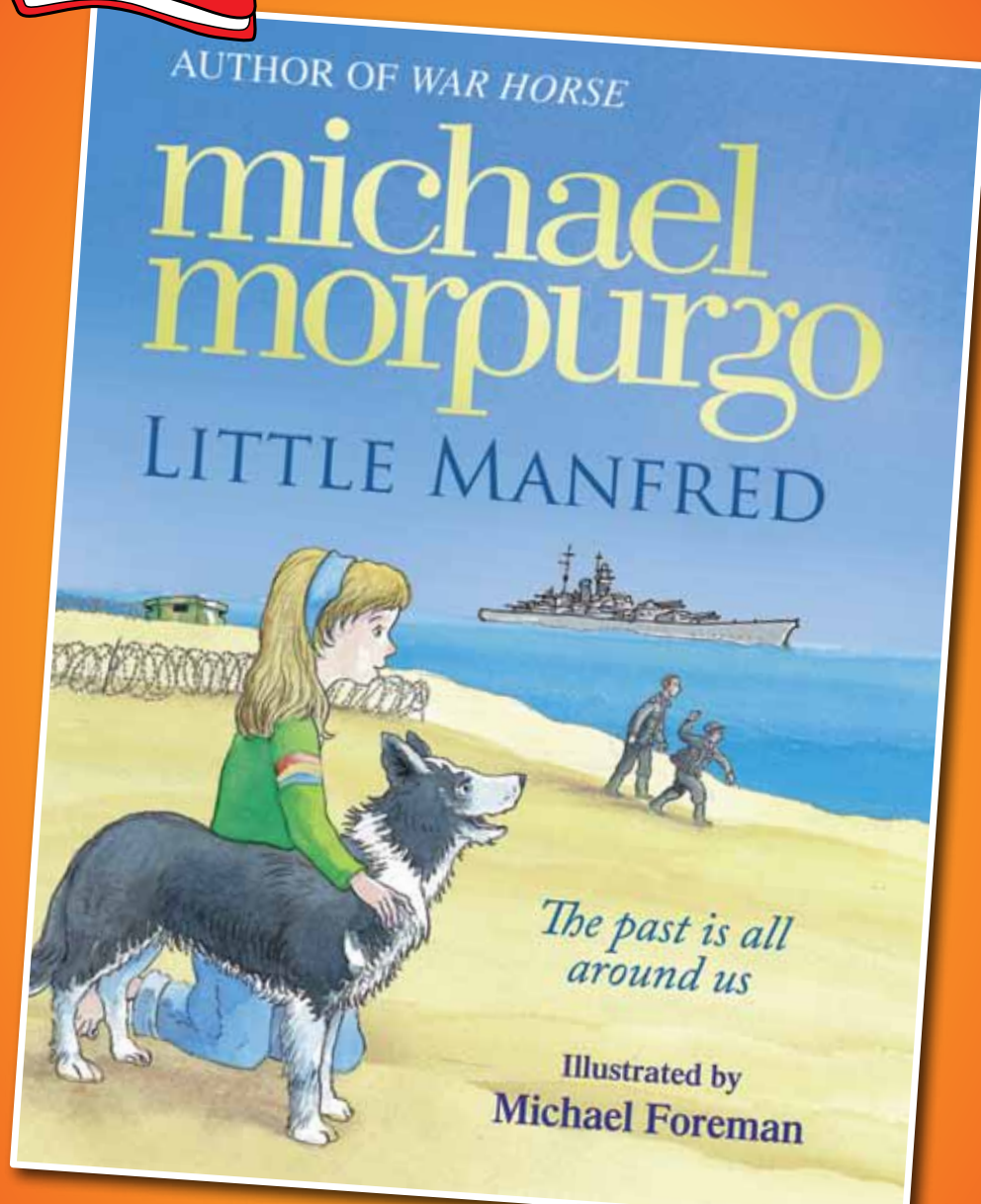


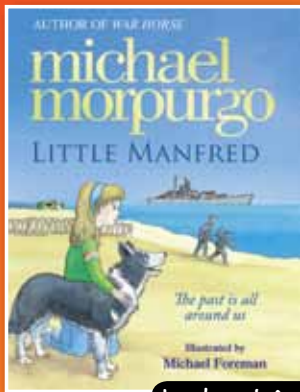
# Book Talk



**AGES 6+**

**Engage and inspire your pupils with a Book Talk!**

AGES 6+



Look out for me at  
your Book Fair!

Price	£4.99 / €5.80
Case	Read Alone
Author	Michael Morpurgo
Illustrator	Michael Foreman
Publisher	HarperCollins Children's Books

## Using this book in your classroom

### Themes

A thought-provoking and gentle story about **friendship** and **reconciliation** in the aftermath of the **Second World War**.

### Summary

Charley and her brother Alex live on a farm by the sea, with their mum and dad and their dog Manfred, or Mannie for short. It's 1966 and England have just won the football World Cup, when Charley and Alex meet a German ex-soldier, Walter, on the beach.

As they chat, it becomes clear that there is an extraordinary link between Walter and the children. Whilst he was a prisoner of war twenty years earlier, Walter had lived on the children's farm, and he had known their mother Grace when she was a child. Together with his great friend Manfred, another prisoner of war, Walter had made a toy dog for Grace which is still a treasured possession of the children today. Walter's friend Manfred had tragically died when a mine exploded on the beach near the children's farm, just days after he had finished making the little dog.

The children's mother had been distraught at Manfred's death, and had decided to call the toy dog Little Manfred after him. She never forgot Manfred or Walter, and in time, the children's own real dog was called Manfred too.

Walter tells the children the story of how he came to be a prisoner of war following the sinking of the German ship *Bismarck* during the Second World War, and how his life changed following his friend Manfred's death. The children bring Walter back to the farm where Walter has an emotional reunion with the children's mother. The story ends twenty-five years later, when the toy dog, Little Manfred, gets pride of place in a special exhibition at the Imperial War Museum.

### Did you know?

- This story is inspired by a real toy dog called Little Manfred, which is now in the Imperial War Museum, and which was made by a prisoner of war under very similar circumstances to the toy dog in the story.
- Another strand within this story, which describes the sinking of the *Bismarck*, was inspired by a conversation Michael Morpurgo had with an elderly man he met at a performance of the play *War Horse* (based on Michael's novel of the same name). Michael brought these various strands together to create a story that focuses on peace and reconciliation in the aftermath of war.

## The Story Session

### 1. Introducing the book

- Before reading the story, check whether children are familiar with the concept of prisoners of war. If necessary, explain that during the Second World War, German servicemen who were captured by the British were often brought back to Britain to prisoner-of-war camps, where they were required to do jobs such as farm work, road building, mine clearance, etc. (For more information on German prisoners of war in Britain, see [www.bbc.co.uk/history/britain/britain\\_wwtwo/german\\_pows\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/britain/britain_wwtwo/german_pows_01.shtml).)
- Read the first part of the story, up to the point where Walter discovers the dog is called Manfred and that the children live on Mayfield Farm. Pause, and check that the children have picked up that the story is set in 1966, twenty years after the end of the Second World War. Share children's thoughts about the story so far. Can they predict what might be going to happen, and what kind of connection there might be between Walter and the children?

### 2. Reading the story

- Read on to the end of Chapter 1. Have the children found out anything more about the connection between Walter and Charley and Alex's family? Can the children guess why the toy dog might have been called Little Manfred originally?
- Encourage the children to read the rest of the story independently or as a class. Pause occasionally to talk about the story, and encourage the children to revisit the predictions they made about the story earlier.
- At the end of the book, talk about the different ways characters in the story bring about peace and reconciliation – for example, Marty in befriending Walter even though they were on opposite sides during the war, and Walter and Manfred in making Little Manfred as a 'dog of peace' and a gift for the English family they lived with. What message do the children think Michael Morpurgo is trying to give readers?

### 3. Follow-up

- Ask the children to write an information sign that could be displayed next to the 'real' Little Manfred in the Imperial War Museum. What would they put on their sign? Encourage them to write a paragraph or two, drawing on information from the book and on their own feelings about what they have read.
- The children could make their own toy dog based on the descriptions of Little Manfred in the book, perhaps using cotton reels or pieces of stiff cardboard tube for the wheels.
- For more information about the real historical inspirations behind this story, see [www.guardian.co.uk/childrens-books-site/2011/may/25/michael-morpurgo-little-manfred-inspiration](http://www.guardian.co.uk/childrens-books-site/2011/may/25/michael-morpurgo-little-manfred-inspiration).

## YOU TELL US

- Did you use these notes to have a Book Talk in class?
- Were they helpful?
- Are there any changes you'd like to see to make them more useful?

We're always happy to hear your comments, so please email us at [bookfairs@scholastic.co.uk](mailto:bookfairs@scholastic.co.uk) (UK) or [bookfairs@scholastic.ie](mailto:bookfairs@scholastic.ie) (Republic of Ireland).