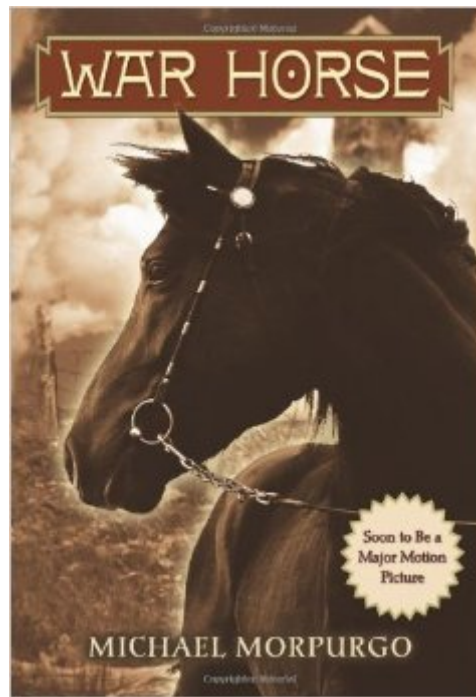


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War Horse



Synopsis

A powerful tale of war, redemption, and a hero's journey--now available in paperback! In 1914, Joey, a beautiful bay-red foal with a distinctive cross on his nose, is sold to the army and thrust into the midst of the war on the Western Front. With his officer, he charges toward the enemy, witnessing the horror of the battles in France. But even in the desolation of the trenches, Joey's courage touches the soldiers around him and he is able to find warmth and hope. But his heart aches for Albert, the farmer's son he left behind. Will he ever see his true master again?

Book Information

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Shipping Weight: 7.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (799 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #10,219 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #13 in [Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Europe](#) #20 in [Books > Children's Books > Animals > Horses](#) #23 in [Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Military & Wars](#)

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

"War Horse" is a story of courage and endurance by horse and man, conveyed through the destruction that is war. Told from the viewpoint of the horse, the story can draw in the most reluctant reader, as children often feel more empathy for animals than people. Because of descriptions of grueling labor and unsound working conditions for the horses, the book is best directed toward fourth grade and up. Joey, a gorgeous bay with four white stocking legs and a white cross on his forehead, is the War Horse. Albert is his 15-year-old human who trains and loves him. When his father sells the horse to the cavalry for service in World War I, Albert swears to join when he is old enough and find Joey. The insanity of matching a cavalry of horses and riders with sabers against soldiers with rifles and machine guns has to be one of the most insane moments in war history!!

One-fourth of the horses are killed in the first battle. All but two die in the next battle this cavalry faces. Joey and his equal, Tophorn, a huge black Arabian, survive, only to be taken as prisoners by the Germans. What Joey and Tophorn face as part of the team to pull the hospital cart to the battle front over and over is made right by kind treatment their German masters give to their wounds and injuries, and treat their fatigue at the end of day. Joey's worse experience comes when he and Tophorn and others must pull the artillery. Because these soldiers are dead tired themselves and also starving, they are not as attentive to the horses. The most horrifying scene occurs when Joey is totally alone and runs and runs from the sound of cannons until he is trapped in No Man's Land, a barren area between the French and English on one side and the Germans on the other. Two rolls of barbed wire separate the land from the trenches. Joey finds himself in this area. What transpires is an incredible and beautiful moment in the midst of an insane war. ***SPOILER ALERT! Read no further if you don't like to know anything about a book's ending.) Of course, you must know that Albert is re-united with Joey. How that comes about is purely contrived, but welcomed by a reader weary of the horrors of war for both man and horse. Last week a fourth-grader asked me for a really good book to read. I showed him several. When he saw "War Horse," he wanted it at once. The next day he told me, "This is a great book." He was already half-way finished. So I went home and read my copy. You will never look at a horse the same way again. Joey tells us about the people who tend him. Are they heavy-handed, hard, tender, kind, caring? What is it like with each type of person? What is it like to be a horse? But the best lesson is that horses are no longer used in battle (until a reader commented that horses are being used in Afghanistan! Barbarity in a barbaric place. What can one expect? Note: I'm speaking of war and war conditions, not the Afghan people or soldiers.)

In my opinion, War Horse is one of the best books I've ever read. I read it in Dutch, named 'Oorlogspaard'. (I'm Dutch, sorry for grammatical mistakes). When I began to read it, I first thought it was 'just' a story about a horse. How sweet. But when I got further, I saw it's kind of historical too. And that's the reason I like it so much; the whole story could be true. Other books about horses are mostly all the same; it's about a young girl (or boy) and a horse and it always has a happy end. This book is different. It shows the first world war from an other point of view: a horse. The horse (Joey) doesn't understand that much about the war and wants to get out of it as fast as he can. He stays friendly, although the soldiers let him work very hard. War Horse is my favourite book and I think that many people would like it; it's not a story for horse-lovers only, you know.

In London on September 17, 2009, I saw the sensational and deeply moving hit play "War Horse" which was adapted from Michael Morpurgo's novel. It was one of the best experiences I have ever had in the theater, an epic theater happening, yet a drama with a very moving intimate family core story. Huge seven foot horse puppets had been constructed. They are operated by two people inside the body and one outside operating the head actions. They move exactly like real horses, sound like real horses, and very early in the play audience members come to believe in them as real horses. The play is performed on a thrust stage with the audience flanking three sides. At various times a puppet goose on wheels delights the audience, a huge menacing tank rolls across the stage, and birds fly on tall poles. There are up to six horse puppets that appear as part of the cavalry. Sound, light, and music coalesce to create a total theater experience. "War Horse," (1982) the novel upon which the play is based is told in the first person by the horse himself, a device that was used in "Black Beauty." Considerable changes were made in plot and dialogue to turn the novel into a theater piece. The story is a very touching one about a boy, Albert, who finds that his father, in one of his drunken bouts, has bought a colt at auction. Albert develops a deep love for the horse and raises him with great tenderness. The book starts in Devon, England before the start of World War I. The father forces Albert to train Joey to be a plough horse; again the father in a drunken state had made a bet that Joey could be a plough horse in a week. When the war in Europe envelops England, Albert's father sells the horse to the army which needs cavalry horses. Albert is grief stricken over the loss of Joey and vows to get him back after what he thinks will be a brief war. Training for army service, Joey becomes a close friend to the bigger, stronger black stallion Tophorn. Together as close companions they go through some horrible battlefield experiences. Captain Nicholls takes care of Joey and paints his portrait. Soon Joey and Tophorn are in the heat of battle. They fall into German hands, and are saved when they pull ambulance carts for the Germans. An old man and his daughter protect them on their farm for a time until they are taken back by the Germans to pull artillery carts. They are befriended by old Friederick. Soon they are overwhelmed by the grim battlefield conditions such as the savage barbed wire. This novel and play are a very strong indictments of war. In World War I over six million horses died from all sorts of causes. The human death toll has been estimated at ten million. The anti-war theme is driven home more poignantly when you see the suffering of the horses on stage and on the printed page; witness man's inhumanity toward man, and man's cruelty and disdain for animals.

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