In the Mouth of the Wolf tells the story of Francis and his brother Pieter, two boys who grow up together but hold very different views about the need to fight. That is until something happens to change that. Michael Morpurgo's tale of courage, fear and hope - with exquisite illustrations by Barroux - is a rich, multi-layered exploration of people's complicated and sometimes conflicted beliefs. This teaching sequence gives children the opportunity to read and enjoy the book, consider some of the issues it raises and then write persuasive letters in role as characters from the story, before recording these and creating music to accompany them.

Discussion and booktalk

1. Once you’ve read In the Mouth of the Wolf together as a class, you can use PowerPoint slide 3 to discuss ideas and themes from the book together, using the following questions as prompts:

   • In what ways are Francis and Pieter different as characters? What do they have in common?
• Do you think Peter and Francis’ different attitudes to fighting are due to something they have learned or experienced in their childhoods or something that is part of their nature?

• At what moment in the story does Francis change his views about fighting? Explain why you have chosen this moment. If this event had not happened, how do you think life would have been different for Francis?

• *In The Mouth of the Wolf* tells the story of real people: Francis and Pieter Cammaerts were Michael Morpurgo’s uncles. Do you think writing about real people is more or less difficult than inventing characters? Why? How might writing about family members change how you tell a story?

• Next, organise the class into an even number of small groups (with 4-6 children in each group). Using PowerPoint slide 4, share the following statement with the children:

> "It is always right to fight for what you believe in"

Ask the children whether they agree with this statement with a show of hands, then tell them they will be debating the statement. Tell half of the groups they will be supporting the statement and tell the other half they will be challenging it. Give the children time to work as a group to compose their arguments. The children can then debate the statement, either as a whole class or with two opposing groups debating against each other.

Once the debate is over, ask for another show of hands. Ask the children if they have changed their minds. If they have, can they explain which arguments persuaded them to think differently?

**Creative writing**

1. Read the extract from page 24 of *In the Mouth of the Wolf* (see PowerPoint slides 5 - 7) to set the scene. Ask the children to summarise the two brothers’ beliefs about fighting in the war. Do they agree more with one brother or the other, or can they see the point of view of both Francis and Pieter?

2. As a class, brainstorm the reasons the brothers give for fighting or not fighting. Then add to these with any other reasons they the children can think of.
3. Tell the children they are going to write two letters. The first will be from Pieter to Francis explaining why he thinks it is important to join the army and fight against the Nazis. They are then going to write Francis’s reply, where he makes the case for his pacifism.

4. Next, share PowerPoint slide 8 showing some of the techniques they could use in a persuasive text. Work through the list together, discussing which might be useful in the brothers’ letters. Give the children time to plan their letters (using the handout, if you wish).

5. Using *PowerPoint slide 9*, remind children about the features of a letter. Ask if the letters they are writing are formal or informal. As they will be informal, ask the children if this might change any of the features that they use (an informal ending, rather than ‘yours faithfully,’ perhaps?).

6. Ask the children to write their letters, drawing on the ideas you have discussed in the session and the guidance on the PowerPoint to make their writing as effective as possible.

7. Once they have finished, ask the children to share their letters with a partner and identify strengths and possible areas for development. You could also share some examples of strong writing with the class by displaying them on the IWB. Finally, give children an opportunity to return to their work and make changes in the light of feedback and other ideas they’ve seen from their classmates.

**Creativity and arts**

1. Tell the children they are going to record themselves reading their letters aloud and create some background music to accompany their film.

2. Working in pairs, ask the children to each take the role of one of the brothers and record their partner reading their letter. Depending on the technology you have available, this could be using a camera, a tablet or the camera on a laptop. The children might wish to practise their reading a few times before recording, to make sure it is clear and that they read it in a way that reflects how their character is feeling.
3. Once they have recorded their speeches, they can set about creating music to play in the background. As a class, discuss what qualities the background music might have. Ask them if it should be:

- Loud or quiet?
- Fast or slow?
- Happy or sad?
- Excited or calm?

Then, brainstorm the types of instruments that might be used to create their desired effect, thinking about the instruments themselves and also how they might be played (a light tapping on a drum with the fingertips, compared to hitting a drum with a drumstick, for example).

4. Depending on the resources you have available, the children could create their background music using percussion instruments (after a discussion about which types of instrument might provide the required sounds) or using a music software (for example Garage Band, or one of the many apps or websites that can be found online for making electronic music).

5. Once they have finished, the groups can share their work with each other, listening to each as a whole class and commenting on parts they particularly like.

**Putting it all together**

Once everyone has finished their films and combined the spoken letters with the background music, they could be shared online, either through a class area on the school’s website or through an online learning platform such as Google Classroom or Microsoft Teams.