

 SCHOLASTIC

**Book
Talk**



AGES 8+

Engage and inspire your pupils with a Book Talk!



Look out for this book
at your Book Fair!

AGES 8+

Price	£5.99 / €7.40
Case	Read On
Author	Michael Morpurgo
Illustrator	Michael Foreman
Publisher	HarperCollins

Using this book in your classroom

Themes

A thought-provoking historical story about **war**, **love**, **grief** and **family secrets**.

Summary

Growing up after the Second World War, Michael never knew his father, Roy, a Spitfire pilot who died before Michael was born, and his grieving mother never discusses him.

When Michael receives a photograph of his father from one of his aunts, he finds a long letter hidden behind the glass. The letter tells Michael the story of his father, Roy, and of his grandfather, Leroy: a handsome black soldier from Barbados who his aunt – who is actually his grandmother – fell in love with during the First World War. Like Michael's own father, Roy, Leroy died in action before meeting his son.

The prejudices of society at the time made it very difficult for Auntie Snowdrop to bring up a mixed-race child as her own, so she and Michael's other aunt made up a story about adopting Roy as a war orphan, and Roy believed this story too. After reading the letter, and sharing it with his mother, Michael realises how much he has to be proud of in his unique family story.

Did you know?

- Michael Morpurgo has written several other books for children set in the First and Second World Wars, including *The Elephant in the Garden*, *Private Peaceful*, *Friend or Foe*, and *War Horse*.
- Michael's number one bestselling book, *War Horse*, has inspired an award-winning play, a film, a museum exhibition and now even an app! It has been translated into over forty languages and has sold over a million copies.

The Story Session

1. Introducing the book

- Read the preface out loud and share children's thoughts about what this tells us about the story. What do they think the narrator and Christine might be doing on that hillside in Belgium? Look together at the front and back cover pictures and the blurb. Do these give the children any additional clues?
- Read Chapter 1 and pause to share children's thoughts about the story so far. What have they found out about Michael from this chapter? Why do the children think that Michael's mother didn't want to talk about his father? Ask: "If you were Michael, how would you feel about this?"

2. Reading the story

- Encourage the children to read the rest of the story independently or as a class. Pause occasionally to talk about the story, and ask the children to look for clues about Michael's family history.
- When the children have read Auntie Snowdrop's letter, ask them to imagine how they would have felt reading it, if they were Michael. Would they feel proud of their family? Would they feel sad as well as happy at the news Auntie Snowdrop gives Michael? Do they think Michael was right to share the news with his mother? Why do they think Auntie Snowdrop and Auntie Pish kept it all a secret for so long?
- At the end of the book, ask the children if they think Michael's burying of Roy's medal makes a good ending. How do they think Leroy would have felt about his son's medal?
- Talk about how the ending of the book gives the feeling of going back to the start, with Michael and Christine eating egg and chips in a café. Can they remember who else in the story had done this? Do they like the story ending in a full circle? Ask them why or why not.

3. Follow-up

- Do the children think that Leroy should have received a medal of his own? Ask them to write a letter to the military authorities at the time of the First World War explaining why Leroy should be granted a medal for his bravery in battle.
- Visit www.waltertull.com for more information about the life and legacy of Walter Tull, whose story inspired Michael Morpurgo to write *A Medal for Leroy*. The site includes biographical information as well as information about the Walter Tull Association's history project and other activities.

YOU TELL US

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

We'd like to hear your comments! Please email us at:
bookfairs@scholastic.co.uk or bookfairs@scholastic.ie