



Black and white photograph of a dog leaning out the window of a moving train. Dinty was picked up in Okla. and served with this Co. at the Mexican border.

Online Collections Database, 1983.49.52, www.theworldwar.org/research/database. National WWI Museum and Memorial. Online.

Rags and the Heroes of WWI: Exploring History Through the Eyes of a Brave Dog

Recommended Grade Levels: 6-8

Course/Content Area(s): History/Social Studies

Authored by: Peri Ogg, National WWI Museum and Memorial Teacher Fellow

LESSON OVERVIEW:	<p>This unit plan provides a comprehensive exploration of World War I through engaging activities over two weeks. Any one of the included activities can be used separately from the overall unit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The first lesson</i> is an introduction to WWI, including key causes, events and outcomes, followed by a video and class discussion. • <i>The second lesson</i> includes an exploration of the role of animals in the war, participating in a guessing game and researching their findings. • <i>The third lesson</i> asks students to read and discuss <i>Rags: Hero Dog of WWI</i>, creating character maps and reflecting on themes like loyalty. • <i>The fourth lesson</i> has students learn about Morse code and its significance, encode and decode messages and use online tools to hear their codes. • <i>For the fifth lesson</i>, students will write diary entries from historical perspectives and design a mini-exhibit showcasing animals' roles and soldiers' daily lives, culminating in a classroom display and presentations. The unit concludes with a rubric-based evaluation of the exhibits and self-assessment reflections on their learning and participation.
OBJECTIVES:	<i>Students will:</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will understand the key events and significance of World War I. • Students will explore the role of animals in WWI through the story of Rags. • Students will develop empathy and perspective-taking skills through creative writing. • Students will analyze primary and secondary sources related to WWI.
STANDARDS ALIGNMENT:	<p>Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies:</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.</p>

	<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6: Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author’s point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.9: Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.</p> <p>Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies:</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.2: Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.7: Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.9: Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.10: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.</p>
TIME NEEDED:	12 (more if needed) 45-50 minute class periods
INTERDISCIPLINARY:	History, English Language Arts
PRIOR KNOWLEDGE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● List out any prior knowledge students will need to have studied before participating in this lesson.
MATERIALS NEEDED:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Rags: Hero Dog of WWI</i> by Margot Theis Raven ● Textbook or resources on World War I history ● Primary sources (letters, photographs, propaganda posters) ● Artifacts or pictures of artifacts

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Writing journals ● Projector/television ● Art supplies (markers, poster boards, etc.) ● Internet access for research ● Worksheets for various activities throughout the unit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ War Animals Graphic Organizer ○ Rags Character Map ○ Rags Diary Brainstorming and Rubric ○ Exhibit Rubric ○ Student Self Reflection
--	--

<h1>LESSON</h1>
PRE-ASSESSMENT/INTRODUCTION/HOOK:
<p>Visual and Emotional Engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Set the Scene: Dim the lights and play a short, impactful video clip or slideshow with images and sounds from World War I. Include dramatic images of trenches, soldiers, and animals (like horses and dogs) in action. Choose images that are powerful but appropriate for middle schoolers. ● Music: Play a piece of somber, reflective music from the WWI era to set the mood. <p>OR</p> <p>Artifact Examination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Display replicas or images of artifacts from World War I (e.g., a soldier’s helmet, a trench whistle, a carrier pigeon message). Pass around or closely examine these items as a class. Images to suit the interests of your students can be found in the Museum and Memorial’s Online Collections Database. ● Initial Impressions: Ask students to share their thoughts about these artifacts. How do they think these items were used? What stories might they tell?
DIRECTIONS:
<p>Week 1</p> <p>Day 1: Introduction to World War I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Objective: Students will gain an overview of World War I. ● Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Brief Background: Use the Orientation Theater Script from the National WWI Museum and Memorial to help students gain an understanding of the origins of WWI.

- **Video Clip:** Select a short, engaging documentary or video clip (5-10 minutes) that provides a visual overview of WWI. Consider sources like the National WWI Museum and Memorial, PBS, History Channel, or YouTube educational channels.
- **Class Discussion:** After the video, facilitate a discussion by asking students what they found surprising or interesting. Prepare a few guiding questions (e.g., "What do you think was the most significant cause of the war?" or "How do you think the war impacted soldiers and civilians?").

Day 2-3: The Role of Animals in WWI & Guessing Game Activity

- **Objective:** Students will learn about the various roles animals played during WWI and compare them to the role of animals today.
- **Activities:**
 - **Discussion on Animals Today:** Begin by asking students about the roles animals play in modern society (e.g., pets, service animals, working animals). Discuss ethical and unethical uses with real-world examples.
 - **Guessing Game:** Divide students into small groups. Have each group guess which animals were used in WWI and how (e.g., horses for transportation, pigeons for communication). Each group should write down their guesses and reasons using the [War Animals graphic organizer](#).
 - **Research and Sharing:** Allow students to use textbooks, library resources, or approved websites to research their guesses. They should confirm if their guesses were correct and find additional information about the animals' roles. Students then present their findings to the class, using a Think-Pair-Share format (students think individually, discuss with a partner, then share with the class). A curated selection of photos of animals at work during WWI can be found on the Online Collections Database "[For Teachers](#)" section.

Day 4-5: Reading and Discussion

- **Objective:** Students will read and comprehend the story of Rags.
- **Activities:**
 - **Class Reading:** Read *Rags: Hero Dog of WWI* by Margot Theis Raven aloud in class. Assign different students to read sections to keep everyone engaged. Pause periodically to discuss important events and themes.
 - **Thematic Discussion:** After reading, facilitate a discussion on themes like loyalty, bravery, and companionship. Ask students how these themes are portrayed in the story and why they are important.
 - **Reflection on Rags' Journey:** Have students reflect on Rags' journey and his bond with soldiers. Use guiding questions like, "How did Rags help the soldiers?" and "What does Rags' story teach us about the relationship between humans and animals?"
 - **Character Maps:** Students create [character maps](#) for Rags and Private Donovan.

Week 2

Day 6: Morse Code Communication in World War I

- **Objective:** Students will learn about the role of signalmen in WWI, understand Morse code basics, and translate/decode messages.
- **Activities:**
 - **Discussion on Signalmen:** Begin with a brief overview of the role of signalmen like Donovan from the book. Explain their importance in sending and receiving messages during the war.
 - **Introduction to Morse Code:** Use a projector to display the Morse code alphabet (dots and dashes). Explain how each letter and number is represented. Use examples to demonstrate simple words.
 - **Hands-On Activity:** Distribute printouts of the [Morse code alphabet](#). Have students write a short message related to their studies or a fun topic. They then translate their message into Morse code.
 - **Message Exchange:** Students trade their Morse code messages with a partner and attempt to decode them using the provided alphabet.
 - **Online Translator:** Direct students to visit an [online Morse code translator](#). They can enter their coded message and listen to how it sounds. If time permits, allow students to play their messages for the class or a partner.
 - **WWI Use:** Students can see a real examples of a WWI soldiers sending messages [here](#) and [here](#).

Day 7-8: Creative Writing Exercise

- **Objective:** Students will practice perspective-taking through creative writing.
- **Activities:**
 - **Gallery Walk:** Set up a gallery walk with [diary entries](#), [letters](#), [photographs](#) and [propaganda posters](#) from WWI. Choose a selection that will resonate with your students and provide a glimpse into the world of soldiers that they might find most interesting and surprising.
 - **Discussion on Primary Sources:** Discuss the importance of primary sources in understanding history. Explain how historians use these sources to learn about the past and what they reveal about the war and daily life of soldiers.
 - **Diary Entry Writing:** Students write a diary entry from the perspective of Rags or a soldier interacting with Rags using the [brainstorming worksheet and grading rubric](#). Encourage them to use details from the gallery walk and their research to make their entries authentic.
 - **Group Sharing:** In small groups, students share their diary entries and discuss the emotions and experiences depicted. Facilitate a discussion on the similarities and differences in their perspectives.

Day 9-12: Designing a WWI Exhibit on Animals' Roles and Soldiers' Daily Life

- **Objective:** Students will use creativity and research to design an exhibit showcasing the roles of animals and the daily experiences of soldiers during World War I.
- **Activities:**
 - **Exhibit Design and Creation:**
 - Task: Students will design a mini-exhibit highlighting the roles of animals in WWI and the daily life of soldiers. They will focus on animals like Rags and how they interacted with soldiers.
 - **Exhibit Components:**
 - **Informational Panels:** Each student or group creates informational panels about:
 - Specific animals (e.g., dogs, horses, pigeons) and their roles.
 - Aspects of soldiers' daily life (e.g., trench conditions, meals, duties).
 - **Visual Displays:** Create visual displays such as drawings, photographs, or models depicting animals in action and soldiers' daily experiences.
 - **Interactive Elements:** Consider adding interactive elements like QR codes linking to videos or additional information.
 - **Sharing and Display:**
 - **Presentation:** Students present their exhibits to the class, explaining the roles of animals and the daily life of soldiers during WWI.
 - **Classroom Display:** Create a display area in the classroom to showcase all the exhibits. Arrange the exhibits to create a mini-museum that other classes or school visitors can tour.

POST-ASSESSMENT:

Exhibit Evaluation

- **Objective:** Evaluate students' ability to research, organize and present information.
- **Format:** [Rubric-based evaluation](#) of the mini-exhibit created by students, assessing:
 - Accuracy and depth of content.
 - Creativity and clarity of visual and interactive elements.
 - Effectiveness of oral presentations.

Student Self-Assessment:

- **Reflection Sheet:** Provide students with a reflection sheet to evaluate their own learning and participation. Questions might include:
 - "What new knowledge did you gain from this unit?"
 - "How did creating a diary entry or comic strip help you understand the historical context?"
 - "What would you like to learn more about regarding World War I or the role of animals in history?"

MODIFICATIONS/ACCOMMODATIONS

General Modifications and Accommodations

Differentiated Instruction:

- Provide reading materials at varying levels.
- Use visual aids and graphic organizers.

Scaffolded Support:

- Provide guided notes and step-by-step instructions.
- Break tasks into smaller, manageable steps.

Alternative Assessments:

- Offer different types of assessments (oral, visual, written).
- Allow multiple formats for assignments.

Specific Accommodations

Learning Disabilities:

- Allow extra time for tasks.
- Use text-to-speech software or audiobooks.

ADHD:

- Incorporate frequent breaks and hands-on activities.
- Allow movement during activities.

English Language Learners:

- Provide materials in the student's native language.
- Use visual aids and pair with bilingual buddies.

Physical Disabilities:

- Ensure materials are accessible.
- Arrange the classroom for easy mobility.

Gifted Students:

- Provide advanced materials and independent projects.
- Assign leadership roles in group activities.

Lesson-Specific Accommodations

Introduction to WWI:

- Use a variety of media and allow written or verbal responses.

Role of Animals & Guessing Game:

- Provide visual support and allow group work.

Reading and Discussion:

- Use audiobooks and provide templates for character maps.

Morse Code Activity:

- Provide digital tools and allow collaborative work.

Creative Writing Exercise:

- Provide writing prompts and allow typed entries.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Field trip to a local museum with WWI exhibits
- Invite a guest speaker (example: historians, scholars, living historians) to discuss WWI
- Watch a film or documentary about WWI and animals in the war

Appendix A:

Bibliography:

Raven, M. T. (2014). *Rags: Hero dog of WWI: A true story* (P. Brown, Illus.). Sleeping Bear Press.

National World War I Museum and Memorial. (n.d.). *Education*. The World War I Museum and Memorial. <https://www.theworldwar.org/education>

Sandler, M. W. (2019). *1919: The year that changed America*. Bloomsbury Children's Books.

Morse Code World. (n.d.). *International Morse code translator*.
<https://morsecode.world/international/translator.html>

Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Morse code*. In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved July 30, 2024, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morse_code