

## **The Good Son: A Story from the First World War, Told in Miniature**

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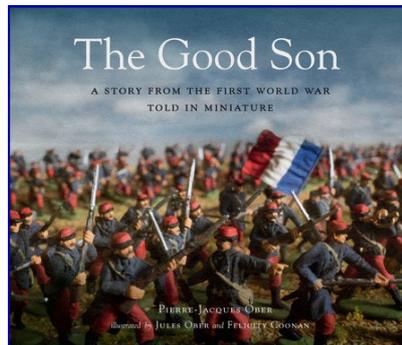
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The Good Son wins 1st Prize at the Prix Sorcières 2019, France's most prestigious award for children's books. A young WWI soldier's unauthorized visit home has dire consequences in a haunting story reimagined in miniature tableaux.

About one hundred years ago, the whole world went to war. The war was supposed to last months. It lasted years.

It is Christmastime, 1914, and World War I rages. A young French soldier named Pierre had quietly left his regiment to visit his family for two days, and when he returned, he was imprisoned. Now he faces execution for desertion, and as he waits in isolation, he meditates on big questions: the nature of patriotism, the horrors of war, the joys of friendship, the love of family, and how even in times of danger, there is a whole world inside every one of us. And how sometimes that world is the only refuge. Its publication coinciding with the centennial of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, this moving and sparsely narrated story, based on true events, is re-enacted in fascinating miniature scenes that convey the emotional complexity of the tale. Notes from the creators explore the innovative process and their personal connection to the story.



### **Themes:**

- World War I
- Human nature
- Family expectations
- Art and photography

### **Discussion Questions:**

This is a haunting true story that is told in photographs of miniature scenes. The publisher recommends that this title is for students 14 years and over, so therefore these teacher notes are general classroom discussion starters, as this book can be studied on many higher levels.

- Discuss the conflict that Pierre had in wanting to be a good son, but also of wanting to be a good soldier, and how it came to be that he could not do both at the same time.
- Discuss, in relation to what happened in this story, the nature of patriotism, the horrors of war, the joys of friendship and the love of family.
- The process of making this book is vastly different to many other picture books, and it is a work of art in itself. Study the process of how it was made and inspiration for this book.
- 'They called it the Great War, but it was fought by little soldiers'. Analyse this statement in the context of World War I in general.
- This story is told from the perspective of Pierre. Discuss the impact of Pierre's story on those around him - his friend Gilbert and, in particular, Pierre's mother.