

Reading

Thematic Overview

'Private Peaceful' – Michael Morpurgo

"Private Peaceful" by Michael Morpurgo takes place during World War I and explores themes of war, loyalty, and struggles related to social class.

English

After exploring poems related to war, Pupils could write their own poems from the perspectives of the characters, such as Tommo or Charlie. They could focus on key moments or emotional shifts in the story, like Tommo's reflections on courage, fear, or family.

Pupils can create travel brochures for Tommo's home village, highlighting its natural beauty and simplicity before the war. This task allows Pupils to practice persuasive language, descriptive techniques, and period research.

Art

Pupils could choose a pivotal moment from *Private Peaceful*, such as a family memory, a battle scene, or a peaceful countryside setting, and illustrate it to convey the story's emotional depth and narrative. This exercise would help Pupils understand how a single image can capture an entire story.

Encourage Pupils to reflect on the themes of war, love, and loss by using colour to convey emotions associated with each theme. For example, they might use dark, muted tones for scenes set in the trenches or warm, vibrant colours for family scenes, exploring how colours can evoke mood and atmosphere.

Geography

The location in "Private Peaceful" is very important to the story. The book describes World War I trenches and the beautiful English countryside, which shape how the characters experience life. The setting shows how war impacts communities—like how the destruction of farmland affected farming families such as Tommo's. This highlights how war can change the environment.

The novel portrays World War I as a time when resources were used up quickly, with armies requiring lots of materials like wood for trenches and coal for factories. This resonates with today's concerns about how we overuse resources. It also sheds light on the difficulties faced by families in rural areas like Tommo's, who often dealt with shortages and unfair treatment because of the war. While it doesn't directly tackle global resource use, it reveals the struggles of everyday people during wartime and connects to current discussions on resource issues in the world.

Science

Investigate how energy was harnessed for survival, such as the metabolic energy required by soldiers and animals in physically demanding conditions. Link this to energy transfer and conversion within the human body.

Address how soldiers would have relied on techniques to purify water and preserve food while in the trenches. Pupils could experiment with separation techniques like filtration or distillation to simulate these needs.

Technology

Pupils could create their own steady hand games using wires and buzzers, drawing parallels between the care soldiers needed to avoid dangers (such as barbed wire or hidden traps) and the concentration required to complete the game without triggering the buzzer.

History

After the Norman Conquest in 1066, English society changed a lot, creating a class system that divided people into strict categories. This structure, set up by William the Conqueror, continued to exist for many centuries and is like the class differences shown in "Private Peaceful." The main characters, Tommo and his brother, feel the effects of these social divisions in their lives.

In medieval times, the Church had a lot of power and played a big role in people's everyday lives and politics. Religion helped people make sense of their struggles and their place in society. In "Private Peaceful," the characters deal with themes of faith and morality as they face difficult moments like death and the realities of war.

