

# The RSPCA during war time

## ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

- To be able to discuss and clearly explain ideas
- To recognise the importance of using a range of sources when forming an opinion
- To evaluate texts and images to identify potential bias

## CURRICULUM LINKS

### England:

- PSHE
- History
- Citizenship

### Wales:

- Humanities
- Languages, Literacy and Communication

## ABOUT THE RSPCA

If you have not used any education resources from the RSPCA before, you may want to spend some time introducing the RSPCA and the work that we do. The supporting Sources Pack includes a slide to show your class.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) is a charity operating in England and Wales that promotes animal welfare. Founded in 1824, it is the oldest and largest animal welfare organisation in the world. The RSPCA's vision is to live in a world where all animals are respected and treated with compassion. RSPCA Education offers a wealth of free online resources, including lesson plans linked to the English and Welsh curricula, interactive resources and a newsletter to keep you up to date with new content. For all of this and more, visit: [education.rspca.org.uk](http://education.rspca.org.uk).

## WHAT IS TABLE TALKING?

Table Talking is a communication and empathy building activity where pupils share their opinions and practice their critical thinking. It works best if pupils are sat around a table or using chairs in a circle. Pupils will read a 'Table Talking' prompt and take turns to share their thoughts for a few minutes using one of the following starters: **"I think..." "I agree because..." "I disagree because..."**

Encourage pupils to think critically about each other's ideas. Asking each other why they have the opinion they do is a great way to start.

Table Talking prompts are designed to start discussions and we have suggested different options depending on the age and ability of your class. Remind your pupils that there are many different opinions and that some of them might change theirs after the activity.



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## STIMULUS

Begin on page 8 of the Sources Pack.



When war was declared in 1914, animals were sent to serve alongside British troops in France and Belgium - horses, mules, donkeys, dogs and even pigeons. Around 1,000 horses a week were sent to support the war effort.

Thousands of animals died every week while serving in World War I and many thought it was necessary. The RSPCA played a vital role by training men to look after horses and setting up the Fund for Sick and Wounded Horses. This meant many animals healed from their injuries and were able to continue serving when they would have died without that care.

More information about the role of the RSPCA and animals in war can be found via these links:  
[24 ways we've made a difference for animals over the last 196 years](#)  
[How we helped animals during the First World War](#)

Share some images from **pages 9 to 17** of the Sources Pack with the class. Use the questions below to discuss what they can see.

### KS1

What can you see?

What clues can you see that tell you the pictures aren't recent?

### KS2

What clues do the pictures give you about when they were taken?

What support would animals have provided during the war?

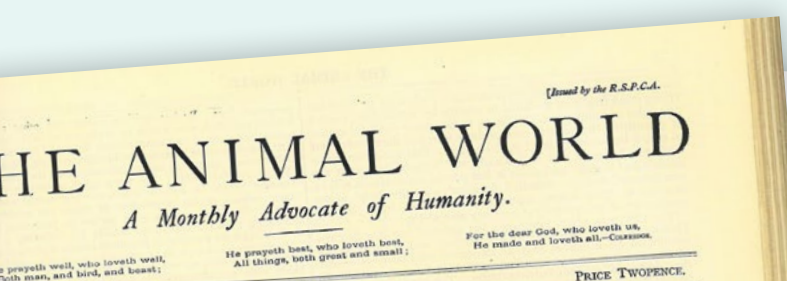
What challenges do you think the RSPCA would have encountered when raising funds to care for sick and injured animals?

### KS3

How would animals have benefited the war effort and supported the troops?

What challenges do you think the RSPCA would have encountered when fundraising?

How do you think the RSPCA's efforts to care for sick and wounded animals in WWI has influenced our attitudes towards animals today?



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## TABLE TALK

Have pupils sit in circular groups of 3-5. Choose the prompt you think is most suitable for your groups and ask them to discuss.

Remind pupils that it's okay to have different opinions, but most importantly – it's best to keep an open-mind. This will develop their critical thinking and communication skills. Depending on needs, remind pupils of the importance of letting each other finish sharing their ideas without interrupting. This will help them to start building their debating skills.

### KS1

Look at the image on **Page 13** of the Sources Pack. What do you think is happening?

### KS2 and 3

- Everyone should raise money to donate to charity
- Animal lives must be risked when needed to save humans
- Using working animals in war was necessary in the 1900s
- Campaigning creates more change than fundraising

Allow a few minutes for discussion before inviting each group to share their ideas about the Table Talking prompt they discussed.

## TEACHER TALK

### KS1

- Who do you think the girl is?
- What might she be doing?
- Can you think of words to describe how the horse might feel? What about for how the girl is feeling?

### KS2

- Who agreed and disagreed? Why?
- Did anyone's opinion change during the discussion?
- If anyone's opinion changed, how did that feel?

### KS3

- Did anyone's opinion change during the discussion?
- If anyone's opinion changed, how did that feel?
- Was there anything you all agreed on?



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## REMEMBERING THE PEOPLE AND ANIMALS WHO FOUGHT IN THE WAR

**Page 16** of the Sources Pack shows an example of a memorial to commemorate animals that served in the First World War effort. The RSPCA campaigned endlessly for the opportunity and resources to care for sick and injured animals during WWI.



Choose from the questions and prompts below and record thoughts and new words in a word bank.

### KS1

What is a memorial? Why do we have them?

Can you think of a memorial you have seen?

Who do we build memorials for and what might they need to do to get one?

**Key vocabulary:** fundraising, kindness, help, care, donation, memorial

### KS2

Can you think of a memorial you have seen?

Who do we build memorials for and what might someone need to do to get one?

How do memorials make us feel?

What would an animal need to do to get a memorial?

**Key vocabulary:** compassion, fundraising, charity, empathy, sympathy, rescue, rehabilitation, commemorate

### KS3

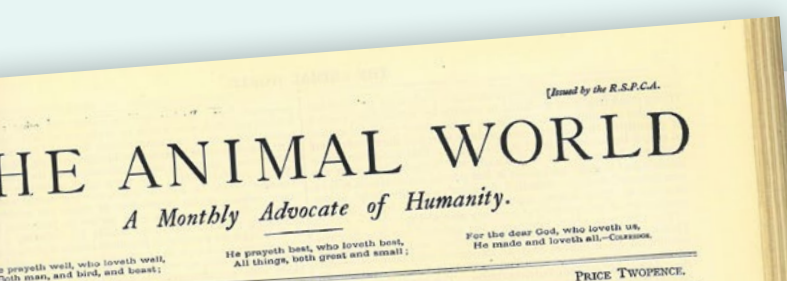
What might someone do to deserve a memorial?

What might prevent people who have achieved amazing things being remembered with a memorial or statue?

Do you think animals should be able to get memorials?

How long should a memorial exist for?

**Key vocabulary:** campaign, altruism, equality, humane, bias





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## RECOGNISING BIAS

Share more images and materials from **pages 8 to 17** of the Sources Pack to offer additional clues about how animals were used during WWI. Encourage pupils to think critically about who was taking the photos or writing the words, and whether this changes their view of what is happening or how the source makes them feel. For younger children, you could talk about propaganda and bias. This will help pupils start to develop an understanding of bias when exploring a source.

You could use the website links on page 2 of this lesson to provide more information. Choose some questions from the options below to continue the discussion.

**KS1**

How would you feel if an animal was sent to war?

How do you think the animal would feel?

What would happen if we didn't have these pictures and posters?

**KS2**

Do you think it was common to have compassion for animals during WWI?

Why is it important to use more than one source when forming an opinion?

Who do you think is taking the photos? Would your opinion change if it was taken by a:

- British soldier
- German soldier
- RSPCA officer

**KS3**

How do you think people feel about sending animals into conflict today?

How would the RSPCA campaign for animal care in a war today?

Why is it important to consider the person responsible for the image or source? How might their view influence what is included, or omitted?



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## OPTIONAL EXTENSION ACTIVITY

### WHAT IS INFLUENTIAL MEDIA?

Influential media is information used to promote a political cause or point of view. It can exist anywhere and can be in any type of media – images, film, social media posts, posters etc.

Look at the Sources Pack for some examples. You can also click [here](#) to see some examples of influential posters during WWII.

#### KS1 and 2

Show children some examples of influential posters. Talk briefly about what makes this influential or persuasive. What opinion is being shared? What words and images are used to present this view?

In groups or pairs, ask them to create their own posters that present an opinion. You could have different groups present conflicting opinions, e.g. a poster campaigning for animals to be used in WWI, or for them to be protected from being sent to war. They can draw or research images to include that support the opinion.

**For KS1**, you could provide a slogan and some images for them to create the poster around. **For KS2**, challenge them to write a slogan that is short and snappy, uses alliteration or rhyming words, depending on the age and ability of your class. You could provide a word bank of persuasive language for them to select from.

#### KS3

Looking at some examples, ask pupils what effect the images or sources have on them and how they feel when looking at them. What do they think the creator intended? Discuss how influence and persuasion can be powerful tools when combined with mass media to influence lots of people.

In groups or pairs, ask them to create a short article or social media post that presents a particular opinion. You could ask different groups to present conflicting opinions e.g. influencing the public that animals should be used in war, or for them to be protected. They can research images or film to include that support the opinion and should think about how the language they use can help to persuade and influence. How do imagery, film, words and music influence our emotions?

