

# Penguin Random House

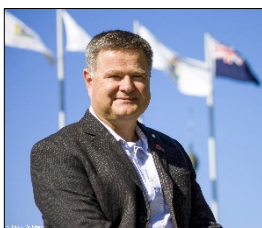
## TEACHERS' RESOURCE KIT

### **Bobby the Littlest War Hero** **Glyn Harper and Jenny Cooper (illustrator)**

**This is the story of Bobby – the littlest hero in a very big war.**

Bobby is a tiny canary. His best friend is Jack, a soldier in one of the tunnelling companies of the Royal Engineers. Together they go deep into the tunnels under no-man's-land. Jack's job is to dig, while Bobby's job is to warn the men to get out quickly when there's dangerous gas. Bobby's warnings save the tunnellers' lives again and again.

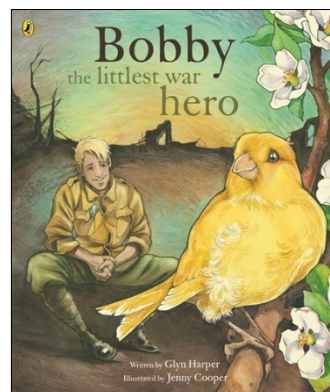
Glyn Harper and Jenny Cooper are the award-winning creators of bestselling picture books about the First World War: *Le Quesnoy*; *Jim's Letters*; *Roly, the Anzac Donkey* and *Gladys Goes to War*.



**Glyn Harper** is Professor of War Studies at Massey University in Palmerston North. He is Massey's Project Manager of the Centenary History of New Zealand and the First World War. He joined the Australian Army in 1988 and after eight years transferred to the New Zealand Army, and rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel. In 2015 Glyn and illustrator Jenny Cooper won the Best Picture Book Award at the New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults.



**Jenny Cooper** is an award-winning illustrator of more than 70 children's books. The judges of the 2015 LIANZA Children's Book Awards praised Jenny for "her command of emotional drawing . . . the depth of feeling in the faces of her characters brings tears to the reader's eyes." In October 2015 Jenny was honoured as one of New Zealand's foremost illustrators with the presentation of The Arts Foundation Mallinson Rendel Illustrators Award. Jenny lives in Amberley, near Christchurch.



#### **SPECIFICATIONS:**

Imprint: Picture Puffin  
Published: 1 March 2018  
ISBN: 9780143771876  
RRP: \$19.99  
Format: Paperback  
Extent: 32 pages  
Readership: 5-10 yrs.

#### **RESOURCE KIT CONTAINS:**

- Before reading
- Close-reading questions
- Language and style
- Illustrations
- Research and Creative Responses
- Close-reading answers

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**Teaching Notes: *Bobby, the littlest war hero***  
**Written by Glyn Harper and illustrated by Jenny Cooper**

**Synopsis:**

This is the story of Bobby – the littlest hero in a very big war.

Bobby is a tiny canary. His best friend is Jack, a soldier in one of the tunnelling companies of the Royal Engineers. Together they go deep into the tunnels under no-man's-land. Jack's job is to dig, while Bobby's job is to warn the men to get out quickly when there's dangerous gas. Bobby's warnings save the tunnellers' lives again and again.

But Jack worries that it's a hard life for a little bird. Will Bobby ever be free to fly again?

**Before Reading:**

1. Before reading the book, look at the cover image and title. Discuss what you think the book might be about.
2. When and where might the book be set?
3. What does the title suggest to you?
4. Who do you think the readership of this book will be?
5. Look at the author's dedication. Use this as inspiration for a class discussion on what the class knows about the tunnellers of the First World War? Discuss and create a brainstorm and/or 'Our Wonderings?' questions as a class. *NB: for information about the tunnellers and Bobby's story turn to the last page of the book.*

**Close Reading Questions (for answers see bottom of notes):**

1. Why were canaries used in the tunnels?
2. What is the name of the narrator of the story?
3. What was Jack's job during the war?
4. What was often used in the tunnels to help the soldiers to see and why was it needed?
5. What was the sign that Bobby had inhaled some dangerous gas and why did it help the soldiers to know this?
6. What rewards were given to Bobby for helping to save the soldiers?
7. In what ways was it good and bad to dig trenches in clay soil?
8. How did Jack revive Bobby after they escaped from the tunnel in the Somme region of France?
9. What machine did Jack use on Bobby to revive him when they were digging tunnels near Arras?
10. What did Jack think Bobby deserved, more than a medal, for helping the tunnellers?

**Language and Style:**

1. Question marks, speech marks, ellipses, full stops and commas are all types of punctuation found in the book. Find and list an example of each from the book and explain their grammatical purpose.

2. This book is written in first person narrative. Write a recount in first person narrative of some of the events which take place in the book from the point of view of one of the characters in the book, such as Bobby or Sergeant Noakes. Or, write your recount in third person narrative.
3. List what you think the main themes of this book are, for example, war, heroism, survival, kindness and freedom. Support your choice of themes with examples from the book.

### **Illustrations:**

4. Examine the book's illustrations. Do you like the style? Why or why not? What colours are used? What kinds of lines and textures are used? What shapes are used? Design your own illustrations for the cover and/or one page of text.
5. Study the illustrations throughout the book. What elements in the illustrations let the reader know where and when the book is set?
6. In pairs, each choose your favourite illustration from the book. Write a description of the illustration. Then read your written description to your partner and each draw a picture based on your partner's descriptions, for example, the picture of Jack reviving Bobby with the Proto rescue machine. How do your drawings compare to the drawings in the book? Consider points such as, is the composition similar and is it as detailed?
7. Choose your favourite moment from the book and create your own illustration or artistic interpretation of it, for example, a diorama, painting, model, poem, cartoon strip, movie storyboard, video, etc. Write a brief artist's statement to accompany your interpretation.

### **Research and Creative Responses:**

- Complete one of the following tasks inspired by the book:
8. Discuss with a partner who your favourite character in the book is and why.
  9. Find and research more about another aspect of the First World War, such as the use of other animals and their jobs. Present your findings in the style of an entry in a children's illustrated encyclopaedia.
  10. After reading the book, choose and discuss your favourite page/pages or moment in the book. List five reasons for your choice. Your choice could relate to elements such as plot development, characters, illustrations, the emotions that have been evoked, etc.
  11. In pairs, list what you feel are the main points of the book. Compare with your classmates. Do you agree or disagree with their choices? Why or why not? Next, write a short plot summary based on your choices. You may choose to present this as an illustrated timeline.
  12. At the back of the book, the author Glyn Harper tells the reader that 'The story of Bobby, the veteran canary, appeared in the British newspapers in 1917'. Create an article about one aspect of Bobby's story in the style of a newspaper article from a 1917 newspaper.
  13. Look at a map of the world and find the places that are mentioned in the book.
  14. Create an informative pamphlet about pet canaries and how best to care for them.
  15. Hold a class debate with the moot: *It is fair to keep birds in cages.*
  16. Jack plays the harmonica for Bobby. Find a song from the era of the First World War to listen to and/or learn to play on a harmonica or other instrument of your choice.
  17. In pairs, summarise the information about the tunnellers in the First World War at the back of the book. Use the main points taken for your summary to help answer the questions from the 'Before Reading' class brainstorm session.

18. Glyn Harper and Jenny Cooper are the award-winning creators of bestselling picture books about the First World War: *Le Quesnoy*, *Jim's Letters*, *Roly*, *the Anzac Donkey* and *Gladys Goes to War*. Find one of these books to read and write a review about it. Review the book for your favourite magazine or website. What did you like about the book? Why? What did you dislike about the book? Why? Give it a rating, such as stars or a number out of ten. Consider the following questions when writing your review:
- How did the story make you feel as it unfolded?
  - What ideas in the book awakened your interest?
  - What did you dislike, or find boring?
  - Do you think this is a significant book?
  - Why is this book important for today's readers?
  - How did it compare to *Bobby, the littlest war hero*? Are there many similarities or differences. Look at the themes, characters, plots, illustrations, etc.

**Close Reading Answers:**

- Canaries were used in the tunnels to detect gas when the soldiers worked underground.*
- The narrator's name is Jack.*
- Jack's job during the war was digging tunnels in one of the tunnelling companies of the Royal Engineers.*
- Candles and lamps were often used as the tunnels were dark and most of the tunnels didn't have electric lights.*
- When Bobby wobbled on his perch and fell on his back this was the sign that he had inhaled some dangerous gas and this early warning helped save the soldiers' lives as they knew to leave the tunnels.*
- As rewards Bobby was given birdseed and sometimes Jack would play his harmonica to Bobby.*
- Chalk is good to dig in because it's easier and cleaner than digging in clay. But there is a higher risk of gas poisoning and, after an explosion, gas can stay in chalky soil for days.*
- Jack revived Bobby after they escaped from the tunnel in the Somme region of France by sprinkling him with water from a nearby bucket.*
- When they were digging tunnels near Arras, Jack used the Proto rescue machine to give Bobby some oxygen.*
- Jack thought that Bobby deserved his freedom more than a medal for helping the tunnellers.*