**Lesson 1: Introducing War Horse**

**Lesson Objective:** This lesson aims to introduce *War Horse* to the students and consider the central themes and motifs used in the text. By the end of the lesson the students should:

1. Understand the context of *War Horse* and the effect it has on the book
2. Be able to name at least three central themes of the book and explain the way in which these themes are explored and developed
3. Understand the concept of author intent; w*hy* did Morpurgo choose to write this story? *Why* does he choose these particular themes to explore? *Why* did he set it in 1914?

**Plan:**

* Begin the class with a general discussion of the book. What did the students enjoy about the book? What did they not enjoy? What was interesting about the way the book was written? Ask the students to note down three things they liked and three things they did not and discuss this as a class
* Introduce the students to the concept of a semantic field. Brainstorm what would be in the semantic field encompassed within *War Horse,* what recurring symbols, themes and motifs can they find in the book (i.e. warfare, bravery, duty)?
* Discuss the context of *War Horse.* Ask the students what they know about the First World War. Introduce the class to the drawing of a cavalry charge by the British 9th Lancers in September 1914, published in the Illustrated London New Christmas issue. Is this portrayal of war different to how they understand it? Why might that be? What words would they use to describe this image? Introduce the idea of wartime propaganda. Does that make them understand this drawing in a different light?
* Share with the class some information about how horses were used in war and discuss why Morpurgo might have set his story in this context
* Read the poem *Commandeered* by Lucy Gertrude Moberly. How does this relate to *War Horse?* Are there similar themes or ideas? What is different in its portrayal of horses in war?
* Watch the interview with Michael Morpurgo. Ask the students to write down two questions each that they would ask him about the book if they were the ones interviewing him. Discuss whether it is useful or not useful to know *why* Morpurgo made the choices he made within the book.
* Returning to the brainstorm made at the beginning of the lesson about themes, ask the students to pick one theme and find two different examples within the book where this theme is explored or developed. Demonstrate an example of this with the theme of “friendship”, using two extracts from the text to highlight the theme’s effect.

**Homework:** How helpful is *War Horse* to students learning about the First World War? Explain your answer with reference to the text and the wider context of the book.

**Lesson 2: Exploring Style and Narrative**

**Lesson Objective:** This lesson aims to enable to students to think more broadly about the way in which *War Horse* is written. By the end of the lesson the students should:

1. Be able to talk confidently about the unusual narrative style of *War Horse* and the effect this has on the reader
2. Be able to identify examples of literary techniques within *War Horse* and write a P.E.E. paragraph explaining the effect
3. **Understand how the central themes in *War Horse*  intersect with the book’s style and narrative voice**

**Plan:**

* **Start the lesson by asking the students to match a set of literary techniques with their definitions. When they have finished this, introduce examples of each technique from *War Horse* and ask them to match them up with the literary technique used.**
* **Read through the excerpt from Chapter 8 together as a class. Ask the students to underline any words they are unfamiliar with and then go through the definitions of these as a class. Introduce the idea of ‘show don’t tell’ and ask the students to underline where Morpurgo has ‘shown’ instead of ‘told’ the reader various things (i.e. Joey was frightened)**
* **Discuss how the fact that the story is told from the horse’s perspective changes the way this excerpt is portrayed. Is it more effective? Widen the conversation out to a broader one on Morpurgo’s use of narrative and perspective. Why does he decide the write in first-person narrative? How does this help explore the theme of warfare?**
* **The students should now re-imagine the excerpt from Chapter 8 from the perspective of Trooper Warren, using descriptive and rich vocabulary and at least one literary device. This should take them around ten minutes to complete. How has their re-imagining changed the tone and mood of the story?**
* **Discuss how the themes of the book intersect with the narration- to what extent is Joey talking for the reader? To what extent is he talking for Morpurgo? Fill out the ‘key themes in Joey’s narrative’ worksheet as a class and try to connect them with the central themes identified in Lesson 1**
* **As a finishing activity, discuss who else the story could have been told by. Draw up a list of characters (i.e. Albert, Emilie) from whose perspective the story could have been told and begin to brainstorm what would be different if other characters served as the narrator. Also touch on the idea of using third-person narrative- how would that change the book? What information would be lost? Have students write down their ideas.**

**Homework: How might *War Horse* be different if it was told from a human’s perspective?** Explain your answer with reference to the text and the wider context of the book.

**Lesson 3: Close Textual Analysis**

**Lesson Objective:** This lesson will aim to make students more comfortable with close textual analysis and how to incorporate it into their essays. By the end of the lesson the students should:

1. Be able to describe the effect of language and word choice using a P.E.E. paragraph
2. Understand how to use close textual analysis within their essays whilst also engaging with the wider themes and style of the book
3. Have consolidated their understanding of essay structure and be able to self-evaluate their own work based on these criteria

**Plan:**

* As a starter activity ask students to fill out the ‘language effect’ sheet on word choice and literary devices. Choose one word and one phrase and construct a P.E.E. (point/evidence/explain) paragraph as a class
* Watch the scene from the film *War Horse* (2011) and ask the class to jot down as many words as they can that describe this scene in the film. Then read as a class the corresponding passage in the book and ask them to jot down as many words as possible that describe the scene in the book. Discuss what is different between the film’s version of this scene and the book’s. What is different about the words they have written down? How have the filmmakers translated the words on the page onto the screen? Is there anything that has been lost in translation? What have they changed and why?
* Ask the class to choose from this extract in the book three words to write synonyms for, and then discuss the difference between the original word and the synonym in effect. For each of those words they should now write a short P.E.E. paragraph.
* Now brainstorm with the class: what are the key ingredients in an essay? Use an example essay to demonstrate how each of these elements fit together, highlighting any language analysis or discussion of techniques and symbolism in particular (as this may be something the students are less familiar with writing about)
* Ask each student to ensure they have their homework essay in front of them. They should now highlight where they have used each element (if they have) and identify any P.E.E. paragraphs and close textual analysis they have used
* Go through the mark scheme for the essay and ask students to evaluate their own work based on these criteria. They should give their essay a mark and then write two ‘what went wells’ and three ‘even better ifs’
* As a finishing activity facilitate a debate on the question ‘the original book is always better than the film’. Half the class should argue for and half should argue against, using examples and responding to each other’s arguments.

**Homework:** What would you say is the moral of the story in *War Horse?* Explain your answer with reference to the text and the wider context of the book.

**Lesson 4: Mock Exam Paper**

**Lesson Objective:** This lesson will consolidate the class’s knowledge of *War Horse,* through studying exam style comprehension and essay questions on the book. By the end of the lesson the students should:

1. Understand the format in which literary analysis arises in comprehension exam papers
2. Be able to answer thematic essay style questions on different ideas and themes within the novel in the form of a presentation
3. Be able to reflect on *War Horse* and draw final conclusions on the purpose of the book

**Plan:**

* Open the lesson by introducing a series of comprehension questions on a passage from *War Horse.* Ask the students to identify what each question is asking them
* Discuss the idea of how atmosphere is created in a book. What features do the class think are most important? How do we analyse literature?
* The students should go through the extract and underline any powerful, telling or revealing words and phrases
* Draw up a list of powerful words used in the extract. Ask the students to find synonyms for each of these words. Why did Morpurgo choose the words he did instead of their synonyms? What is particular about the words he chose? Explain the concept of word choice to the class and demonstrate how to analyse it
* Now consider any literary techniques within the extract, or any structural features. Go over these as a class, using P.E.E. to analyse the particularly powerful lines in the text
* Discuss how they would fit themes into their analysis, introducing the idea of how symbols and motifs function as a vessel for themes
* Moving on, present the class with a selection of theme based discussion questions. Go over presentation techniques, and how to coherently present information in a speech
* Assign one theme to each student. They should now prepare a spoken two-minute segment answering the question, remembering to use examples from the book to back up their analysis and to think about how literary techniques enforce their theme
* Each student should present and one student per presentation should give feedback on what they liked in the presentation
* For the last ten minutes of the lesson, facilitate a wider discussion on what they have learnt from *War Horse,* what they think is the most powerful theme or message and why

**Homework:** Complete the exam style writing question under timed conditions of thirty minutes, making sure to follow the instructions on the exam paper carefully. The prompt is *“Joey and Albert have an incredibly strong friendship despite being apart for so long. Describe a time you have been apart from someone you loved and how it made you feel.”* It can be based on a real experience, or completely made up, but remember to use lots of vivid language and some literary techniques too!