

War Horse by Michael Morpurgo

1. The protagonist in most novel features the main character or “good guy”. The protagonist of War Horse is quite different than most novels – a horse, Joey.
Why might this be an especially difficult challenge for a novelist?

The novelist needs to captures the horse in a way that helps us connect with it, ensures we can relate to it in order to want to read more. The novelist has to assume what the goals, desires, fears of a horse would be. That is the tricky part.

As readers or viewers, we connect with these characters, celebrating their victories and mourning their losses right along with them. These characters are the protagonists in their stories. The **protagonist** is the central or main character of a story, often called the hero. Through this character, we experience the conflict as the **antagonist**, or the force working against the protagonist, fights against him or her.

2. The first paragraph of Chapter One is certainly an attention-grabber, isn't it? What phrase in this paragraph first lets the reader know that the narrator is probably not a person?

Chapter 1

My earliest memories are a confusion of hilly fields and dark, damp stables, and rats that scampered along the beams above my head. But I remember well enough the day of the horse sale. The terror of it stayed with me all my life.

3. What specific event separated the colt from its mother? **The horse auction/sale**
4. In Chapter One Joey and the readers are introduced to three new characters, Albert, his father and his mother. For each of these characters write a brief description of his/her personality from what we know of them so far.

Albert – a young boy who is hard working. Bonds with Joey immediately.

Father – a harsh man (a bully) who has no time for sympathy. He is full of pride – never wanting to look foolish to others.

Mother – an obedient wife (due to the times she lived in) and protective mother. (wants to help Albert from getting into trouble with his father.

5. It is evident that Albert is very pleased that his father purchased Joey. At one point in Chapter One he tells his mother that it was “the best thing he ever did.” Reread Albert’s mother’s response to this statement. What does the lack of conviction in her answer reveal about her true feelings regarding her husband?

Chapter 1

“But why the devil did he buy him, Mother?” Albert asked. “it was a calf we wanted, wasn’t it? That’s what he went into the market for, wasn’t it? A calf to suckle old Celandine.

“I know dear, your father’s not himself when he’s like that,” his mother said softly. “He says that Farmer Easton was bidding for the horse, and you know what he thinks of that man after that barney over the fencing. I should imagine he bought it just to deny him. Well that’s what it looks like to me.”

“Well I’m glad he did, Mother,” said Albert, walking slowly towards me, pulling off his jacket. “Drunk or not, it’s the best thing he ever did.”

“Don’t speak like that about your father, Albert. He’s been through a lot. It’s not right,” said his mother. But her words lacked conviction.

The mother's hands are tied by the rules and traditions of the time that prevented a woman from overriding the sway of her husband. Her work ethic is deeply ingrained and she is matter-of-fact in most situations. She will stand by her husband.

6. Investigate: The Torridge River in County Devon (mentioned in Chapter Two) was the setting of an award-winning animal story written by Henry Williamson. Using the Internet, find out the name of this famous novel. (Check out some interesting Youtube clips from the movie.)

Tarka the Otter

<https://youtu.be/mjnSAATCOoc>

7. Horse Terms Investigation. Draw a line to match each term with the definition on the left.

A Stallion	Female horse 4 years or older
B Filly	Male horse under the age of 4
C Foal	Male horse 4 years old or older
D Mare	A horse of either sex between 1 and 2 years old
E Colt	A horse of either sex less than a year old
F Yearling	Female horse under the age of 4

8. The author seems to enjoy using alliteration – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. An example from Chapter Two is “We’ll teach them a thing or two.”

Using your imagination, create your own examples of alliteration from the following topics. Each example must contain a minimum of three words.

A baby crying – **The baby's crying is relentless, leaving me no rest or relaxation**

An explosion – **The sudden, surge of sound from the explosion was deafening.**

Butterflies – **The butterflies' flit, flap and flutter from flower to flower.**

9. The word “rope” can be used as a noun or a verb, depending on the sentence. Use your imagination and write sentences to illustrate how this word can be used as both a noun and a verb.

Rope – thick strong cord

Rope – catch with/ fasten with

The thick rope was used to tie the horse to the fence.

The horse retreated but the man managed to rope him back in.