealthy. Due to regular rain and melting snow, the ground was continually muddy or even knee-high with water, often causing a condition known as trench foot. Though boards were laid down as

a solid surface, this was often not enough to provide relief, so mud was a constant feature of trench life. Daylight hours in the trenches were primarily quiet due to the vigilance of snipers and artillery observers. Yet at night, under the cover of darkness, troops could maintain or expand barbed wire protection and reinforce or construct new trenches to prepare for raids. Because men were required to fight shoulder to shoulder, living conditions were cramped, and there was no privacy. Thus, sanitary conditions in the trenches were poor, creating a haven for vermin and disease. Plagued constantly by rats and lice, soldiers had much more than enemy fire to endure. Dysentery, typhus and cholera were common illnesses, and as a result, one of World War I's greatest killers was disease. Artillery and disease were a "one-two punch" for many men. Although troops would only be stationed in the trenches for a few weeks, about half of the men would leave alive and unwounded.

The weapons of trench warfare had to be portable and able to create great impact. Take, for instance, hand grenades, which could be carried in a soldier's belt and easily tossed from a distance. However, the soldier had to be prepared to take rapid cover when the enemy replied with his own artillery. Trench mortars were lightweight and could be fired directly from the relative safety of the trench. Fired at a steep angle,

the projectile fell almost straight down into the enemy's trench. Rapid machine gun fire provided protection from advancing troops. In an attempt to overcome the continuous stalemate of trench warfare, poisonous gas was employed. Initially in the war, soldiers had little means of protection from the gas, but toward the end of the war, filter respirators (gas masks) provided effective protection, though they were cumbersome to wear.

Tanks, introduced by the British and first used during World War I, were able to maneuver across uneven ground created by the complex system of trenches. A tank could easily cross a narrow trench, but wider trenches had to be traversed by throwing portable metal bundles into the trench depressions. With their powerful weapons and armored structure, along with the ability to plow easily through barbed wire fencing, tanks were able to create pathways and act as shields for advancing troops. They were

arguably one of the most feared weapons of war.

Though the trench networks were intended to provide a place for soldiers to be shielded from enemy fire, they were hardly safe places. The maze-like networks, excavated close to the enemy's trench systems, generated dreadful living conditions. Soldiers endured disease, exposure, and the continued threat of enemy attack. Yet this fighting situation was widely used throughout the Western Front of the war. By the end of the war, such a network of trenches had been excavated that it was considered possible to walk the entire 400 miles of the Western Front without having to step out of a trench. To this day, a study of World War I cannot be complete without a study of trench warfare.

Questions:

1. The parenthetical statement in line 22 ("and even hear") is included to
 - a. portray the continual fear soldiers endured
 - b. illustrate the constant need for watchmen
 - c. emphasize the nearness of the enemy's trench
 - d. give the reader a clear mental image
2. The description of mud and water-filled trenches (lines 26-33) chiefly is intended to convey a sense of
 - a. extreme melancholy
 - b. a deleterious atmosphere
 - c. a capacious environment
 - d. an inconsequential setting
3. The main idea of the third paragraph is
 - a. life in the trenches
 - b. trench diseases
 - c. trench exposure
 - d. many men died in the trenches



4. When the author writes “Artillery and disease were a ‘one-two punch’ for many men” (lines 47-48) she is speaking
- hypothetically
 - nostalgically
 - analytically
 - metaphorically
5. When the author says “Take ...hand grenades,” (lines 53-54) she is asking the reader to
- grip the weapon
 - assume it as a typical weapon
 - prefer it as more important
 - consider it as an example
6. The word “replied” in line 57 means
- conversed
 - retaliated
 - echoed
 - exerted
7. According to the author, which of the following attributes is (are) characteristic of tanks?
- Invulnerable
 - Relentless
 - Conventional and Commonplace
- I only
 - II only
 - III only
 - I and II only
 - II and III only
8. The use of the word “arguably” in line 82 is to show
- people liked to argue about tanks
 - some may disagree with tanks being more fearsome than other weapons
 - military strategists do not agree if tanks should have been used in the war
 - historians do not consider tanks to be weapons
9. All of the following statements about trenches can be inferred from the passage EXCEPT
- men had lots of solitary time to think in the trenches
 - trenches were difficult to keep clean and orderly
 - sleeping would be challenging in trenches
 - there was a continual feeling of expectancy of an attack
10. The main purpose of the passage is to
- discuss the various battles of World War I
 - report on the weapons of warfare
 - summarize the conditions of warfare
 - explain the environment of trench warfare

War Horse - Life on the Farm

High School

Dear Mother,

Today I will finally be able to write you a letter as it has been so long since I have been able to write. I am very well at present. I hope you are the same. Because I know you have a lot of work, I hope you have time to read this - try to take a short rest in the day, even though there is daylight. I don't like you reading with the Kerosene lamp. I wish I could be there to help teach little Anne how to milk Old Lizzie. It is hard to believe my little sister is almost four now! Please remember to ask the Miller family down the road if they are available to help with the harvest next month. Ask Mr. Miller to help Father with repairs of the roof before winter sets in.

How is our new foal doing? I wager Father has been working with her to get her familiar with wearing a harness. He likes to start them young. I also wager you are looking forward to when he is grown and can pull you into town on the carriage - no more donkey cart for you, Mother!

Please don't work yourself too hard while I'm gone. I know I'm not there to feed the animals and clean the pens, but Father said young Thomas Banks from town came to help plow and seed last spring. Maybe he could come over once in a bit to help with the chores (in return for some of your delicious pork pies!).

Write me as often as you can. Wishing you all well and happy as I am.

Your loving son,
William Campbell

Questions:

1. Did the Campbell household have electricity?
2. From the letter, can you tell if work on the farm was difficult? Give examples from the letter in your answer.
3. Did farm families work isolated from each other?
4. Did children work on the farm?
5. Were horses valuable animals on the farm? What could they do?

Instructions:

Many soldiers, like Albert, were members of a farming family. While they were away at war, the farming did not stop. Families had to work even harder to tend to the many responsibilities. From the soldier's letter, try to infer the answers to the questions given.

War Horse Composition High School

World War I affected more civilian locations than battlefields. The consequences of war reached to all of Europe and even other continents. The people, like Albert's family, living in the Devon area of Great Britain had to endure many hardships throughout the war. Often their only information came from the local newspapers. Using the headlines from a newspaper similar to one that may have been distributed in Devon, write a paper that describes what life was like for those living in Albert's community during the course of the war. Include the important political events as well as the local concerns that faced this rural farming community.

The Devon Herald June 28th, 1914
ARCHDUKE FRANZ FERDINAND ASSASSINATED
Heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne killed in Sarajevo, Bosnia

The Devon Herald August 1st, 1914
WAR ON THE CONTINENT!!
With Austria-Hungary at war with Serbia and Russia declaring war on Austria-Hungary, Germany joins the battle, declaring war against Russia

LOCAL: DEVON AREA MEN PREPARING TO GO TO BATTLE

The Devon Herald August 4, 1914
BRITAIN AT WAR
Britain has declared war with Germany!

The Devon Herald September 15, 1914
NEWS OF TRENCH WARFARE
An entirely new method of war

Area farmers dealing with 10% reduction in horse population due to war requisitions

LOCAL: SEVERAL LOCAL FAMILIES RECEIVING NOTICE OF LOST LOVED ONES

The Devon Herald April 29, 1915
A PLAGUE OF POISON GAS
Reports of German use of poisonous gas in Battle of Ypres

LOCAL: WOMEN NEEDED FOR BRITISH LAND ARMY FIELD WORK
Soldiers' Farm Shoes Need Filling

The Devon Herald July 5, 1916

SADNESS AT THE SOMME

Devastating number of casualties for Britain
60,000 dead or wounded

The Devon Herald September 15, 1916

GIVE THANKS FOR TANKS

British tanks introduced on the
Somme battlefield

British tank design straight
from farm; tank idea from
development of farm
vehicles that could cross
difficult land with ease
using caterpillar tracks

The Devon Herald July 15, 1918

Heavy rains in Devon decimate pea and cabbage crops. Farmers calling for
all able-bodied persons to help

END OF GERMAN SPRING OFFENSIVES

Allied forces planning counterattack

The Devon Herald July 18, 1918

ALLIES RALLY BACK!

Offensive move pushes back Germans

Devon crop production of
beans, peas and cabbage
projected to decrease due to
continued labor shortage

The Devon Herald November 7, 1918

ARMISTICE NEGOTIATIONS UNDERWAY

Germany begins negotiations with Allies at Compiegne

The Devon Herald November 9, 1918

KAISER WILHELM II ABDICATES

German emperor relinquishes position

LOCAL: DEVON FAMILIES AWAIT THE RETURN OF SOLDIERS

The Devon Herald November 9, 1918

ARMISTICE!!!

The war is over – fighting to cease at 11AM today!