



# ANIMALS OF THE GREAT WAR

## The Impact of Animals During WWI

Recommended Grade Levels: 5-8

Course/Content Area: Social Studies, Language Arts

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### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- What role did animals play in the successes and failures of World War I?
- How did animals affect the morale of the troops?



**SUMMARY:** Animals played a large role during the conflict known as the Great War. From traditional warfare animals such as horses and dogs to exotic animals such as lions, monkeys, and bears, animals of all types were important to both the war effort and to the morale of the troops on the front lines. In this lesson, students will examine the use of different animals in various aspects of war. Students will then create a museum exhibit based on the contributions of one particular animal.

**STANDARDS** **Common Core Standards:**

**ALIGNMENT:** **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7:** Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

**National Standards for English Language Arts (Developed by the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE).)**

1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

**Arkansas State History Frameworks**

Era7.1.USH.2 Evaluate social, economic, and political motives for and impact of the involvement of the United States in World War I using multiple primary and secondary sources

Era7.1.USH.3 Analyze the historical significance of battles, events, and people during WWI

Era7.1.USH.4 Investigate social, economic, and technological effects of World War I on American society

**TIME NEEDED:**

- One 45-minute class period for whole group instruction
- Time for the project portion of the lesson varies; students need time for both research and for completion of museum exhibit

**OBJECTIVES:** Students will:

- explore the roles of animals in World War I through independent research.
- apply research findings to a project designed for peer teaching.
- develop critical thinking, literacy, and research skills.

**INTERDISCIPLINARY:** Social Studies, Language Arts, Art

**THEMES &  
CONNECTIONS:**

- Trench Warfare
- Efforts on the Homefront

**MATERIALS NEEDED:**

- Children’s Book, *Rags Hero Dog of WWI*, by Margot Theis Raven
- [Power Point – \*Animals of the Great War\*](#)
- Internet access for research
- Collection of children’s books about WWI is helpful, but not required
- Various art materials for creating artifacts

# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Millions of animals played a role of some kind during World War I. Whether serving an actual military purpose or serving as inspiration for a letter home or as a morale booster, the animal kingdom came to the aide of humankind during one of its darkest hours.

Traditional war-going animals such as horses and mules functioned in similar ways as in past conflicts by outfitting troops of cavalry and transporting supplies. Both the Allies and Central Powers had fully stocked resources of equines ready to use; however, as each side in the European theater dug into trenches during the first few months of war, the need for cavalry greatly diminished. Troops in Africa and the Middle East still used horses, and in some places camels, for more traditional cavalry operations. During the course of the war, each side employed more than half a million horses which were used for advancing troops, carrying messengers, and hauling equipment.

Used in lesser quantity than horses, the canine was an important player in the theater of World War I. Dogs located wounded soldiers so that medics could provide assistance. Dogs also ministered to the needs of wounded soldiers in No Man's Land as they could carry supplies of water around barbed wire barricades, and with Red Cross insignias avoid enemy fire. Dogs carried messages between troops and served to guard outposts and sections of trench.

Because the war included people from countries all over the world, the animals involved in the war effort were also quite varied. Camels were used in the desert areas of the Middle Eastern theater. Animals from zoos in locations close to battle often ended up as mascots for troops: monkeys, lion cubs, and bears. Soldiers in the trenches kept a variety of pets including cats, turtles, and frogs. Although insects are often thought of as pests, several proved their worth in the trenches. Glow worms were used as lights, maggots were used as a type of antibiotics, and slugs were used to warn of gas attacks. The true animal pest of World War I was the rat, a creature which made trench life just a little more miserable by transmitting fleas and lice, inflicting painful bites, and of course, stealing food.



This lesson will allow students to look at the contributions made by members of the animal kingdom other than humans, members who did not choose war but ended up in the midst of it anyway.

# LESSON

## PRE-ASSESSMENT

Ask students to list three different types of animals used during WWI and describe how each was used. Ask students, “Which animal provided the greatest assistance to soldiers during the war? Explain your answer.”

## DIRECTIONS

### Introductory Hook:

Begin class by reading aloud a children’s book about a dog in the Great War, *Rags Hero Dog of WWI*, by Margot Theis Raven. Discuss general themes in the book. What contributions did Rags make? Do you think Rags was an isolated type of character during the War? Why/why not? (Note: A list of children’s books is provided in Appendix A. Feel free to choose the one that best fits your students’ interest.)

### Whole Group Instruction:

Go through the [Animals of the Great War PowerPoint](#). This will give a broad overview of many different types of animals that contributed in one way or another to the war effort. Ask students what information surprised them? What had they expected? Which animal(s) most intrigue them?

### Assignment:

Give assignment, *Museum Animal Exhibit*. Explain to students that they have been hired by the museum to create an exhibit specific to one animal that contributed to the war effort. Read through the project rubric, Appendix B.

Place students in groups of two or three and assign each group an animal. This can be done randomly, or groups can be allowed to choose. Groups may choose to focus on an animal type, such as dogs in general OR may choose to create an exhibit about one specific animal, such as Rags in the read-aloud story at the beginning of the lesson. Appendix C provides a list of possible group choices.

For the exhibit, students should include a one-page typed summary of information about their animal. Use font size 14 or 16, so that it is large enough to read. The summary, along with any photos or copies of primary source documents, can be mounted on a tri-fold or other type of display board. Students can be creative with the 3D artifact. This could be a model of an animal or something specifically related to the animal such as a horse saddle, a dog collar, a pigeon carrier, etc. Students should cite all resources used following the citation format used at their school (MLA, Chicago, etc.).

Once group exhibits are complete, set them up around the classroom or in another area with enough space for students to view as if in a museum. Students should use the worksheet in Appendix D while viewing the exhibits.

## POST-ASSESSMENT

Revisit the questions from the pre-assessment. Ask students to make as complete a list as possible of different types of animals used during the war, including the manner in which they were used. Then, ask students to write a paragraph detailing which animal they feel was most valuable to the war effort.

## MODIFICATIONS/ACCOMMODATIONS

Modifications can be made with regard to choice of animal for each student/student group. Students with a need for more scaffolding can research an animal that is detailed in a children's book in addition to print and internet resources. Modifications can also be made to the number of artifacts required for the display.

## Appendix A: Children's Book Resource List

- Bausum, Ann, *Stubby the War Dog* (Washington D.C.: National Geographic, 2014).
- Greenwood, Mark, *Midnight: A True Story of Loyalty in World War I* (Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2015).
- Greenwood, Mark, *The Donkey of Gallipoli* (Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2008).
- Hart, Allison, *Darling, Mercy Dog of World War I* (Atlanta, GA: Peachtree Publishers, 2013).
- Hoena, Blake, *Stubby the Dog Soldier: World War I Hero* (Nonfiction Picture Books, 2014).
- MacLeod, Elizabeth, *Bunny the Brave War Horse* (Tonawanda, NY: Kids Can Press, 2014).
- Mattick, Lindsay, *Finding Winnie* (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2015).
- Raven, Margot Theis, *Rags Hero Dog of WWI* (Ann Arbor, MI: Sleeping Bear Press, 2014).
- Robinson, Hilary, *Flo of the Somme* (United Kingdom: Straus House Productions, 2015).

# Appendix B: Museum Exhibit Rubric

## Making a Museum Exhibit

Objective: Design a museum exhibit that demonstrates understanding of the use of animals during World War I and works to teach others about this topic.

You have just been hired by the National World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City to help design a new museum exhibit! The exhibit should teach museum visitors about the ways in which a specific type of animal served during the war. Your exhibit should include a one page text summary of information about your animal, 3 or more photos of your animal/animal type, a copy of a primary source document involving your animal, and a 3D artifact. All resources should be correctly cited. You will have access, but are not limited to, the museum’s artifacts, available at:

<https://www.theworldwar.org/explore/online-collections-database>.

Criteria	Exemplary	Developed	Emerging	Undeveloped
Communicates historical understanding effectively for the purpose	Expresses historical understanding with a high degree of effectiveness	Expresses historical understanding with considerable effectiveness	Expresses historical understanding with some effectiveness	Expresses historical understanding with limited effectiveness
Exhibit contains all required pieces	Exhibit contains more pieces than what is required	Exhibit contains text summary, photos, a primary source, and a 3D artifact	Exhibit is missing one required piece	Exhibit is missing two or more required pieces
Accuracy	Exhibit is historically accurate and greatly enhances the visitor’s overall learning experience.	Exhibit is historically accurate and aides in the visitor’s overall learning experience.	Exhibit is mostly accurate. Inaccuracies don’t distract the visitor from the overall learning experience.	Exhibit has numerous inaccuracies that distract the visitor from the overall learning experience.
Effort Shown in Project	Used time well during each class period. Focused on getting the project done. Never distracted others.	Used time well during each class period. Usually focused and rarely distracted others.	Used some of the class time well during each class period. Sporadic focus and somewhat distracting to others.	Did not use class time to focus on the project OR often distracted others.
Citations	The group creates a works cited list using proper formatting that is free of mechanical errors.	The group creates a works cited list using proper formatting that includes 1 error. Spelling errors are present.	The group creates a works cited list using proper formatting that includes 2 errors. Spelling and punctuation errors are present.	The group creates a works cited list using improper formatting OR includes 3 or more errors. Multiple spelling and punctuation errors are present.



# Appendix C: List of Possible Research Topics

## General Categories

- Horses
- Dogs
- Camels
- Pigeons
- Mascots (wide variety of different animals)
- Bugs & Other Critters (slugs, glow worms, etc.)

## Specific Animals

- Stubby (dog)
- Rags (dog)
- Cher Ami (pigeon)
- Winnie (bear)
- Warrior (horse)
- Midnight (horse)

# Appendix D: Museum Exhibit Worksheet

## Museum Animal Exhibits

Directions: Visit each exhibit in the class museum and answer the following questions.

Name of Exhibit	Type of Animal	Most Interesting Fact	Questions You Have	Rate the Overall Exhibit 4-3-2-1



# Bibliography

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