

Unit 8: All living things

Lessons 12–13 Fiction

Learning objectives:

Speaking: To discuss the background to the text.

Reading: To read a fiction text from *War Horse* by Michael Morpurgo.

Writing: To answer comprehension questions about the text.

Key vocabulary:

Intrigued

Smooth

Rub

Dab

Raw

hay

Bucket

Stable

stroke

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Reading

1 Read the extract from the novel *War Horse* and then answer the questions.

- Who is the narrator (the 'I')?
- Who is Albert?
- Who is Joey?



- 3 **intrigued** very interested
- 5–6 **he meant me no harm** he wasn't going to hurt me
- 6 **to smooth** to move your hand across something to make it flat
- 11 **to rub** to press and move your hand, a cloth or an object over a surface
- 12 **to dab** to touch something gently several times with a cloth
- 14 **raw** skin that is red and painful because it has been rubbed too much
- 14 **hay** dry grass
- 14 **bucket** a large container for carrying water
- 16 **stable** a place to keep horses
- 18 **to smile broadly** to give a big smile
- 18 **to stroke** to gently smooth the fur of an animal
- 19 **to get along** to get on well
- 21 **it suits you** it's right for you
- 26 **obstinate** not willing to change your ideas
- 34 **instinctive** natural
- 34 **bond of trust** an understanding that each will always be true to the other

Albert was about the same height as me and talked so gently as he approached that I was immediately calmed and not a little intrigued, and so stood where I was against the wall. I jumped at first when he touched me, but could see at once that he meant me no harm. He smoothed my back first and then my neck, talking all the while about what a fine time we would have together, how I would grow up to be the smartest horse in the whole wide world, and how we would go out hunting together.

After a bit he began to rub me gently with his coat. He rubbed me until I was dry and then dabbed salted water onto my face where the skin had been rubbed raw. He brought in some sweet hay and a bucket of cool, deep water. I do not believe he stopped talking all the time. As he turned to go out of the stable I called out to him to thank him and he seemed to understand for he smiled broadly and stroked my nose.

‘We’ll get along, you and I,’ he said kindly. ‘I shall call you Joey, only because it rhymes with Zoey, and then maybe, yes maybe because it suits you. I’ll be out again in the morning – and don’t worry, I’ll look after you. I promise you that. Sweet dreams, Joey.’



‘You should never talk to horses, Albert,’ said his mother from outside. ‘They never understand you. They’re stupid creatures. Obstinate and stupid, that’s what your father says, and he’s known horses all his life.’

‘Father just doesn’t understand them,’ said Albert. ‘I think he’s frightened of them.’

I went over to the door and watched Albert and his mother walking away and up into the darkness. I knew then that I had found a friend for life, that there was an instinctive and immediate bond of trust and affection between us. Next to me old Zoey leant over her door to try to touch me, but our noses would not quite meet.

Reading

1 Read the extract from the novel *War Horse* and then answer the questions.

- Who is the narrator (the 'I')?
- Who is Albert?
- Who is Joey?

1 The narrator is the horse

2 Albert is the boy owner of the horse

3 Joey is the horse

2 Answer the questions.

1 Does Albert like Joey? How do you know?

2 What does Albert promise Joey?

3 When will Albert see Joey again?

1 **Yes**, Joey does like Albert. There are lots of examples in the text. For example, He talks gently, he means no harm, smooths Joey's back and talks to him of things they will do together to calm him down. He rubs him down and dabs his raw skin and gives him food and drink. He also speaks kindly to him, gives him a name and wishes him sweet dreams;

2 Albert promises Joey that **he will look after him**

3 Albert says he will see Joey again **in the morning**.

3 Read the second part of the extract and then answer the questions.

- 1** Why does Albert's mum say you should never talk to horses?
- 2** What doesn't Albert's father understand?
- 3** Who do you think Zoey is?

1 Albert's mum says you should never talk to horses, because she thinks they are stupid and obstinate and they can't understand you

2 Albert's father doesn't understand horses

3 The extract doesn't tell us who Zoey is, but we can guess she is a horse as she and Joey try to touch noses and Zoey is presumably in a stable too.

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1 Read the extract and answer the questions.

In your Coursebook on page 142, re-read the paragraph beginning: 'Albert was about the same height as me' until 'we would go out hunting together.'



1 Who is taller, Albert or Joey?

1 Albert and Joey are the same height.

2 How does Albert talk to Joey?

2 Albert talks to Joey gently.

3 What does Joey first do when Albert touches him?

3 Joey jumps at first when Albert touches him.

4 How does Albert touch Joey's back?

4 Albert smooths Joey's back.

5 What does Albert talk to Joey about?

5 Albert tells Joey that they will have a fine time together, how he would grow up to be the smartest horse in the world and how they would go hunting together.

3 The following are all typical ingredients of a short story. Which do you think are the most important? Put them in order and discuss your ideas with a partner.

a Only have two or three main characters so the reader is never confused.

b Try to use interesting vocabulary to entertain the reader.

c Think about structure and have a clear beginning, middle and end to your story.

d Use interesting sentences – some long, some short and even some that are only one word!

e Add pictures to your story to help the reader understand the context.

1 _____ **2** _____ **3** _____ **4** _____ **5** _____

- 4 *War Horse* is an unusual book because it is told from the point of view of Joey the horse. Choose another kind of animal and write a short paragraph from their point of view. Write about the animal's first experience of something or someone. Before you write, complete the mind map about your animal.


