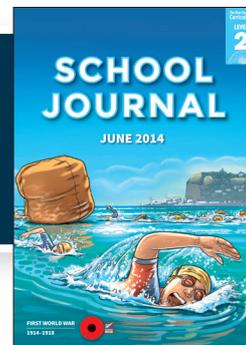


First World War Mascots: Animals at War

by Philippa Werry

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Year 4



Overview

Many students will be familiar with the use of mascots by sports teams, but they may be surprised to learn that mascots have also been used in wars. This text describes mascots used by New Zealand soldiers in the First World War. Students may have some awareness of the First World War through Anzac Day commemorations and from events to mark its centenary in 2014. Although the context will be remote for children, the focus on animals will be engaging.

The article includes a number of references to the hardships of New Zealand forces, requiring some knowledge building to support students' connections and understanding. We recommend that the text is revisited or read several times.

Texts related by theme | "The Anzac Button" L2 Feb 2012 | "Poem for Anzac Day" L2 Feb 2012 | "Helping to Win the War" SJ 1.3.07

Text characteristics from the year 4 reading standard

some abstract ideas that are clearly supported by concrete examples in the text or easily linked to the students' prior knowledge

a straightforward text structure, such as a structure that follows a recognisable and clear text form

FIRST WORLD WAR MASCOTS
ANIMALS AT WAR
by Philippa Werry



War is no place for an animal – or is it?
You might be surprised to know that many animals took part in the First World War. Horses were used by the **cavalry**. They also pulled guns and supply wagons. Dogs were trained to look for wounded soldiers in "**no-man's land**". Cats caught rats in the trenches, homing pigeons delivered messages, and donkeys carried water and supplies. Other animals went to war, too, but not to work. They went as mascots.

WHAT IS A MASCOT?
A mascot is used to represent a group of people or a team. Often it's an animal or some kind of soft toy, such as a teddy bear. Some people even think that mascots bring good luck and help to achieve success.

WHY DID SOLDIERS HAVE MASCOTS?
Many New Zealand **troops** had mascots. Dogs were always popular, but there were also birds, cats, donkeys, goats, and monkeys. The soldiers kept mascots for many reasons. A mascot was a symbol for the **regiment**. It was also a friend and companion, like a pet. It added humour and fun to everyday life. A mascot was good for **morale** because it cheered up the soldiers.

Thousands of New Zealanders took part in the war. They were a long way from home and living in terrible conditions. A mascot gave them something positive to think about. It was a reminder of home and normal life. Many New Zealanders were killed and injured in the war. Some people probably hoped that their mascot would bring them good luck and keep them safe.



Paddy, the Wellington Regiment mascot, on parade in France in 1918

some compound and complex sentences, which may consist of two or three clauses

other visual language features that support the ideas and information, for example, text boxes or maps

some words or phrases that are ambiguous or unfamiliar to the students, the meaning of which is supported by the context or clarified by photographs, illustrations, diagrams, and/or written explanations

Reading standard: by the end of year 4

Possible curriculum contexts

SOCIAL SCIENCES (Social Studies)

Level 2: Understand how cultural practices reflect and express people's customs, traditions, and values.

Level 2: Understand how people make significant contributions to New Zealand society.

ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 2 – Structure: Show some understanding of text structures.

ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 2 – Structure: Organise texts, using a range of structures.

Possible reading purposes

- To locate information and increase understanding about a significant event in New Zealand's history
- To explore and discuss the relationships between humans and animals
- To make connections with a distant event through a shared interest in animals.

See [Instructional focus – Reading](#) for illustrations of some of these reading purposes.

Possible writing purposes

- To describe the ways humans have relied on animals in the past and the present
- To argue for or against the use of animals in war
- To describe the use of mascots
- To research and write about another aspect of the First World War.

See [Instructional focus – Writing](#) for illustrations of some of these writing purposes.



The New Zealand Curriculum

Text and language challenges

VOCABULARY:

- Possible unfamiliar words and phrases, including “mascots”, “wounded”, “homing pigeons”, “represent”, “symbol”, “companion”, “conditions”, “something positive”, “terrier”, “brass band”, “conductor”, “Great Dane”, “on the spot”, “able sea dog”, “inspection”, “funnel”, “been through a lot”
- Words and phrases related to the military, including “cavalry”, “no-man’s land”, “trenches”, “troops”, “regiment”, “on parade”, “drill”, “on leave”, “Mounted Rifles”, “New Zealand Army Service Corps”, “exploding shells”, “Rifle Brigade”, “naval battle”, “Reinforcements”
- The place names, including “Rimutaka Hill”, “Featherston”, “Cairo”, “Marlborough Sounds”, “Jutland”, “Devonport”, “Cannock Chase”
- The simile: “as merry as boys out for a picnic”
- The bolded words, which are explained in the glossary.

Possible supporting strategies

During the activities below, make a vocabulary list or word wall related to the topic, adding to it from this and other texts the students are reading. You could make a separate list of military terms.

For some students, it may be helpful to provide simple definitions of key words and example sentences. Have the students use these in conjunction with pre-reading tasks that focus on building prior knowledge.

For English language learners in particular, you will need to identify the low-frequency vocabulary they need to read this text and the higher-frequency vocabulary (including academic vocabulary). Use appropriate strategies for each. *The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction*, pages 39–46, has useful information about learning vocabulary.

Review the vocabulary you are focusing on before, during, and after reading. To learn vocabulary effectively, students need multiple opportunities – in different contexts.

Check that students are able to use strategies to work out the meanings of unfamiliar words.

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- Awareness of New Zealand's involvement in the First World War
- Understanding of the distance in time between the First World War and the present day
- Awareness of the lives of soldiers, including the time spent in training, the different divisions, and inspections
- Geographical awareness of the places where the war was fought
- Awareness of the fighting conditions of war, especially trench warfare
- Awareness of mascots and how they are used.

Possible supporting strategies

Before reading, build prior knowledge by providing resources and opportunities for discussion. Use a world map to show the countries mentioned in the text, emphasising their distance from New Zealand and the time required for travel when using ships rather than planes.

Use historical photographs to show how war was waged in the past (using horses, rifles, trenches, and so on) and how that differs from modern warfare.

Ask students to share their knowledge of mascots, for example, by bringing to class a team or club mascot and describing the way it is regarded and used.

Although it is a resource for older students, the Selections 2009 Teacher Support Materials (*for New Zealand at War*) may have strategies that are useful for exploring the topic and language with English language learners.

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:

- The statement and question posed in the first line
- The reader addressed directly as “you”
- The use of questions as headings for most sections after the introduction
- The straightforward factual answers to the questions in the headings
- The section devoted to one mascot (Pelorus Jack)
- The use of explanations and descriptions
- The use of captioned historical photographs that show mascots and help set the scene in time and place.

Possible supporting strategies

Support the students to identify the structure of the text, for example, by skimming the text with them to gain an overview of the structure and content. Prompt the students to examine the photographs. Write the sub-headings at the top of large sheets of paper (one sub-heading to each sheet). Give each sheet to a pair or group of three. Have the groups write their predictions about what will be under the sub-heading and then pass their sheet to the next group. Continue until each group has written their ideas on each sheet. Review and display the sheets.

For students who may find the length of the text challenging, you could use a mixed shared/guided reading approach. This could be followed by a jigsaw reading approach for a closer reading of the text. As well as breaking up the text, the jigsaw approach allows students to revisit the text several times and to experience the language and ideas in speaking, listening, reading, and writing.



Sounds and Words

Instructional focus – Reading

Social Sciences (Social Studies, level 2: Understand how cultural practices reflect and express people’s customs, traditions, and values.)

(Social Studies, level 2: Understand how people make significant contributions to New Zealand society.)

English (Level 2 – Structure: Show some understanding of text structures.)

Text excerpts from “First World War Mascots”

Students (what they might do)

Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Thousands of New Zealanders took part in the war. They were a long way from home and living in terrible conditions. A mascot gave them something positive to think about. It was a reminder of home and normal life. Many New Zealanders were killed and injured in the war. Some people probably hoped that their mascot would bring them good luck and keep them safe.

*The students locate and use information from the text, the photos, and their own prior knowledge to **make inferences** about how a mascot might be good for the soldiers. They **make connections** with their own experiences of being away from home and in difficult situations. They **ask and answers questions** about the risks to the soldiers as they develop an understanding of the impact of mascots.*

DIRECT the students to work in pairs or small groups to unpack and discuss this extract. You could start the discussion by modelling your thinking about the first question and prompting the students to identify the three issues.

- What are the main issues for the soldiers? (Far from home, terrible conditions, possible injury or death)
- Think about what makes you feel better when you are far from home.
- Use your knowledge of having a mascot or a special toy to help you to understand the role of a mascot for the soldiers.

Many soldiers spent several months in training camps before going overseas to join the fighting.

*The students locate information about the soldiers training and **make connections** between this and their own experiences of training for a sport or event to **infer** that the soldiers probably felt keen and ready to go to war, despite the expected hardships and risks. They **make connections** with their knowledge of places in New Zealand to **visualise** the march. With support, the students **integrate** information with their own experiences and ideas to understand why the soldiers were “merry” and sang as they marched.*

MODEL how to make connections to understand unfamiliar experiences. Use a graphic organiser like the one below. Select a small section of text. Model your thinking for a couple of examples and write them on the organiser. Then do another with the students. Then have the students use the graphic organiser to do a think-pair-share activity. This would provide thinking and preparation time as well as opportunities to repeat and clarify their thinking and language.

Text	My connection	What I think/infer about the text
... soldiers spent several months in training camps before ... the men were “as merry as boys out for a picnic”.	I spent a week in a netball training camp once. It made me really keen to get started on the new season so we could use the training and win some matches.	that helped me understand that the soldiers would feel ready for action

...

In December 1915, a group of soldiers marched over the Rimutaka Hill from the Featherston camp. They were on their way to the ships that would take them to Europe. The newspaper said that the men were “as merry as boys out for a picnic”. They sang all the way up the long, steep hill.

- What experiences and knowledge of your own can help you understand the soldiers and their thoughts about setting off to war?
- Think about your own experiences and what you’ve read about the soldiers and share with your group why you think they were cheerful about going to war.

Most of the mascots were not allowed to return to New Zealand after the war because of quarantine rules. However, some were probably brought back secretly. There are stories of soldiers hiding mascots under their clothing or in their luggage. Soldiers and animals had been through a lot together, and the soldiers couldn’t bear to leave their animal friends behind.

*The students **make connections** between this extract and what they have learnt about the war to **infer** the meaning of “been through a lot together”. They **visualise** soldiers bringing the mascots back secretly and draw on their own feelings of attachment to a special animal or toy to **infer** the meaning of “couldn’t bear to leave their animal friends behind”.*

ASK QUESTIONS to help the students clarify meaning.

- Why didn’t all the mascots come back to New Zealand?
- Why did quarantine rules prevent some from returning to New Zealand?
- What does the phrase “been through a lot” mean? Why would being through a lot together make the soldiers want to keep their mascots?
- When have you felt you “couldn’t bear” to be parted from an animal or special toy?
- Reread the first sentence of the article, on page 8. What do you understand now about the roles of animals as mascots in the First World War? Share your thoughts with a partner.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- I noticed that as you shared your ideas about mascots, you learnt from each other and this helped you understand the role of mascots in the article.
- You used the questions in the text to help find specific information, and then you reread to make sure you understood. These are both very useful reading strategies.

METACOGNITION

- Show me a place in the text where you had to reread and use strategies to understand. Which strategies were most useful here?
- Tell me about an experience that helped you make connections with the text. Did it surprise you that you might have something in common with soldiers of a hundred years ago?

Instructional focus – Writing

Social Sciences (Social Studies, level 2: Understand how cultural practices reflect and express people’s customs, traditions, and values.)

(Social Studies, level 2: Understand how people make significant contributions to New Zealand society.)

English (Level 2 – Structure: Organise texts, using a range of structures.)

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What is a mascot?

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STRUCTURE

Headings give the writing shape and help the writer organise ideas. They help the reader find information and understand how a topic will be covered.

Headings in the form of questions let the reader know exactly what they will learn in each section.

DEFINITION

Defining a word or a concept helps readers to understand an unfamiliar idea. It is useful to include an example that will help readers make connections with the idea.

TENSE

The past tense can be used to indicate events or actions that occurred regularly. The modal verbs “used to” and “would” are two ways of indicating that something happened regularly in the past (“would” is only used before action verbs).

CAPTIONS

Photos or other illustrations give readers important and additional information. A caption is usually written as a complete sentence, briefly giving key information.

ASK QUESTIONS to help the students plan for writing.

- What are the main ideas you want your audience to understand?
- How will you structure your writing? Why?
- How will your headings help your audience?

EXPLAIN that some ideas need to be defined.

- A definition and one or more examples help the readers to know what you’re writing about. They also help your readers to make their own connections. In this extract, the mention of a soft toy as a mascot reminded me of the funny pink pig my father’s hockey team took to all their matches.

MODEL

- The writer shows us how the first dog behaved. The verb phrase “used to line up” shows us that Pelorus Jack lined up many times. The verb “used to” implies he usually did this.
- The verb phrase, “would stand on deck” also tells us that he *usually* did something – whenever there was fighting, Pelorus Jack barked at the shells.

PROMPT the students to review their writing.

- Are there places where you could make your meaning more precise by using a different verb or verb form? Remember to think about the exact meaning you want to convey.

DIRECT the students to review their writing.

- If you have used photos or other graphic features, consider whether they need captions. Will your audience understand what the image is showing if you do not add a caption?
- If you need captions, are they in complete sentences?
- Are they as short as possible while still making sense?
- What new or useful information do they give your readers?
- Sometimes labels are needed to help readers understand how something works or happens. Ask a partner to review your work and give you feedback on your captions.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- Your plan showed the questions you wanted to research and answer, and you’ve used those questions as headings in your draft. They will help your audience understand how the text is organised and what each section will tell them.
- The example you added to this explanation is just right for your audience. They will all be able to make connections to ...
- I can see that asking your partner to review the captions was helpful. These captions are clear and contain only the key information about each picture.

In fact, there were two dogs called Pelorus Jack. The first one joined the ship as a puppy in 1913, before the war. He used to line up with the sailors every morning for the captain’s inspection. During the war, he would stand on deck when there was fighting and bark at the exploding shells.



Paddy, the Wellington Regiment mascot on parade in France in 1918.

METACOGNITION

- What guided your thinking as you planned the structure of your writing? How did this planning help your research? How did it help you as you wrote the first draft?
- Show me a place where feedback from your writing partner helped you make a change in your writing. What made you change this part?
- How hard or easy was it to find the information you needed? Would a slightly different topic (such as a narrower focus) have made the research and writing easier?



Writing standard: by the end of year 4



The Literacy Learning Progressions