

March 2015

**Picture Story**

*Teacher Notes and Activities*

## **The Horse Soldier**

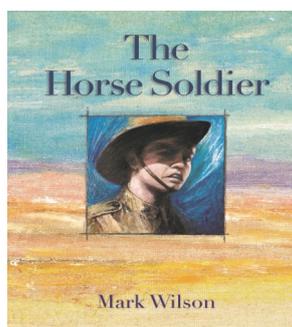
By Mark Wilson

Publisher: Windy Hollow Publishing

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\$25.95

"Bandy jerked her head. I felt her shiver and neigh to the other horses. Then a hand went up in the distance, and the soldiers urged their horses into a canter." When the shadow of war descends on Australia in 1914, a boy and his horse set off for war in the Middle East. With water rations gone, they charge the enemy across six kilometres of open ground to reach the wells at Beersheba. In one moment of dash and bravura, both Jason's and Bandy's destinies are set as the battle unfolds, with heroic and tragic consequences.



Teacher notes have been adapted from those supplied by the publisher, Windy Hollow Publishing.

### Discussion Points & Activities:

- Research Anzac day and write a short piece about what you think it stands for today.
- Mark Wilson's text is light and spare and suggestive. The horror of war is hinted at but it is not graphically confronting. How and where in the text has he done this?
- Research and write a short piece on what happened to the Australian horses when the war ended.
- What does the term 'bravery' mean to you? Compare this with the term used in the context of this story.
- What might have been in the young soldier's mind as he rode into battle for the first time?
- Research and discuss the impact World War One had on Australian society.
- The Horse Soldier's story is told in simple language and the visual and written narrative conveys a strong sense of place and character, with maps, telegrams and order sheets bringing a detailed historical backdrop to the story. Discuss this narrative style.
- The illustrations are impressionist on some spreads, while others are stark and confronting. A sense of nostalgia is created through these images, as if we are looking at an old photograph book. Discuss.
- Discuss the cover of the book and what it conveys about the story, particularly the setting.
- How does the format and design of the book influence your reading of it? Discuss.
- Do a drawing of a Lighthorseman with his horse and all his equipment.
- The medium is mainly acrylic paint on canvas. Try to create your own painting in this medium (which can be used on paper), showing the impressions of war you gained from the story.
- Some illustrations are just pencil sketches. Discuss why Mark Wilson may have used this medium for particular illustrations, and how the different illustration style impacts how you feel about the illustration.
- How do the colour themes on various pages affect your interpretation of this work?
- The Australian War Memorial has much information on the charge by the Lighthorse at Beersheba, which you can research. Create your own Lighthorse Project Display.