



# AMERICA ON THE WORLD STAGE

ALBEMARLE | CHARLOTTESVILLE | GREENE | MADISON | ORANGE

A  
TEACHING  
AMERICAN  
HISTORY  
GRANT PROGRAM

PROJECT TITLE: <b>Animals At War</b>	
AUTHOR: <b>Sharon Mohrmann</b>	GRADE LEVEL & SUBJECT <b>4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Grade Social Studies</b>

## SCHOLARSHIP & RESEARCH

### 1. Primary Investigative Question(s) –

**What role did animals play in World War I and World War II?**

**How do we remember animals who served in World War I and World War II?**

### 2. Contextual Essay –

Since the beginning of time, animals have played a significant, but often unappreciated, role in wartime activities. Animals worked alongside soldiers, providing endless hours of service day after day. Dogs served as spies, dug in rubble to find hidden survivors, jumped from planes into dangerous warfare, and carried messages that saved whole platoons. Pigeons carried messages, horses faithfully carried military leaders into battle and even glowworms provided lights for map reading on dark nights. Animals were able to provide service in areas unsafe for human soldiers. As the end came to World War I and World War II, the stories of heroes would last forever in journals, diaries, and oral histories, but many of the animals that played a large role in these battles have remained silent heroes. Statues, memorials, and monuments have been erected around the world to commemorate the service that these animals provided. Not only were animals commissioned to serve in the line of duty, but they also served as great symbols of unconditional love and security to those they befriended in active duty. Hindsight not provides us the information, time, and ability to understand, appreciate, and honor these self-less, non-human war heroes.

### **HORSES, DONKEYS, and MULES**

At the onset of World War I, the horse population had begun to shrink due to the introduction of motor cars and bicycles. Horses were being imported from farmers in America, Argentina, Canada, and Australia. Even families were asked to give up family pets. On August 11, 1914, the young Hewlett children wrote to War Officer Kitchener asking that their family pony, who was soon to be a mother, be spared since they had already given two others. The children were relieved to receive a letter from the war office sparing their family pet. (Cooper, 1983) In World War I, trench warfare caused the ground to be littered with holes and covered in

mud. The newly introduced motor vehicle was quickly replaced with the strength of the horse. “Only teams of horses or mules could get the ammunition and supplies up to the front, and if the line advanced or retreated a mile or two, only they could lug the guns into their new positions.” (Cooper, 1983, p. 42)

## **DOGS**

Dogs have served fearlessly on the home front as patrol dogs for the Coast Guard on the east coast of the United States to recovering injured families in bomb stricken British towns. In wartime service dogs have been used to lay telegraph wires, deliver messages concealed in their collars, and carry necessary materials and supplies. According to Cooper (1983) the messenger dog could bring messages through three times faster than a man. He was less of a target, was able to swim, could deliver in darkness, and even in foggy conditions, dogs were the only things that got through. In World War I, Stubby, a pit bull terrier, was smuggled aboard with 102<sup>nd</sup> as they shipped out to St. Nazaire, France. Stubby participated in 17 battles and his keen sense of hearing and smell allowed him to sense danger before the soldiers. He has been recognized for saving the lives of many men in the trenches with his loud barks, alerting them to put on their gas masks. (Hamer, 2001) Richard Zika, a former CBI veteran handle, retells the story of a group of seven American soldiers assigned to patrol a small ammunition dump in Ledo, India. Captured by Japanese soldiers and forced to dig foxholes, they were buried chin deep and left to die. Just when the seven they had little time left, they were located by specially trained combat dogs. “One lost the sight of an eye, another deafened for life, while none escaped the emotional scars which would be theirs to the end of their days. But all of them grateful for the keen sense of scent God bequeaths on dogs.” (Lemish, 2008, p. 208) Dogs were also used by the French, Italian, and British as ambulance dogs. Dogs not only provided comfort for wounded soldiers, they carried food and medical supplies on special pouches attached to their bodies. “The French army used over 3,000 ambulance dogs, and they are thought to have saved the lives of around 10,000 men” (George, Jones, Charman, & Kelly, 2006, p. 27). In World War II, dogs continued to save life, signal danger after being dropped from a parachute into enemy territory, and detect mines. Cooper (1983) writes of a Russian dog, named Zucha who found 2,000 mines in just 18 days. Mine dogs were able to detect mines made of plastic, wood, glass and metal.

## **PIGEONS**

Telegraph wires were often unreliable for communication, so pigeons were frequently used to deliver important messages. The pigeons were transported by bicycle or mobile lofts and released with a message concealed in a medal canister attached to pigeon’s leg. Cher Ami, a carrier pigeon used by the American Army in World War I made a famous flight to deliver a vital message to save the lives of “the Lost Battalion.” This brave bird made numerous flights and received many awards for his actions. His body can be seen at the National Museum of American History. (Burleigh & Mackenzie 2008). In World War I, more than 100, 000 pigeons were used by Great Britain with a success rate of 95 per cent returning with messages. The British felt that with the success of radar, and the advancement in technology, pigeons were no longer needed and they were released from service, as the war came to a close. It was only a few short months into World War II, that pigeons were needed again for communication. As British planes were forced down, their radio communication was destroyed in the ocean water. British bombers carried pigeons on flights. If the plane was forced into the sea, a pigeon enclosed in a

plastic container was thrown in to the open waters. When the men were able to safely reach the bird, it was able to fly to base and request help. (Cooper, 1983)

## **ELEPHANTS**

The strong bodies of elephant were used in Germany, India, and England. During World War II, elephants in Burma were able to clear brush to get supplies to troops, haul necessary lumber for construction, building bridges and transporting refugees out of the country. Cooper (1983) quotes Field Marshal Sir William Slim about his experience during the Burma campaign as he reflects about the amazing beasts. “It was the elephant’s dignity and intelligence that gained our real respect. To watch an elephant building a bridge, to see the skill with which the great beasts lifted the huge logs, and the accuracy with which they were coaxed in to position, was to realize that he elephant was no mere transport animal, but indeed a skilled sapper.”

## **CATS**

Cats were often used for mice reductions and served as mascots. Simon, the mascot for HMS Amethyst, was the only cat to receive the Dickin Medal, a British medal given to an animal who displays gallantry and devotion during World War II and afterward. During his time on the ship, he reduced the rodent population, catching at least one mouse a day and kept the moral of the crew high in troubling times (Le 2004).

## **MULES, CAMELS, DONKEYS, REINDEERS**

Numerous other animals, such as the mules, camels, donkeys and reindeer used their strength for transporting materials, wounded soldiers and needed supplies in areas where geographical landforms and snow covered terrain provided a challenge for humans and vehicles. The famous donkey ‘Murphy’ of Gallipoli has been recognized for his heroic duties as a walking ambulance. With the help of his companion, Private John Simpson Kirkpatrick, the two searched the beachside hills each night looking for injured soldiers. Murphy is responsible for rescuing over 300 casualties of war. (George, Jones, Charman, & Kelly, 2006)

## **ANIMALS REMEMBERED**

Just as we remember heroes who have served our country in war time, the animals that served in World War I and World War II have been remembered in many ways across the world. “Every since Alexander the Great built a city to remember his horse, memorials have been created to celebrate the courage of animals at war.” (George & Jones, 2006, p.62) The largest and latest memorial to be erected is located in Hyde Park, London England and was dedicated in 2004, marking the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of World War I. The large stone wall is dedicated to all of the creatures who served and gave their lives to the First and Second World Wars, from the tiny glowworms that provided light to the soldiers in the trenches in World War I to the massive elephants who moved logs, airplanes, and built bridges. While many memorials can be found in the United Kingdom, other countries have recognized these war heroes with honors. Memorials can be found to honor war dogs in the United States and Guam and camels in London. Bronze statues of the Bamse, the sea guard are located on the coast of Norway and Scotland and the Desert Mounted Corps are honored at the summit of Mt. Clarence in Australia.

Animals that served during wartime were also recognized with medals. The Dickin Medal was instituted in 1943 and was awarded by the PDSA. The bronze medal is engraved with the words “For Gallantry, We also Serve” and is attached with a green, brown and blue ribbon is awarded to animals for their exceptional bravery. (Cooper, 1983) The medal was awarded 54 times between 1943 and 1949, to 32 pigeons, 18 dogs, 3 horses and a cat. The PDSA gold medal is awarded to animals for their bravery and devotion to animals. It can be awarded for saving the life of a human or animal or completing a job in the face of violent danger. In 2006, Bamse, the sea dog mascot for the Royal Norwegian Navy in World War II was recognized for saving the life of a crew member from drowning and knocked a knifeman into the water. He is the only World War II animal to receive this award.

From the first days of World War I in 1914 to the last war of World War II, millions and millions of heroic animals have served silently. Many of their stories have been recorded and some remain untold, but their action was always delivered with courage. Evelyn Le Chene (1994) writes, “Animal courage, like that of humans, comes in many forms. It may be simply by being there, uplifting the spirit and morale and turning a situation from darkest despair into one of driving will to survive. Or an animal, without urging, may decide what to do in a moment of peril and save life or turn a situation for the better.”

### **3. Annotated Bibliography** –

#### References

Burleigh, R., & Mackenzie, R. (2008). *Fly, Cher Ami, fly!: The pigeon who saved the lost battalion.*

New York: Abrams Books for Young Readers.

This children's book features honored Cher Ami, a trained homing pigeon in World War I. The book takes place in 1918 in France when radio communication failed and a message must be delivered to other troop member to save the lost battalion. Although the book is illustrated, great detail is shown with the basket storage place for the pigeon and the small tube attached to the bird's leg. The Afterword gives background information about the use of pigeons as message carriers and the life of Cher Ami. The body of this hero can be seen at the Natural Museum of American History in Washington, D.C.

Cooper, J. (1983). *Animals in war*. London: Heinemann.

In the third printing of this book, Cooper highlights the animals that served in war. Great details include journal entries, photographs, posters, newspaper articles, and interviews. Cooper includes cover each animal in detail from the smallest glow-worms to the elephant. The latest publication was published to coincide with the launch of *The Animals in War*

Dumon, T. B., & Hopman, P. (2011). *Soldier bear*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers.

This novel is based on the true story of Voytek, an orphaned bear adopted by Polish soldiers in World War II. Voytek moves with the soldiers to Egypt, Italy, and Scotland and stays with them for five years. After the war, he spent the rest of his life in the Edinburgh Zoo in Scotland. As well as a mascot for the troop, he learns to carry bombs, corners a spy, as well as keeping spirits high during difficult times. The book does contain original photographs and maps about his location and service.

George, I., Jones, R. L., Charman, T. C., & Kelly, A. (2006). *Animals at war*. London: Usborne.

This children's reader is written at a fourth grade reading level. It is a perfect resource for elementary research. The authors begins the book with Hannibal use of elephant to dogs, bears, pigeons, horses used in World War I and World War II. The book provides many details about animal breeds, as well as specific animals. The last chapter of the book is dedicated to how animals are honored for their courageous service with badges, medals, certificates, and memorials. The last page of the book features the 'Animals in War' memorial in Park Lane, London. The book was published with the help of the Imperial War Museum. It is filled with numerous primary source posters and photographs.

Greenwood, M., & Lessac, F. (2008). *The donkey of Gallipoli: A true story of courage in World War I*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.

Greenwood tells the story of an English World War I soldier, Jack Simpson serving on the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey. With the help of his donkeys, Simpson carried more than 300

injured soldiers day and night during warfare. This book ends with two pages dedicated to details about Simpson, the donkeys, other mascots and a map to show the location of service.

Le, C. E. (2009). *Silent heroes: The bravery and devotion of animals in war*. London: Souvenir.

This book features thirteen animals who served during wartime. Le includes cats, bears, pigeons, horses, dogs, mules. Many of these animals received the Dickin Medal, a medal awarded to animals who displayed conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty to any branch of the Armed Forces or Civil Defense during World War II. 53 Dickin Medals have been awarded to 18 dogs, 3 horses, 1 cat, and 31 pigeons.

Lemish, M. G. (2008). *War dogs: A history of loyalty and heroism*. Washington, D.C.: Potomac.

Lemish dedicates his research to canines and their service during war times from the Stone Age to the Vietnam War. The books used many primary source documents, including numerous photographs, interviews, and eyewitness accounts. There is a lengthy bibliography that includes books, newspaper articles, articles, government publications, and video recordings.

Redmond, S., & Ettliger, D. (2003). *Pigeon hero!* New York, NY: Aladdin Paperbacks.

This children's book features G.I.Joe, a carrier pigeon in Italy during World War II who must deliver an important message to the American troops. Even though the book is written in story form and the illustrations have been drawn, the details showing the placement of the tube on the leg of the pigeon is well worth the few minutes that it will take to read the short story.

Stoddard, L. (2003). *Nora, the fifty-cent dog*. Mystic, CT: Mystic Seaport Museum.

This short children's book features a fictional story inspired by an actual event in North Carolina's Outer Banks during World War II. During World War II, from 1942 to 1944, 2,600 Coast Guardsmen patrolled exposed beaches with more than 3,600 trained dogs watching for possible enemy attack. During a night patrol, the young guard fell and his trained dog was able to drag him to safety and seek help to save his life. Nora received a medal of honor from the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in New York City.