

michael morpurgo



Private Peaceful Diary Entry Activities

24th June 1916, 10.05pm

They've gone now, and I'm alone at last. I have the whole night ahead of me, and I won't waste a single moment of it. I shan't sleep it away. I won't dream it away either. I mustn't, because every moment of it will be far too precious.

I want to try to remember everything, just as it was, just as it happened. I've had nearly eighteen years of yesterdays and tomorrows, and tonight I must remember as many of them as I can. I want tonight to be long, as long as my life, not filled with fleeting dreams that rush me on towards dawn.

Tonight, more than any other night of my life, I want to feel alive.

Activity: Emotion Vocabulary

Tommo's diary entries show the reader his thoughts and feelings.

- Can you find all twenty of the emotion words in the wordsearch?
- Do you know what all of the words mean?
- Which words have similar meanings?
- With a partner decide which five of these emotion words you would use to describe Tommo's feelings.

F	R	U	S	T	R	A	T	E	D	Q	W	U	I	P
E	A	M	S	H	A	K	E	H	N	P	A	R	X	K
A	L	I	C	T	R	I	R	R	P	E	S	T	H	L
R	A	S	A	Q	E	O	R	A	R	H	E	B	O	M
F	R	E	R	A	W	P	I	G	E	E	T	E	R	N
U	M	R	E	F	I	M	F	E	S	A	N	G	R	Y
L	E	A	D	R	T	H	I	D	S	R	T	C	I	P
T	D	B	O	A	H	E	E	A	E	T	R	R	F	A
A	F	L	Z	I	D	L	D	K	D	B	E	U	I	N
A	S	E	X	D	R	P	Q	L	L	R	M	S	E	I
W	D	P	D	I	A	L	A	S	E	O	B	H	D	C
U	R	A	U	L	W	E	L	P	E	K	L	E	O	K
R	E	S	P	O	N	S	I	B	L	E	Y	D	P	Y
M	A	F	S	D	K	S	V	A	B	N	D	T	R	M
O	D	H	O	P	E	L	E	S	S	C	K	L	I	B

dread	frustrated
panicky	responsible
heartbroken	angry
helpless	horrified
miserable	afraid
shaken	alarmed
trembly	terrified
fearful	enraged
scared	depressed
hopeless	crushed



Private Peaceful Diary Entry Activities

24th June 1916, 10.40pm

I don't want to eat. Stew, potatoes and biscuits. I usually like stew, but I've no appetite for it. I nibble at a biscuit, but I don't want that either. Not now. It's a good thing Grandma Wolf is not here. She always hated us leaving food on our plates. "Waste not, want not," she'd say. I'm wasting this, Wolfwoman, whether you like it or not.

Activity: Wolfwoman Flashback

Imagine you are Tommo. Write a flashback memory about Grandma Wolf. You could use information from the story or use your imagination to expand the memory of Grandma Wolf telling the children not to waste food.

Tips for writing a flashback:

- Use the past tense
- Make it clear to the reader you are writing a flashback by using an opening sentence such as, 'I remember it as if it were yesterday...'
- Use time connectives to show the passing of time
- Use a closing sentence such as, 'Suddenly a noise abruptly brought me back to the present moment.'

[illegible]



mael



24th June 1916, 11.14pm

There's a mouse in here with me. He's sitting there in the light of the lamp, looking up at me. He seems as surprised to see me as I am to see him. There he goes. I can hear him still, scurrying about somewhere under the hayrack. I think he's gone now. I hope he comes back. I miss him already.

There's a mouse in here with me. He's sitting there in the light of the lamp, looking up at me. He seems as surprised to see me as I am to see him. There he goes. I can hear him still, scurrying about somewhere under the hayrack. I think he's gone now. I hope he comes back. I miss him already.

Imagine that Tommo and the mouse have a conversation. What would Tommo tell the mouse? What would the mouse say back to him? What questions might they ask one another? Present your dialogue using direct speech with the correct punctuation and use at least six exchanges between Tommo and the mouse.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

[illegible]



mael



25th June 2016, 00.24am

I haven't seen a fox while I've been out here. It's hardly surprising, I suppose. But I have heard owls. How any bird can survive in all this I'll never know. I've even seen larks over no-man's-land. I always found hope in that.

I haven't seen a fox while I've been out here. It's hardly surprising, I suppose. But I have heard owls. How any bird can survive in all this I'll never know. I've even seen larks over no-man's-land. I always found hope in that.

Research images and information about the setting 'no-man's land'. Use your research findings and information from the story to write a description of no-man's land. Ideas you may choose to include:

- **Where there animals in no-man's land? If so, which ones?**
- **Where there trees and plants?**
- **How big was no-man's land?**
- **Was the landscape flat or hilly?**
- **Where there any buildings or other landmarks?**
- **What was the weather like?**

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mael



Private Peaceful Diary Entry Activities

25th June 2016, 00.54am

There's a sliver of a moon out there, a new moon. I wonder if they're looking at it back home. Bertha used to howl at the moon, I remember. If I had a coin in my pocket, I'd turn it over and make a wish. When I was young I really believed in all those old tales. I wish I still could believe in them. But I mustn't think like that. It's no good wishing for the moon, no good wishing for the impossible. Don't wish, Tommo. Remember. Remembrances are real.

Activity: Moon Poem

Use key words and phrases from this extract to inspire you to write a poem about the moon. Try to create a mood and rhythm that matches the atmosphere and tone of the diary extract. You might choose to include the following phrases:

- 'sliver of moon'
- 'a new moon'
- 'looking at it back home'
- howl at the moon'
- 'coin in my pocket'
- 'make a wish'
- 'when I was young'
- 'it's no good'
- 'impossible'

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Private Peaceful Diary Entry Activities

25th June 2016, 01.28am

I was once told in Sunday school that a church tower reaches up skywards because it is a promise of Heaven. Church towers are different in France. It was the first thing I noticed when I came here, when I changed my world of home for my world of war. In comparison the church towers at home seem almost squat, hiding themselves away in the folds of the fields. Here there are no folds in the fields, only wide open plains, scarcely a hill in sight. And instead of church towers they have spires that thrust themselves skywards like a child putting his hand up in class, longing to be noticed. But God, if there is one, notices nothing here. He has long since abandoned this place and all of us who live in it. There are not many steeples left now. I have seen the one in Albert, hanging down like a broken promise. Now I come to think of it, it was a broken promise that brought me here, to France, and now to this barn. The mouse is back again. That's good.

Activity: Church Tower Sketch

Research images of English and French church towers to see the comparison Tommo makes in this extract. Draw and label pencil sketches of an English church tower next to a French church tower to show your findings. Was Tommo accurate in the descriptions he uses?

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Private Peaceful Diary Entry Activities

25th June 2016, 02.14am

I keep checking the time. I promised myself I wouldn't, but I can't seem to help myself. Each time I do it, I put the watch to my ear and listen for the tick. It's still there, softly slicing away the seconds, then the minutes, then the hours. It tells me there are three hours and forty-six minutes left. Charlie told me once this watch would never stop, never let me down, unless I forgot to wind it. The best watch in the world, he said, a wonderful watch. But it isn't. If it was such a wonderful watch it would do more than simply keep the time - any old watch can do that. A truly wonderful watch would make the time. Then, if it stopped, time itself would have to stand still, then this night would never have to end and morning could never come. Charlie often told me we were living on borrowed time out here. I don't want to borrow any more time. I want time to stop so that tomorrow never comes, so that dawn will never happen. I listen to my watch again, to Charlie's watch. Still ticking. Don't listen, Tommo. Don't look. Don't think. Only remember.

Activity: Stopping Time

Imagine that Tommo's watch is magical. As he holds the watch listening to it ticking it suddenly stops. Tommo realises that when the watch stops ticking, time has stopped. Use your imagination to write a story extract about what happens when time stops.

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Private Peaceful Diary Entry Activities

25th June 2016, 03.01am

I dropped off to sleep. I've lost precious minutes - I don't know how many, but they are minutes I can never have back. I should be able by now to fight off sleep. I've done it often enough on lookout in the trenches, but then I had cold or fear or both as my wakeful companions. I long for that moment of surrender to sleep, just to drift away into the warmth of nothingness. Resist it, Tommo, resist it. After this night is over, then you can drift away, then you can sleep for ever, for nothing will ever matter again. Sing Oranges and Lemons. Go on. Sing it. Sing it like Big Joe does, over and over again. That'll keep you awake.

Oranges and Lemons, say the bells of St. Clements,
You owe me five farthings, say the bells of St. Martins.
When will you pay me? say the bells of Old Bailey.
When I grow rich, say the bells of Shoreditch.
When will that be? say the bells of Stepney.
I'm sure I don't know, says the great bell at Bow.
Here comes a candle to light you to bed,
And here comes a chopper to chop off your head.

When will you pay me? say the bells of Old Bailey.
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Activity: Research Presentation

With a partner or small group, research and find out about the origins of the Oranges and Lemons song. Present your research findings as a powerpoint presentation, a poster or a fact file ready to show another group or the rest of your class. Ideas to research could include:

- When was the song written?
- Who wrote the song?
- What do the lyrics mean?
- Why have children throughout history enjoyed singing it?
- Where are the places mentioned in the song?
- What is special about the places in the song?

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Private Peaceful Diary Entry Activities

25th June 2016, 03.25am

The mouse is here again. He keeps stopping and looking up at me. He's wondering if he should run away, whether I'm friend or foe. "Wee, sleekit, caw'rin tim'rous beastie." I don't know what half the words mean, but I still know the poem. Back at school Miss McAllister made us stand up and recite it on Burns Day. She said it was good for us to have at least one great Scottish poem in our heads for ever. This wee beastie is tim'rous all right, but he's not Scottish, he's a Belgian mouse. I recite the poem to him all the same. He seems to understand because he listens politely. I do it in Miss McAllister's Scottish accent. I'm almost word perfect. I think Miss McAllister would have been proud of me. But the moment I finish he's gone, and I'm alone once more. Earlier they came and asked if I wanted someone to stay with me through the night, and I said no. I even sent the padre away. They asked if there was anything I wanted, anything they could do to help, and I said there was nothing. Now I long to have them all here, the padre too. We could have had singsongs. They could have brought me egg and chips. We could have drunk ourselves silly and I could be numb with it by now. But all I've had for company is a mouse, a vanishing Belgian mouse.

Activity: Poetry Performance

Research and learn about Robert Burns' famous poem 'To a Mouse'. Then with a partner or small group practise reading and performing the poem ready to show other groups. Think about the following performance poetry tips to help you:

Posture (how you stand)

- Eye contact (where to look)
- Articulation (speaking clearly)
- Timing and rhythm (the speed and intonation of your voice)
- Mood (using the volume and pitch of your voice)
- Facial expressions (use your face to show the feeling in the poem)



Private Peaceful Diary Entry Activities

25th June 2016, 03.59am

There is the beginning of day in the night sky, not yet the pale light of dawn, but night is certainly losing its darkness. A cockerel sounds his morning call, and tells me what I already know but do not want to believe, that morning will break and soon. Morning at home used to be walking with Charlie to school, wading through piles of autumn leaves and stamping the ice in the puddles, or the three of us coming up through the woods after a night's poaching on the Colonel's river, and crouching down to watch a badger that didn't know we were there. Morning here has always been to wake with the same dread in the pit of my stomach, knowing that I will have to look death in the face again, that up to now it may have been someone else's death, but that today it could be mine, that this may be my last sunrise, my last day on earth. All that is different about this morning is that I know whose death it will be and how it will happen. Looking at it that way it seems not so bad. Look at it that way, Tommo. Look at it that way.

Activity: Walking to School Flashback

Flashbacks and memories are an important feature of the situation Tommo is experiencing. Use information from the story or your imagination to expand Tommo's flashback about walking with Charlie to school.

- **Make your writing as descriptive as possible. Use techniques such as similes, metaphors, alliteration and onomatopoeia.**
- **Think about the sights, smells, temperature and noises Tommo would have experienced when wading through autumn leaves and stamping on ice puddles.**

[illegible]

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Private Peaceful Diary Entry Activities

25th June 2016, 04.55am

Sixty-five minutes to go. How shall I live them? Shall I try to sleep? It would be useless to try. Should I eat a hearty breakfast? I don't want it. Shall I scream and shout? What would be the point? Shall I pray? Why? What for? Who to? No. They will do what they will do. Field Marshal Haig is God out here, and Haig has signed. Haig has confirmed the sentence. He has decreed that Private Peaceful will die, will be shot for cowardice in the face of the enemy at six o'clock on the morning of the twenty-fifth of June 1916. The firing squad will be having their breakfast by now, sipping their tea, hating what they will have to do. No one has told me where exactly it will happen. I don't want it to be in some dark prison yard with grey walls all around. I want it to be where there is sky and clouds and trees, and birds. It will be easier if there are birds. And let it be quickly over. Please let it be quickly over.

Activity: Concept of Time Challenge

Have you ever noticed that when you want time to pass quickly it feels like it passes slowly, and then, when you want time to pass slowly it feels like it flies by? Think about how time affects Tommo in this extract. Do you think 65 minutes feels like a long time for him? Or does it feel far too short? Imagine that you must explain how long 65 minutes is to someone who has come from another planet and has no concept of time. Write a list of things that you can do in 65 minutes as a way of showing how long it is. For example in 65 minutes you could...

- Play a sports game
- Read a short book
- Have a maths lesson
- Run around the school field 30 times

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Private Peaceful Diary Entry Activities

25th June 2016, 05:59am

I try to close my mind to what is happening this minute to Charlie. I try just to think of Charlie as he was at home, as we all were. But all I can see in my mind are the soldiers leading Charlie out into the field. He is not stumbling. He is not struggling. He is not crying out. He is walking with his head held high, just as he was after Mr Munnings caned him at school that day. Maybe there's a lark rising, or a great crow wheeling into the wind above him. The firing squad stands at ease, waiting. Six men, their rifles loaded and ready, each one wanting only to get it over with. They will be shooting one of their own and it feels to them like murder. They try not to look at Charlie's face. Charlie is tied to the post. The padre says a prayer, makes the sign of the cross on his forehead and moves away. It is cold now but Charlie does not shiver. The officer, his revolver drawn, is looking at his watch. They try to put a hood over Charlie's head, but he will not have it. He looks up to the sky and sends his last living thoughts back home. "Present! Ready! Aim!" He closes his eyes and as he waits he sings softly. "Oranges and Lemons, say the bells of St. Clements." Under my breath I sing it with him. I hear the echoing volley. It is done. It is over. With that volley a part of me has died with him. I turn back to go to the solitude of my hay barn, and I find I am far from alone in my grieving. All over the camp I see them standing to attention outside their tents. And the birds are singing.

Activity: Another Perspective

Imagine you are a member of the firing squad. Use information from the extract and your imagination to write your diary extract from the evening of this day. You might choose to include:

- Reflection on how you felt in the build up to the event
- Your feelings about Charlie
- Description of what happened from your perspective
- How you felt and what you thought about at the time of firing
- How you feel now
