‘The Field of Waterloo’ by Thomas Hardy

Resource Sheet

Opening Up.....

- Ask the children to work individually, or in small groups, on some quick research on one of the following creatures: rabbit, swallow, mole, lark, hedgehog, snail or worm. Where might we find such a creature? What does it eat? How does it make its home? What does it look like? We are going to look at a poem that emphasises the shock of war on these creatures.

- Now listen to a reading of *The Field of Waterloo* by Thomas Hardy. Explain to the children that this particular poem was written some time ago by a famous British poet. It is about a battle that took place 200 years ago. It took place in what is now Belgium and brought the end to a series of wars called the Napoleonic Wars. The Battle of Waterloo was considered a particularly ferocious and cruel battle. Ask the children to listen out for their researched creature in the midst of this battlefield.

- Hand out a copy of *The Field of Waterloo (Pupil Worksheet 1)* to each child. Read the poem again, maybe twice, asking the children to mark with a highlighter all the creatures or plants mentioned in the poem. Discuss, as appropriate.

Climbing Inside....

- The children have now engaged with the natural world on this battlefield. It is now time to consider how this fragile field ecosystem might be affected by the ravages of war. Show the children a short cartoon explaining *what life was like in the WW1 trenches* and listen to some war veterans talking about the *conditions in the trenches and on the battlefield*.

- Siegried Sassoon’s emotive poem *Attack* is accompanied by powerful film clips. This will impress upon the children the horrors of a battlefield. Look together at *Sassoon’s poem, Attack (Pupil Worksheet 2)* and collect interesting words, images and adjectives.

- Ask each child to imagine that they are one of the field-dwelling creatures mentioned in Hardy’s poem. Some children may wish to choose a creature that Hardy does not include - this is also fine. Each child needs to consider how their animal world has been thrown upside down by the onslaught of battle. Consider any information gleaned from the two film clips they have seen. *What has been destroyed? Is their home the same? Are they hurt in some way? What can they hear/smell/taste/see/touch?* Place a large beanbag/chair in the middle of a circle and Hot Seat each child in turn, asking them questions as a group.

Building Upon.....

- The children have now gathered ideas from both Hardy and Sassoon’s poems. They have imagined themselves to be battlefield creatures and now know a little about the real-life experiences of men who were there. *Pupil Worksheet 3* will now help them to structure their ideas and should result in some exciting poems. There is plenty of scope for collaborative work here, be it either working in pairs on a poem or producing a class poem with a different creature described in each individually written verse. Display possibilities are endless!

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- Barroux’s graphic novel *Line of Fire* cannot fail to inspire Upper Primary children if time can allow. Barroux is an artist who rescued a WW1 soldier’s diary from the rubbish. Magical....