



Walker Books Classroom Ideas



Midnight

Author: Mark Greenwood
Illustrator: Frané Lessac
ISBN: 9781921977718
ARRP: \$27.95
NZRRP: \$29.99
February 2014

*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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Outline:

A foal is born at midnight, on the homestead side of the river. Coal black. Star ablaze. Moonlight in her eyes.

On 31 October, 1917, the 4th and 12th Regiments of the Australian Light Horse took part in one of the last great cavalry charges in history. Among the first to leap the enemy trenches was Lieutenant Guy Haydon riding his beloved mare, Midnight. This is their story.

Author/Illustrator Information:

Mark Greenwood is a musician and award-winning children's author. His books aim to foster a greater appreciation and understanding of Australian myths and legends. Mark enjoys working with students of all ages, inspiring and developing their natural curiosity about books and writing. He has twice won the Western Australian Premier's Award for children's books and *Simpson and His Donkey* was Honour Book in 2009 at the Children's Book Council of Australia Awards. He is married to Frané Lessac and they live with their two children in Western Australia. For more information about Mark's work, please visit his website: www.markgreenwood.com.au

Frané Lessac is originally from New Jersey and is an artist of international renown having exhibited in London, Paris, New York, Los Angeles, and the Caribbean. Residing in Western Australia, Lessac now has over 30 children's books published throughout the world. Her work has won Australian and international awards and has been translated into numerous languages. In 2010 she was awarded the Muriel Barwell Award for Distinguished Service to Children's literature. For more information about her work, please visit her website: <http://www.franelessac.com>

How to use these notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

These notes are for:

- Primary years 2 - 6
- Ages 8+

Key Learning Areas:

- English
- History
- Art

Example of:

- Picture Book
- Narrative non-fiction

Themes/Ideas:

- Heroes
- ANZACs
- Animals in war
- Bravery
- Courage
- Mateship



Walker Books Classroom Ideas

National Curriculum Focus:*

English content descriptions include:

Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
ACELA1463	ACELA1477	ACELA1489	ACELA1502	ACELT1613
ACELT1587	ACELT1594	ACELA1490	ACELT1608	ACELT1614
ACELT1589	ACELT1596	ACELA1492	ACELT1795	ACELT1615
ACELT1590	ACELT1599	ACELT1602	ACELT1610	ACELT1616
ACELT1591	ACELT1601	ACELT1603	ACELT1798	ACELY1711
ACELY1665	ACELY1675	ACELT1605	ACELY1699	
ACELY1668	ACELY1678	ACELT1794	ACELY1703	
	ACELY1680	ACELY1690		

*Key content descriptions have been identified from the Australian National Curriculum. However, this is not an exhaustive list of National Curriculum content able to be addressed through studying this text.

Background information

This book was inspired by the folklore of the Haydon family from “Bloomfield”, in the Hunter Valley, NSW. Riding his beloved mare, Midnight, Guy Haydon, a 25-year-old stockman, enlisted with the 12th Light Horse Regiment on 15 February, 1915.

Lt Haydon was parted from his horse when he was sent to Gallipoli. When he returned to Egypt he was allocated another, but no horse could replace Midnight. Lieutenant Haydon searched for weeks among the thousands of army horses until he found Midnight with another regiment. Negotiations between the commanding officers of both regiments to swap horses eventually reunited the soldier and his horse.

During the battle for Gaza, Midnight remained continuously under saddle for seven days and nights – testament to the endurance of this wonderful horse, as well as to the care she received from Guy Haydon.

The lieutenant and Midnight served together until sunset on 31 October, 1917, when the 4th and 12th Regiments of the Australian Light Horse charged the Turkish stronghold of Beersheba. Riding Midnight, Lieutenant Haydon was one of the first to leap the enemy trenches.

Mark Greenwood on *Midnight*

The spark to write about the light horse and the charge at Beersheba came from a visit to a school in Queensland where I saw the famous photograph of the charge hanging in the school hall. I was instantly intrigued by the photo, and the controversy surrounding it. I began reading many books about the light horse with a view to writing a story that would bring this moment in our history to life.

I’m drawn to little known slices of history where themes like courage and mateship play an important role in defining our past. So I began a search for a story within the story – I was searching for a tale of one horse and one rider among those brave 800 – a story that would give readers a sense of atmosphere, participation and excitement about that historic event. And that’s how Midnight’s story found me!

I visited the Haydon’s Bloomfield homestead in the Hunter Valley, NSW where Midnight was born. I was graciously granted access to Guy’s letters from the trenches at Gallipoli and throughout the campaign in Palestine. Then, together with Frané, we travelled to the scene of the famous charge and retraced the places where Guy and Midnight camped in the last few days leading up to the charge. For me, going to the setting I’m writing about, where the historical event actually occurred, is one of the crucial stages in bringing history to life. It is a fascinating part of the process of writing about the past.

In the safety of stories like *Midnight*, readers can imagine the past and understand events and struggles. They can experience war and conflict and the suffering and despair on imaginative journeys that provide opportunities for thinking critically and making judgements about the tragedy that war is capable of inflicting on individuals, families and nations.

Frané Lessac on *Midnight*

Creating *Midnight* had many highlights, from visiting the Haydon homestead in Australia where Midnight was born to walking on the battlefields in Beersheba where the light horse last charge took place. My challenge was to capture the devoted bond between Midnight and Guy. I always wanted a horse when I was growing up and Midnight became that horse.



Walker Books Classroom Ideas

Discussion Questions and Activities

Before Reading

Look closely at the front cover of the book. As a class, discuss your expectations of the book. What do you think the story will be about? Where and when might it be set? What genre do you think it will be (e.g. fantasy, suspense, comedy, true story)? Provide reasons for your responses.

The subtitle of this book is “The story of a light horse”. What is a light horse? For more information visit www.lighthorse.org.au/famous-battles/world-war-one

Look at the title page. What extra information does it give the reader about the story?

Listen to the story being read aloud, without looking at the illustrations. Then, read or listen to the story being read again, this time looking at the illustrations. How did the illustrations add to, or change, the meaning of the story? Did they look as you expected them to, or were there significant differences between the way you imagined the story and the way Lessac presented it?

Language And Literacy

This book tells a vibrant story in prose style, which captures both the bond between horse and rider, the journey to war and an important moment in Australian military history.

The story is told in the third person, allowing distance from the subject of the narrative. How might Guy Haydon have told the story in first person narrative voice?

Read other picture books about ANZACs and particularly the light horse. Discuss and compare them.

Write an acrostic poem using the letters in the name “Midnight” to describe what Guy’s beloved mare was like.

“Weary riders dismount on the outskirts of an ancient city.” Research the history of Beersheba and the fabled seven wells of water that the enemy entrenched there were defending.

Where are the “dunes of Sinai”?

Research Guy Haydon’s Unit, the 12th Light Horse Regiment, B Squadron. When did they arrive at Gallipoli? When did they leave?

Why did they call the light horsemen the “Kings of the Feathers”?

Who was the Australian general who commanded the light horse?

Research other horse and rider stories from the light horse. What happened to the horses? Did they ever return to Australia?

Riding Midnight, Guy Haydon joined the advance into Palestine, surviving the battles of Romani and Gaza. In the text Greenwood writes: “In battle, Midnight works hard for her praise.” What is Greenwood referring to here?

Research the famous light horse battles prior to the charge at Beersheba.

Where is Beersheba, and what is it officially known as today?

Imagine you are a rider in the desert column, slowly snaking across the wilderness towards the enemy garrison at the foot of the Judean hills. Describe your thoughts and feelings.

In the story, Greenwood writes that Guy “shares a secret between horse and rider.” What do you think that secret might be?

Research the author and illustrator. What other books have they written/illustrated? Which of these books can you find in your school library? Choose your favourite and present it to the class using persuasive language to encourage others to read it. Read more about Mark Greenwood at www.markgreenwood.com.au and Frané Lessac at www.franelessac.com.

Follow Guy’s journey on a map or globe. Discuss how he might have travelled to these places in 1915 and how that might be different today.

- Hunter Valley, NSW (the homestead)
- Gallipoli
- Giza
- Sinai
- Beersheba
- Cairo (Australian General Hospital)

What is the significance of Guy sharing his water with Midnight? What does it show about the relationship between Guy and his horse?

Midnight is narrative nonfiction. List the parts of the story that are historical fact and those that may be the author’s creative interpretation. How would the story be different if it was purely nonfiction?



Walker Books Classroom Ideas

Discuss the use of descriptive language in the passage, “Coal black. Star ablaze. Moonlight in her eyes.” How is this more effective than if the author had simply written, “Midnight was black and had a star shape on her head”? What extra feelings or ideas does this imagery conjure up for the reader? Can you locate any other examples of imagery in the book? Why do you think the author has included them?

Midnight is the story of a man’s special bond with his horse. Write a story about a special bond you have with an animal. This could be a true story about a pet or another animal, or it could be an imaginary story. Describe the animal in a similar style to Mark Greenwood’s description of Midnight on the first spread.

Write a letter to Mark Greenwood and Frané Lessac giving your thoughts on the book. What did you like about it? What did it teach you? Edit your letter then send it to Walker Books Australia to pass on to Mark and Frané!

What do the following words mean when describing horses?

- Foal
- Filly
- Mare
- Waler

Visual Literacy

Discuss the layout and design of the book, and of the individual double page spreads and information page. How do they affect the reading of the book and complement the text?

Why are some lines written in a different font? What effect does this have on the way you read the text?

The title page contains a picture of a young boy and his horse. What does this image suggest? What feelings or themes does it evoke?

Encourage students to read for the “subtext” and observe how the pictures and the text work together; how images illuminate meaning within the text.

The artist’s images are created in gouache. Discuss the artist’s choice of mediums with students and encourage them to create a picture in the same style and an illustration using a different medium.

What colours are particularly emphasised in this book?

How does Frané Lessac convey emotions in her illustrations?

If you were illustrating the story, which pictures (if any) would you do differently? Why? Choose one passage from the book and create your own illustration to accompany it.

If you were designing a recruitment poster to encourage young men to volunteer to go to war, what would you put in it?

Read the information page and then discuss the double meaning of the line: “moonlight in her eyes”.

Midnight was born on 31 October, 1905. What is the relevance of that date in the story?

Look at the clothes worn by the crowd during the farewell parade. How are these clothes different to the clothes people wear today?

Look at Guy’s expression and body language as Midnight is unloaded from the ship. List words that describe how he is feeling on this page. Why would he be feeling this way?

World War I

Have a class discussion about the battle of Gallipoli. As a class, draw a mind map about what students already know about the battle. What date did the Anzacs land on Gallipoli? How does Australia and New Zealand commemorate this historic battle?

In Australia all WW I soldiers were volunteers. Why do you think so many young men volunteered to go to war? Why do you think Guy enlisted in the army? What did he hope would be the outcome of enlisting?

Study the illustrations depicting the conflict at Gallipoli. In small groups brainstorm the difficulties the soldiers may have been experiencing. Imagine you are a soldier and write a letter home discussing the difficulties during the first few days of the landing.

What do we learn about the lives of WW I soldiers from this book? Do some additional research on the internet, then write a series of journal entries from the point of view of a soldier fighting in the war. Some useful websites include:

- www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone/launch_vt_wwone_trench.shtml (You can take a virtual tour of the trenches on this site.)
- www.anzacday.org.au/history/ww1/overview/west.html

As a class, discuss some things you can do in your school on Anzac Day or Remembrance Day so that people remember and pay respect to the soldiers who died in WW I.



Walker Books Classroom Ideas

Creative Arts

The story of the light horse has been told in numerous books for children and adults. The book, stage play and movie, *War Horse*, brought the plight of a brave horse and rider to the big screen.

Listen to Eric Bogle's song "As If He Knows". Encourage students to create their own dramatised retelling of the *Midnight* story in a range of creative arts such as acting, improvisation, music and dance.

Enact scenes in the book i.e. where Guy Haydon whispers into Midnight's ears a secret before the charge of Beersheba.

Choose pieces of music that might be suggestive of feelings and the conflict about to unfold.

Have the class create a mural and create different panels telling Midnight's story.

As a class, brainstorm a list of emotions or feelings Guy might have experienced during the story. For example, fear, sadness, confusion, determination and hope. Find your own space in the room. As the teacher says each emotion, use your whole body to express this idea. Next, try to reveal this emotion just through one part of the body, for instance, the hands or face. Transform these different emotions into a dance symbolising Guy's journey.

Themes and Values

Heroes

Have your students research, discuss and then debate the topic of heroes with reference to both Guy Haydon and Midnight.

What defines a "hero"? Is it bravery, or is it a combination of other qualities such as kindness, nobility, or intelligence?

Bravery

Bravery is often narrowly defined as a willingness to go into battle and risk one's life. Can animals demonstrate bravery? Ask students to find examples. In particular look for examples of animals in wartime who have demonstrated bravery.

What brave things have you ever witnessed? Are there any brave people in your family? Why do you think they are brave?

Story Starters

In the information page the author states that Guy wrote a letter to his mother. Imagine you are Guy Haydon in hospital and write a letter describing the charge at Beersheba in detail.

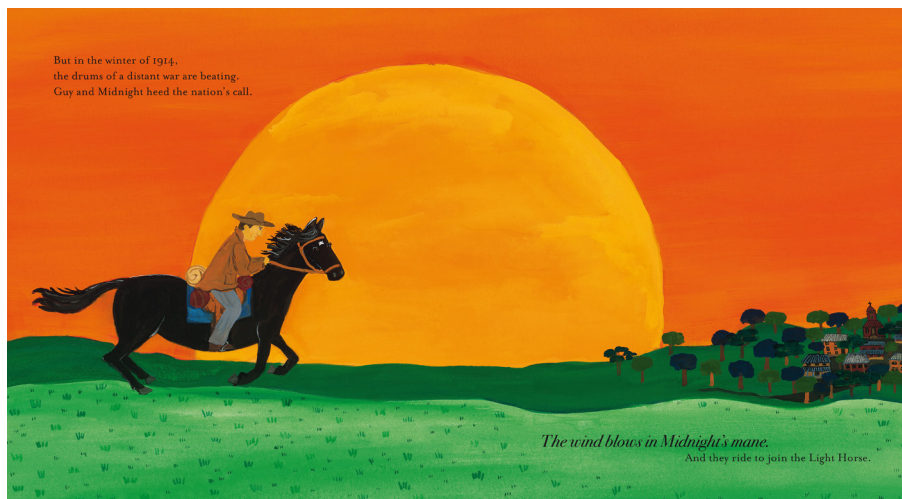
Write a letter by Guy describing the first time he saw Midnight.

Story Starter:

There she stood, black like the night. On her forehead was a white star. I knew then ...

Write an account describing the bond between a soldier and his horse, starting with "A horse was your mate ..."

While training in the Egyptian desert, Guy and Midnight were chosen to represent Australia in a friendly equestrian competition against the British cavalry. Midnight, the "Bloomfield Mare", won the sprint race and flag race. Write a story about how the Anzacs "let off steam" and this untold moment in the *Midnight* story.





Walker Books Classroom Ideas

Conclusion – A Note from Mark Greenwood

This story ends on a solemn note, but *Midnight* is a hero and her inspiring story is one that I hope many young Australians will read, just as we read about other heroes whose stories have contributed to our national myth-making.

History is about listening and sharing stories. The writer's task is to fossick for ones that resonate and make us want to understand. I hope our *Midnight* will encourage readers to think critically about the tragedy of war. I hope the story will linger in the reader's memory long after the book is closed.

Bibliography of related texts

Research other Books on Anzac and light horse themes such as those used as references for this book:

Combie, K., *Journey to Beersheba*, 2011

Daley, P., *Beersheba: A journey through Australia's forgotten war*, Melbourne University Press 2009

Davidson, F.D., *The Wells of Beersheba*, Angus and Robertson Ltd, Nth Ryde, 1985

Hamilton, J., *First to Damascus*, Kangaroo Press/Simon & Schuster (Aust), 2002

Hill, A., *Animal Heroes*, Penguin Books (Australia), 2005

Hollis, K., *Thunder of the Hooves*, Australian Military History Publications, 2008

Idriess, I., *The Desert Column*, Angus and Robertson Ltd Sydney, 1932

Jones, I., *The Australian Light Horse*, Time-Life Books (Aust.) Pty Ltd, 1987

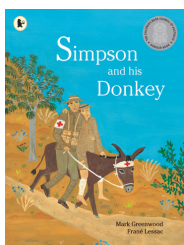
King, J. and Bowers, M., *Gallipoli: Untold Stories*, Doubleday, 2005

Perry, R., *The Australian Light Horse*, Hachette Australia, 2010

Stringer, C., *800 Horsemen*, Col Stringer Ministries, Queensland, 1998

Rees, L., *The Horse's Mind*, Prentice Hill Press, New York, 1986

Other books by Mark Greenwood and Frane Lessac

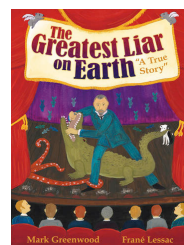


Simpson and His Donkey

PB 9781921529542
AU\$16.95/NZ\$18.99

Big Book 9781921529627
AU\$44.95/NZ\$47.99

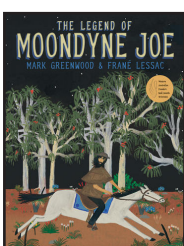
Classroom ideas available



The Greatest Liar on Earth

HB 9781921529856
AU\$29.95/NZ\$32.99

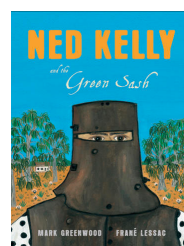
Classroom ideas available



The Legend of Moondyne Joe

PB 9781921720123
AU\$16.95/NZ\$18.99

Classroom ideas available



Ned Kelly and the Green Sash

HB 9781921150876
AU\$29.95/NZ\$31.99

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