

Lamont Books Standing Order

March 2014

Teacher Notes and Activities

The Poppy

By Andrew Plant

Publisher: Ford Street

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\$26.95

Stunningly illustrated using over 70 paintings, *The Poppy* is the true story of one of Australia's greatest victories, and of a promise kept for nearly a century. On Anzac Day, 1918, a desperate night counter-attack in the French village of Villers-Bretonneux became one of Australia's greatest victories. A bond was forged that night between France and Australia that has never been broken. Villers-Bretonneux is 'The town that never forgets'. What was achieved that terrible night - and what happened after - is a story that, likewise, Australians should never forget.



Teacher notes have been taken from those prepared by the publishers, Ford Street Publishing.

Themes:

- World War I
- The Poppy as a symbol
- Remembrance

Discussion Points and Activities:

- Why do you think a poppy petal was used as a way of tracing the journey around Villers-Bretonneux?
- Repetition occurs in the story in two forms. One relates to the soldiers not being forgotten, the other to the French and Australian flags being side by side. Why has the author deliberately repeated phrases or ideas? What effect does it have on the story?
- Black is an unusual colour to be dominant in a children's picture book. Is it effective? Would a different colour change the mood of the book?
- Why was Australia fighting in a war in France?
- Discuss what life would have been like for soldiers in the trenches. Use photographs and diary entries as resources.
- Discuss how the students would feel if asked to fight in a war for England today. Points to include could be Australia's sense of individual national identity today, contrasted with Australia's sense of being part of the British Empire in the past. Would the students feel differently if Australia itself was directly threatened?
- Create a poster that could have been used to support the war effort. Compare these with real recruitment posters of WWI.
- Visit a local War Memorial. Which wars are commemorated?
- Can the students think of any other symbols that are used to represent remembrance or peace, or that could be used? Are there any Australian animals or plants that would be appropriate? Try to write a poem using these new symbols.
- *The Poppy* is, on some pages, a silent book. Using no words can be a very effective way of telling a story. Using just pictures, work in groups to tell a short story about WWI. Do not try to be too complicated - keep the story simple. It does not need to be too long: two pages with a dozen pictures can work very well. Imagine the different characters that could be in the story - a new recruit, a tired old soldier, a general, an artillery man, a cook, a stretcher bearer, a wounded soldier, a pack horse, a bird in a devastated woodland. Keep the pictures varied in size, angle and level of detail. Use both close ups and panorama. Be imaginative!