

# Plot, character and setting

## SECTION

## 4

### The Great War

**Objective:** To distinguish between everyday use of words and their subject-specific use.

**What you need:** Copies of *War Horse* and photocopiable page 15.

**Cross-curricular link:** History.

#### What to do

- Re-read Extract 3 and ask the children to explain the concept of no man's land (the land between the trenches occupied by opposing armies).
- What else have the children learned about the First World War from the novel? Encourage them to talk about the British and German armies, the trenches, weapons and transport, how horses were used and so on. Highlight any terminology associated with war in general, (*bombardment*,

*artillery, shelling*) or with this war in particular (*trench warfare, no man's land*).

- Ask the children how they think the author may have researched the war (by reading books about it, looking at films, listening to people talking about their memories of the war).
- Hand out photocopiable page 15 and invite them to use their knowledge from the novel to write a definition of each term.

#### Differentiation

**For older/more confident learners:** Invite the children to research more terms or facts about the war from the novel and add them to their sheets.

**For younger/less confident learners:** Limit the children to explaining only two of the terms and allow them access to dictionaries and/or websites.

### War Haiku

**Objective:** To select words and language drawing on their knowledge of literary features and formal and informal writing.

**What you need:** Copies of *War Horse*, images of the First World War Front (photographs, film or paintings), whiteboard, individual whiteboards and pens.

**Cross-curricular links:** Art, geography.

#### What to do

- Re-read Extract 3 and ask the children to describe the landscape of no man's land using their own words. What do they think the French countryside might have been like before the war, and what has been destroyed by war? (Grass, flowers, insects, crops, trees and so on.)
- Show the children pictures of the Front, and invite responses. Ask: *What words or phrases would you use to describe the way the landscape looks?* (Shattered, war-torn, bleak, empty, bare.)
- Arrange the children into small groups and highlight passages in the novel that describe the terrain and weather (see Chapters 8, 12, 15 and 16). Ask each group to scan one

chapter, noting down on their whiteboards key nouns (*craters, shells, mud*), adjectives (*wasted, shattered*) and phrases (*laid waste, blasted wilderness*) that describe the landscape.

- Capture key words and phrases on the whiteboard and then challenge the children to compose haiku-style poems to describe the war landscape. Model an example before they begin to ensure they understand the 5-7-5 syllable haiku form. For instance:

‘Wasted wilderness  
No birds, no trees, no insects  
Just mud and more mud.’

- Invite volunteers to share their poems.

#### Differentiation

**For older/more confident learners:** Encourage the children to use techniques such as alliteration, assonance and onomatopoeia in their poems.

**For younger/less confident learners:** Review the words and phrases the children have collected, discussing possible effects. Also, provide the first line to start their poem.