



# Brave battle friends

Verity Croker

## Focus phonics

ai written as eigh as in neighed

ur written as or as in worked, worldwide, work

ur written as ear as in earth, heard

## Tricky words

again, any, because, everywhere, friends, hours, many, people, their, there, thought, through, where, who

## Book summary

Brave animals have helped people in wars throughout history. The book looks at four animals' stories – a packhorse called Bill, a Pointer dog, a bomb-sniffing German Shepherd dog and a little grey kitten who is smuggled onto a battleship.

## Learning intention

**Phonics:** To decode words with the phonemes /ai/ spelt eigh; and ur spelt or, ear, that feature in the text and extend to other known words with the same grapheme-phoneme correspondences, e.g. eight, weigh, sleigh; word, worm, world; early, learn, search. To understand that the words *Major, actor, sailor* have a schwa sound for the letters 'or'.

## Comprehension:

- Retrieve and record information/key details from the text
- Explain the meaning of words in context
- Summarise main ideas
- Make inferences from the text
- Make predictions that fit with information given in the text
- Make connections (text to self, text to text, text to world)
- Ask questions
- Visualise

## Fluency:

- Read at a natural speaking pace with minimal sounding out
- Pay attention to punctuation when reading, pausing and changing tone as appropriate
- Read with appropriate emphasis and intonation to support the meaning of the text

## Before reading

**Story discussion:** Look at and discuss the front cover and read the title together. Notice the alliteration of /b/ when you say the title. Ask: What is happening in the picture? (a horse galloping)

fast and looking scared) Could the horse be one of the friends that the title refers to? What does battle mean? (war or fighting) Does the horse look as though it is being brave? Compare the illustration with that on the title page. Could the dog be another brave battle friend? Who is the author? (Verity Croker) Share knowledge and views of any other books written by Verity. (in the Reading Road series, Verity has also written Ticking-clock quicksand, Go, Eve, go!, Odd fish countdown) Invite students to share any prior knowledge of the topic of the book, and make predictions about what kind of information might be given in the text. Keep a note of predictions and return to them later. Read and discuss the blurb on the back cover. Notice four animals on the back cover (the four battle friends). Flip through the book to get a sense of the contents. Do you think this is a fiction or non-fiction text and say why?

**Quick phonics warm-up:** Read the words on the inside front cover together, with the focus phonemes of /ai/ written as eigh; and /ur/ written as or and ear. Flip through the text to locate and read words with these same focus phonemes. Discuss the meaning of these words. Build the focus word *heard* with letter cards. Think of words that rhyme with *heard* or have the same phoneme. List these to read together. Sort these words into the way they are written, e.g. spellings *ur, ir, or, ear, er*; bird, heard, herb, herd, word, third, stir, skirt, fern, earn, learn. Then read the words. When we read the word *sailor*, it has 'or' in the second syllable. This is not read as an /or/ sound. It is a schwa sound /u/. Repeat the word: /s/ /ai/ /l/ /u/ sailor. (*Major* and *actor* also follow this model)

**Vocabulary check:**

troops p 3 soldiers or armed forces

smuggled p 14 moved something secretly

**Morphology:** combat p 7 means a fight or contest; prefix com- means with, together; bat means hit at.

**Etymology:** battle p 3 means a fight or conflict – “fight or hostile engagement between opposing forces” c1300, from Old French “bataille”, “battle, single combat” also “inner turmoil, harsh circumstances; army, body of soldiers”, from Late Latin “battualia”, “exercise of soldiers and gladiators in fighting and fencing” from Latin “battuere” “to beat, to strike”.

**Tricky word practice:** Display the tricky words *hours* and *who*. Ask: What are the tricky parts of these words?

hours – the tricky parts are hou which says /ow/ and rs which says /ur/ /z /.

who – the tricky parts are wh which says /h/ and o which says /oo/ as in moon.

Practise reading and spelling these tricky words.

## During reading

**Read the story:** This book may not fit into a single reading session. The end of p 17 is a good point to break the reading. Students can finish the book in a second group session or for homework.

Reading could follow one or more of the following approaches:

- Start by reading the text with students, then invite them to take over the reading. On p 4, ask: What was special about Bill the horse? (he was clever, strong and brave) Why did he nearly not make it on the ship to help the soldiers? (he didn't want to go on and neighed and reared) What does reared mean? (stand up on back legs, like in the illustration on p 5) What kind of help did Bill give in the war zone? (he carried soldiers who were hurt to safety) Students continue reading the stories.

- Students read silently at their own pace; listen to each student in turn as they read a brief passage.
- Divide the book up between groups of students; they read a section each and then summarise the main ideas and report back on it.

**Phonics support:** Remind students to sound out and blend the letters as necessary to read any unfamiliar words, but encourage them to read words with familiar letters and sounds fluently on sight if they can, without sounding out. If students get stuck on a word, model how to sound out and blend the sounds in the word. Encourage students to help each other with sounding out and blending and praise good use of this strategy, especially words with the focus phonemes of /ai/ written as eigh; and /ur/ written as or, ear.

**Comprehension support:** Pause occasionally to talk about the stories and encourage students to find and retrieve key details from the text, e.g. at the end of p 6, ask: Who became Bill's friend and why? (Major Shanahan, he gave him candy) What was an amazing thing Bill did? (carried four wounded men to safety) How do people know about Bill the horse and his rescue? (a statue was made of the horse with the men clinging on) On p 8, ask: What do you think of the statue? How would it feel to be a friend of such a brave animal and why do you say that?

## After reading

**Apply learning:** Discuss the text. Ask: What new information have you learned about brave animals? Which animal is your favourite? Why do you say that? What did Verity (the author) need to know before writing this text?

**Comprehension:** Review the predictions made earlier. Were they correct? Were there any surprises? On p 9, ask: What breed of dog is this story about? (Pointer dog) On p 10, ask: What does the Pointer dog do to help sailors on Gnat? (barks when she hears enemy aircraft) On p 11, ask: What is a torpedo? (a missile/bomb) On p 13, ask: How did Frank become friends with the Pointer dog? (he shared his food with her) On p 14, ask: How did Frank smuggle the Pointer dog onto the ship? (by training her to stay quiet and still in a sack) How do you think Frank felt at this time? What other daring things did Frank do with the pointer? (p 14 pushed her through a porthole when the ship was sinking, p 17 smuggled her onto the troopship)

Read and discuss the questions on the inside back cover.

Retelling the text. Ask students to choose a page or heading and retell that part of the text. Discuss the meaning of *brave*. Ask: What words can you make from the root word *brave*? (bravery, braver, bravest) Find synonyms in the text (words with a similar meaning) for *battle* (combat p 7, conflict p 8) Discuss the meaning of *battle*. (a fight or competition) Say the word *torpedo* and count the syllables. tor/pe/do (3) Find other words in the text with three syllables or more to count and say, e.g. aircraftman, fantastic, remember, animals, enemy, luckily. What is the root word of these past tense verbs: threw, reared up, fainted, carried? Read the words. Locate other past tense words in the text. Look for compound words in the text and discuss the meaning of the two separate words and what they mean when joined together, e.g. aircraft, troopship, packhorse, life-size, grasshopper, porthole.

**Fluency:** Choose a passage from the book and model how to read it with appropriate emphasis and intonation to support the meaning of the text. Students read the same passage, copying your reading. (echo-reading) Students choose another brief passage and read it in the same manner to their partner, then swap over. Read parts of the text together (choral-read) to build fluency and self-confidence. Students practise speed-reading the focus words from the inside front cover to encourage automatic recall (words that can be recalled automatically have been orthographically mapped to students' long-term memory).

**Spelling and writing through dictation:** Read out the following passage for students to write. It uses words and sentences from the text as these are decodable. The focus is on encoding (spelling) rather than creating content.

(page 2)

Many brave animals have helped in battle. They have rescued people and saved lives, they have carted guns and food, and they have sniffed out bombs. In this book, you will meet four of these brave animals.

(page 3)

In 1914, a worldwide battle began. Horses were sent to help the troops. One of the horses sent on a ship into battle was Bill.

(page 4)

Some say Bill became the best battle horse in the land – he was clever, strong and brave. But they almost did not let him on the ship at all, because he neighed and reared up. When the ship finally arrived in the conflict zone, many people tried to ride Bill. Bill did not like them on his back, so he threw them off. Bill was put to work as a packhorse instead. This meant that he transported supplies to the troops. He carried men who were hurt back to camp, too. He didn't throw any of the hurt men off.

## Follow-up activities

Students complete the follow-up activities:

### **Worksheet 1: Phonics**

/ur/ spelt or, ear. /ai/ spelt eigh.

Write words.

Sort words.

Write definitions.

Schwa sound.

### **Worksheet 2: Comprehension**

Answer questions about the text.

Expand sentences.

### **Worksheet 3: History**

Arrange sentences in order.

Fill in events on a timeline.

### **Worksheet 4: Maths**

4x table.

Years and dates calculations.