

Lamont Books Standing Order

March 2014

Teacher Notes and Activities

The Afghanistan Pup

By Mark Wilson

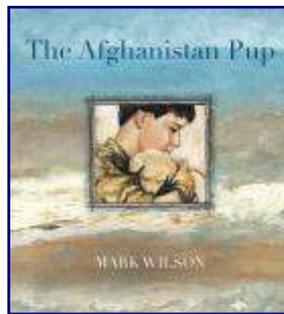
Publisher: Lothian Children's Books

ISBN 9780734415325

\$24.99

**Picture Book of
the Month**

The Afghanistan Pup is the story of an Afghani schoolgirl fighting for her education, an Australian soldier struggling to survive, and an abandoned Labrador pup who touches the lives of both of them. With powerful impressionistic illustrations and honest writing, Mark Wilson introduces young readers to the tragedy of war in an accessible yet realistic way, showing not just the dark side but how hope can be found even in the most difficult places.



Teacher notes have been taken from those supplied by the publisher and prepared by Robyn Sheahan-Bright.

Themes:

- The Afghanistan War
- Refugees
- Pets and trauma

Discussion Points and Activities:

- Western powers invaded Afghanistan as the 'Coalition Against Terror'. The Taliban are portrayed as the 'enemies' in this conflict with western powers. Investigate their beliefs and the origin of the conflict. Do the Taliban have any legitimate argument with western powers, or a claim to engage in combat? Conduct research into the background of the conflict.
- Research the role played by Australian troops in the war in Afghanistan.
- Tarin Kowt in the province of Uruzgan was the site of the Australian army base which closed in late 2013. Find out more about this area and the people who live there. How has it changed since the current conflict began in 2001?
- Research some of the weaponry used in modern warfare such as landmines, roadside bombs, grenades and chemical weapons.
- Mark Wilson, in his series about children at war, has suggested that generations in Australia have been affected by various wars. Discuss this topic. You may wish to examine your own family history in relation to this question. For example, you may have parents, grandparents or great aunts or uncles who fought in wars or even died in them.
- How has the war in Afghanistan impacted on the traffic of refugees to Australia and other countries? Research the stories of these refugees.
- In this story the love of a dog offers comfort to both an Afghani girl and an Australian soldier. In the note at the end, the author refers to the role which animals have played in the recovery of soldiers suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Have you ever experienced this sort of bond with an animal? Has your pet ever helped you get through a difficult time?
- The book says that Kinah had to be careful because many older people didn't believe that girls and women should be taught to read or write. Is this a prevalent belief in Afghanistan, or only amongst members of the Taliban?
- Bravery is an ambiguous concept. The young soldier is fighting and also rebuilding parts of Afghanistan. But the civilians like Kinah who survive this crisis need to be every bit as brave. How would you describe bravery? Is the soldier brave to be in Afghanistan?

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Chasing Shadows

By Corinne Fenton & illustrated by Hannah Sommerville

Publisher: Ford Street

ISBN 9781925000153

\$26.95

Corinne Fenton joins first-time illustrator Hannah Sommerville on an epic journey of discovery. Everyone feels sad sometimes, but when sadness lingers, shadows appear. Some of us, even children, chase shadows. Will a wriggly, mischievous surprise help Beth chase her shadows away?



Given the sensitive nature of this book, it is probably best suited to upper primary school students.

Themes:

- Sadness
- The power of animals
- Opening up
- Acceptance over time

Discussion Points:

- Before reading the story, what do you think the book could be about?
- Did your thoughts change after you read it? If so, how?
- Beth seems to be very sad. Do we know why she is feeling so unhappy?
- Everyone feels sad sometimes in their life, and this is a normal reaction to many things. As a class, discuss what events in life can lead to feeling this way.
- What are some practical things that can make you feel happier?
- When you feel sad, what and/or who helps to make you feel better and helps you understand your feelings?
- The dad in the story just wanted his little girl to be happy again. Why do you think he thought a puppy would help her?
- What impact did Patches have on Beth?
- Did she accept him at first? Why do you think she reacted this way when she first got him? Did her reaction when Patches got sick surprise you?
- Do you have a pet? If so, how does your pet make you feel?
- What can pets teach us?

Activities:

- Animals, especially dogs, are used in all aspects of life to help people. Research one area where they are used, for example seeing eye dogs, sniffer dogs, companion dogs etc. Include in your research the special characteristics that the animal has to have to undertake their role, what training is involved and how the animal helps people.

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The Poppy

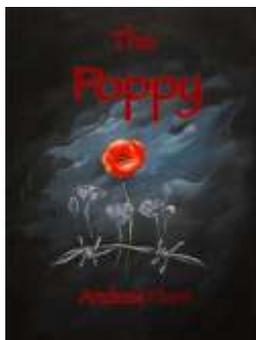
By Andrew Plant

Publisher: Ford Street

ISBN 9781925000313

\$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!

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Gallipoli

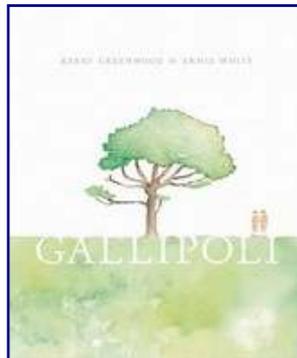
By Kerry Greenwood & illustrated by Annie White

Publisher: Scholastic Australia

ISBN 9781743621295

\$24.99

It was 1914 and Dusty and Bluey were headed for adventure. They were ANZACs, members of the Australian Light Horse, on their way to the Great War. The story of Bluey and Dusty is a story of family and friendship. It is the story of Gallipoli.



Themes:

- Gallipoli
- War
- Mateship

Discussion Points:

- When you hear the word 'Gallipoli' what do you think of?
- What do you know about it?
- Why is Gallipoli such an infamous place in the history of Australia?
- Bluey and Dusty were ANZACs. What does this mean?
- Many Australians travel to Gallipoli on ANZAC day to commemorate and remember. Is it important to not forget what happened there? If so, why?
- Can understanding what our troops went through make us appreciate what they did? Explain.
- There can be very few positive things that come from war. Is mateship one of them? Discuss.
- Bluey and Dusty experienced many hardships during their time away. How and why do you think they managed to remain friends for life?
- The stretcher bearer John Simpson and his donkey Duffy are also mentioned in the story. Have you heard of Simpson and his donkey before? What do you know about them and the role that they played?
- A war has an impact on the whole society. As a class, investigate who else, other than just the soldiers fighting the actual battle, contributed to the war. Think about all aspects - including machinery, food, medicine etc. How difficult would it have been to co-ordinate all the things that were needed to fight such a battle?

Activities:

- In small groups, conduct your own research project on Gallipoli. Find at least five facts that you were unaware of before you commenced your project. Present your findings to the class, in any form.
- Imagine you are a soldier at Gallipoli. Write a letter home telling of your experiences.

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The Brothers Quibble

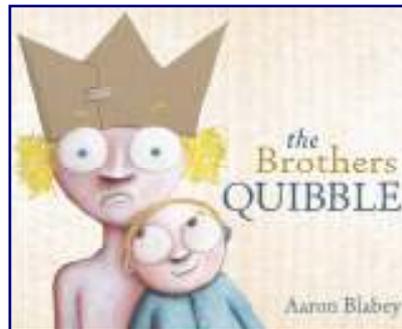
By Aaron Blabey

Publisher: Penguin Australia

ISBN 9780670076000

\$24.99

Spalding Quibble ruled the roost. He shared it with no other. But then his parents introduced a brand new baby brother. Uh oh. A picture book about love (and war) from the award-winning author of *Pearl Barley and Charlie Parsley*, *The Dreadful Fluff* and *Noah Dreary*.



Themes:

- Jealously
- Sibling rivalry
- Acceptance
- Family relationships
- Unconditional love

Discussion Points:

- How would you describe Spalding's reaction to his baby brother? Do you think it was a common way to react? Why or why not?
- If you already have younger brothers or sisters, how did you react when they first came home? If you haven't, how do you think you would behave?
- Was Spalding's behaviour unreasonable? Explain.
- As a class, come up with a list of words to describe his treatment of his baby brother.
- Do you think your parents would let you behave the way that Spalding did?
- Even though Spalding treated Bunny very badly, Bunny still loved him and wanted to be with him. Why do you think this was the case?
- The brothers surname is "Quibble". Do you know what the word "quibble" means? Do you think that the brothers surname reflects their behaviour in the story?
- What impact did Spalding's behaviour have on Bunny's behaviour?
- Why do brothers and sisters often fight? List what you think are the most common reasons.
- There are all different types of families. What is it about your family that you love the most?
- What are your favourite things to do together?

Activities:

- Aaron Blabey has a very unique style of illustrations. Draw a family portrait of your own family in the same style that he uses in his books. Give your drawing to one of your family members. (If you have a brother or sister, you might like to give it to the one you fight with the most!), just to show them how much you really do love them.

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Little Meerkat

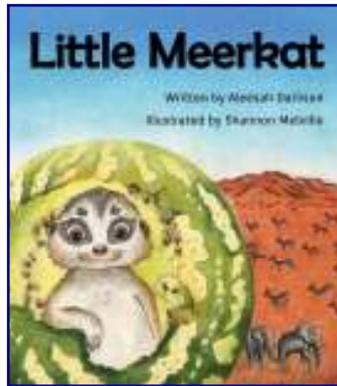
By Aleesah Darlison & illustrated by Shannon Melville

Publisher: Wombat Books

ISBN 9781921632822

\$24.99

Little Meerkat craves independence and adventure in his life. His extended family of Mum, Dad, Aunty, Uncle, Brother and Sister, are there to guide and protect him.



Teacher notes have been taken from those prepared by the publishers, Wombat Books.

Themes:

- Independence
- Family values
- Appreciating others
- Finding your place in the world
- Acceptable social behaviour
- Respect for others

Discussion Points:

- Why do you think Little Meerkat is so determined to show his independence?
- How do Little Meerkat's family support him? Why are they so protective of him?
- What are some of the dangers that Little Meerkat faces in the desert?
- Do you think Little Meerkat has a good imagination?
- What does Little Meerkat learn at the end of the story? Does his attitude change?
- What was your favourite page in the story? Why?
- Have you ever been to a desert before? Or to Africa?
- Little Meerkat tries to be very independent. How are you independent in your life? What activities can you do by yourself? What things do you still need someone to help you with? What things did you used to need help with but can now do by yourself? Is this a sign that you are becoming more independent?
- Look closely at the illustrations in the book. Which one is your favourite? What colours are used in the picture?

Activities:

- The Kalahari Desert is home to Little Meerkat and his family, as well as many other animals. As a group, have the students list all the animals that they can see in the book, then have students either:
 - Choose one animal and write a story about one of the animals and the animal's family.
 - Write down ten important facts about one of the animals in the book and present them to the class.
 - Research the Kalahari Desert. Write a report or create a powerpoint presentation about the area and present it to the class.
 - Choose their favourite animal from the Kalahari Desert and draw a picture of it. Pin up all the drawings of the animals done by the students around the classroom walls.
- Organise a visit to a zoo where there are meerkats. Draw pictures of the meerkats and take photos and videos to study their habits. Present your findings to the class.
- Meerkats live in large family groups. Draw a picture of your own family. Try to include as many family members as you can. Include their names.
- Colouring sheets are also attached for your use.



