



KS2 Teaching Notes for use in school
and as home schooling activities.

In 1815 *Cobweb*, a Pembrokeshire Corgi, finds himself having to suddenly adapt from a happy life as a beloved farm dog to a life as a Drover's dog herding cattle and sheep 250 miles from Wales to London. On his return to Wales Cobweb encounters an unexpected stranger, the French Drummer Boy of Waterloo, and hears his incredible tale. The adventure story is unique, heartfelt and includes many themes and issues that affect all our lives today as they affected the lives of the people living in 1815. It is another truly magical Michael Morpurgo tale.



Here are some ideas of the ways the story can be used as a hook into learning activities in both the classroom and home.

English

KS2 Writing Opportunities

Instructional Texts - How to train a dog. Using Cobweb, a Pembrokehire Corgi and Goodlad, a Border Collie as a hook from the story, ask the children how many of them, or their close relatives, own a dog. Discover how much experience the children already have of caring for and training a dog. If possible invite a dog and it's owner into school to demonstrate how they trained it and answer questions from the children. Even better, invite a local sheepdog trainer and their dog into school to demonstrate their dog's skills and answer the children's questions.

Build on first hand experience by providing the children with a selection of non- fiction texts and allow internet access to relevant sites (see some suggested links below) and ask them to research how to train a dog. Ask the children to take notes using bullet points and keywords. Ask the children to include the key features of the text type; a title statement, list of equipment or materials, sequenced, chronological steps, diagrams or illustrations, present tense, imperative verbs, detailed information and precise vocabulary. Then they can choose to create a guide on how to train a dog to work with sheep or how to train a dog to behave well as a pet.

[RSPCA Dog Training](#)

[Battersea Dogs Home Training](#)

Learn about sheep dogs [International Sheep Dog Society](#)

Tips from the Farmers Weekly on how to train a sheep dog [Training Top Tips](#)

Watch episodes of 'One Man And His Dog' on YouTube.



Instructional Texts - How to survive on Treasure Island. We are introduced to Treasure Island at the start of the story, tell the children that there is a real Treasure Island at the farm Michael Morpurgo bases the story on, called Ramsey Island (look up images). Ask the children to imagine that they have been abandoned, alone on the island with no means of escape. Using the key features of this text type as described previously ask them to write a guide of how to survive on the island. Consider a scenario which resulted in how they found themselves lost and abandoned on the island and how would they get the equipment needed to survive? Use the landscape, scavenge materials (eg perhaps they would make rope by plaiting sheep fleece found caught on plants or rocks). Then share ideas and role play situations before beginning writing. Don't forget to include ways to protect themselves from predators and give instructions as to how to attract attention of possible rescuers.

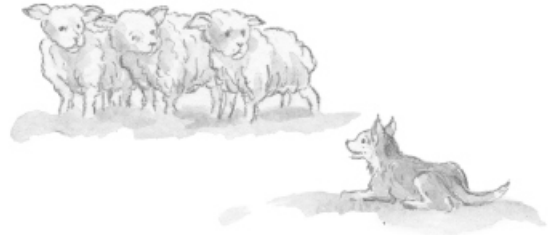
Short News Reports – Write an article for the Frampton On Severn Village magazine as if it was published and read in 1815.

- Boney's Finished, Peace At Last!
– write an article detailing the events as the news that The Battle of Waterloo had been won. (P130 Chapter 10)
- Write adverts for artists tradespeople offering to paint your portrait, service your horse drawn cart or carriage, farrier services or thatchers to repair or replace thatched roofs.
- Write adverts for a musical night in the inn, a flower sale or for the Frampton Fayre on the Green.



Writing in role – write as if you are one of the cattle or sheep that Goodlad and Cobweb drive to London. Write a short recount of part of the journey to London, include humour, rhetorical questions eg ...

My hooves were killing me, he's a slave driver that Drover Morgan and those two dogs, that little fat one with short legs, who does he think he is? Ran alongside me barking and telling me to hurry up, I was going as fast as I can. Curly (my best mate, young ram) said that short dog best not come barking in his face or he'll feel the full force of his forehead when he butts him.



Diary Entries – Analyse Auntie Megan's character from what you learn about her reading Chapters 5 and 6. Ask the children to write diary entries in role as **Megan** recounting and reflecting on key events in the story from when she arrives at the farmhouse until the end of Chapter six when she has given Cobweb away to her cousin Drover Morgan.

Role play using another adult (or yourself) dressed as Auntie Megan and let the children ask you questions about the events. Eg 'Why do you not like dogs?' 'Why did you marry Tad?' 'Are you happy living at the farm?' 'Where did you learn to bake and cook so well?', etc . When answering the children's questions disrupt the impression the children will have of Megan from the text. Encourage the children to speculate what may have led her to act in such a way and develop understanding and empathy to the villain in the story. Foster your children's critical thinking skills so that they question information they read and are able to form their own perspectives based on having an open mind.

Encourage the children to take notes based on the interview to use in their diary entries in role as Auntie Megan.

Alternatively, write a diary entry in role as the injured soldier who meets Patrick the drummer boy (pages 201-203) recounting this meeting and reflecting on their previous meeting at Hougoumont during and after the battle.

Persuasive Writing - Challenge the children to write a letter to Auntie Megan persuading her to be a better, kinder person. Convince her that Cobweb is an asset to the house and the family.

Write a play script – Read chapter 13, summarise the story of the heroic French drummer boy that Robbie and Jonno, the two brothers returning from war tell to Goodlad and Cobweb. Research stories about this drummer boy who did exist and was hugely admired by British soldiers who defended Hougomont Farm. Challenge the children to write a play script from the point where the French break through the gate ...

The Frenchies had broken through the gate, led by the drummer boy, who was walking on ahead. He was drumming and shouting through the noise of the battle, all the yelling, and the musket fire, and the artillery shells, and the screams of the dying. “En avant,” he was shouting. “Vive l’empereur! Vive la France. En avant, en avant!”

(P164/165, Chapter 13)

Up to the part of the story where the drummer boy vanishes as they disembark at Tilbury. Talk about the conventions of a play script, how the setting is indicated, how stage directions are given to tell the actors how to act. Put the children into groups, each group writes their scene, prepares it and performs it to the rest of the class. Encourage the children to film their scenes on iPads as they rehearse making changes to improve their scene based on what they see.



Debate – Ask the children to consider Bethan's life and compare it to their's now.

Tad and me, we're on our own again now. But the trouble is there aren't enough hours in the day to get all the work done, not enough hands to do it, and stone walls are falling down. A shed blew away in the last gale, and the roof's falling off the house, and there's more gales to come - there always are. And Tad says we'll never have enough money to mend everything, no matter how hard we work on the farm. And he goes on and on about how he knows that there is treasure out there somewhere on Treasure Island, that there must be, and that one day he'll find it and then we'll be rich, and everything will be fine.

(Page 20, Chapter 1)

Reading the story, list the chores Bethan would have done on the farm and in the house (caring for the animals, mucking out, feeding, cleaning the house, making the meals for her and Tad, washing up etc). **Write** a short description of her life at the time. List the chores they have to do at home, compare their list and life to Bethan's. Debate, should children have chores?

Creative Writing - Treasure Island – using Tad's belief that there is treasure buried somewhere on the island create a story about the pirates or sailors who hid it there and what fate had befallen them that meant they hadn't returned to collect it. Design and make treasure maps marking features of the island and where the spot where the treasure is buried.



Cross Curricular Activities

History

The Battle Of Waterloo – at the beginning of the story we hear Bethan talking to Cobweb;

“Barri left to be a soldier, you know,” she said, “to fight the Frenchies in the war, against Boney. The Frenchies don't have a king like we do, Cobweb. They have an emperor instead. I don't know why. Napoleon, he is - Boney, we call him. And Boney wants to invade us, and we don't want him to, do we? So we're fighting him and he's fighting us. A few young fellows from around here have gone to the war, like Barri did. And we haven't heard of him or seen him since. There's been one or two killed. That's what happens in wars, cobweb. People die, and that's really sad.”

(Page 19, Chapter 1).

Later in the story the villagers in Frampton are celebrating the end of the war. Using these events, investigate the Battle of Waterloo learning the key facts. Note the connections and contrasts with the present day as wars and unrest is occurring between countries right now. Address and devise historically valid questions about change, cause, similarity and difference, and significance. Consider the questions; Why have we not learnt from the atrocities of war? Why do we still fight?

Farming Then and Now – what are the similarities and differences between farming around 1815 and today? Look at land use, food production, jobs on the farm and the impact of machinery. Create a timeline of changes. Take a look at the links below.

How has farming changed over time (KS2) BBC Bitesize

Exploring food and farming in the UK KS2 geography BBC Bitesize

Homes and Houses – Frampton on Severn is significant in the story as it is the only village the characters stop at, that Michael Morpurgo names.

We were all on our own again one warm evening as we approached a long, wide village green. There was a church with a tall tower, and houses big and small on either side of the green, and there was a pond at the far end outside the village in. To arrive in such a place after a hard day was always a relief.... Frampton drover Morgan called out to us. Best place to stop isn't it good lad? Nice folk, good beer, all the grass the sheep and cows can eat, all the water they can drink. Perfect. We were just coming past the church, heading for the pond ahead of us, when the church bells suddenly began to ring out.

(page 127 chapter 10).



The Green at Frampton on Severn

One of the three ponds
on the Green.



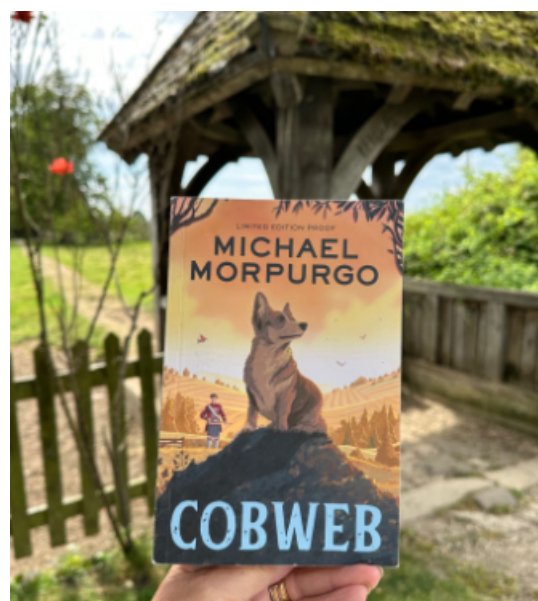
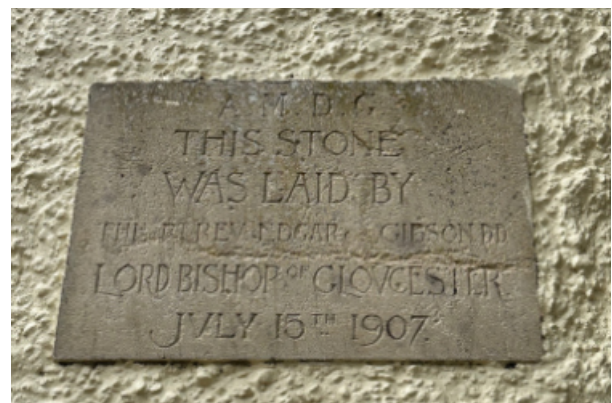
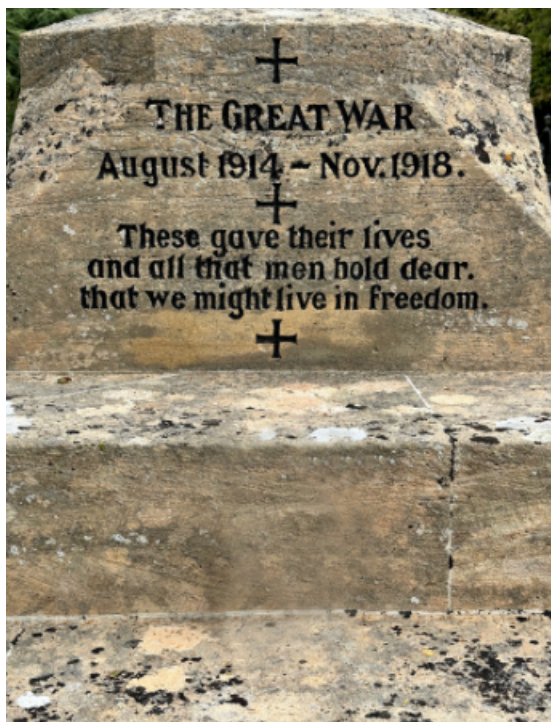


The door in the bathroom
of 1 Manor Cottages





The church in Frampton lies at the edge of the village just beyond the Green.



It is useful to look at Frampton on Severn to see the different style of architecture which spans several centuries ranges from Tudor and Georgian to modern houses. The village lies about 10 miles south of Gloucester on the eastern side of the River Severn. The Village Green in Frampton is said to be the longest village green in England, and is about 22 acres in size.

If possible, take your class/children to visit and learn about the way we lived in the past by looking at the different styles of housing that you can see as you walk around the village. Spot different landmarks that Michael Morpurgo used in the story.

Geography

Create map of Drover Morgan's journey from Pembrokeshire to London. Michael Morpurgo set the story on a real Pembrokeshire farm called Treginnis, on the coast near St Davids as this is where one of his three charity Farms For City Children is. Use aerial photos and plan perspectives to recognise landmarks and basic human and physical features. Their route was 250 miles long. Use the eight points of a compass, four and six-figure grid references, symbols and key (including the use of Ordnance Survey maps) to build their knowledge of the United Kingdom.

It's interesting to note that, remarkably, Drover dogs really were sent home from London to Wales on their own and found their way back just like homing pigeons do. Would we humans be able to do that without maps? Did the dogs rely on remembering smells and recognising landmarks?



Plot the journey. Estimate how many miles you would walk to do a similar journey today from Pembrokeshire to London. Could you travel by horseback and move cattle and sheep on foot now? How has the land changed over time? Research how long it would take you to walk the journey now (from my research it would take about 5 or 6 days). Consider and understand how, along this route geographical regions and their identifying human and physical characteristics, key topographical features (including hills, mountains, coasts and rivers), and land-use patterns may have changed over time.

Locate Belgium using maps, atlases and digital maps. Investigate where the battle of Waterloo was fought. What does it look like today.

Locate Michael Morpurgo's charity's three Farms For City Children in the UK. Learn about the areas [Farms For City Children](#)

Maths

Create your own reasoning and problem solving activities based on ideas such as ...

How many transporters would you need to move the herd by road from Wales to London if a transporter held x amount of cows or sheep?

If the transport company charge x per mile, work out how much it would cost to transport the complete herd the full distance of 250 miles?

If you were to walk the journey today how long would it take based on the amount of miles you could comfortably walk in a day? Work out the length of the journey if you were to cycle instead of walking. Compare the results.

If a bed and breakfast hotel cost x amount how much would the trip cost in accommodation? If campsite cost x amount would it be less or more expensive to camp or stay in a hotel?

PSHE

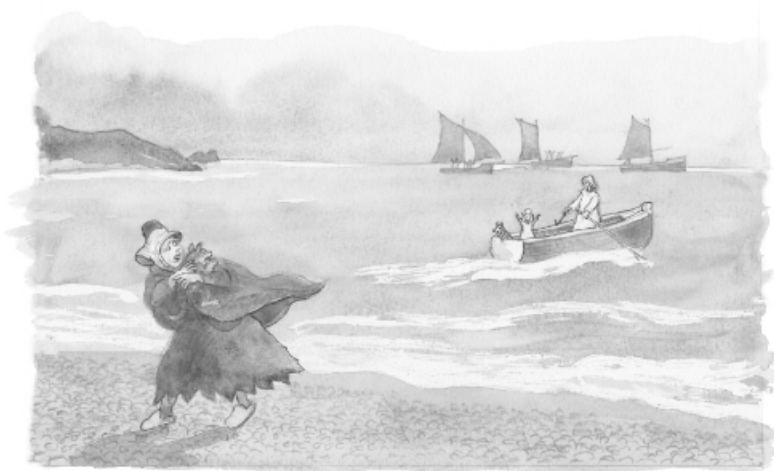
Themes – some are troubling, some are uplifting, Michael Morpurgo addresses themes in his stories that give adults and children the opportunity to discuss difficult subjects. Many themes are explored as the story unfolds, friendship, conflict, love, loyalty, struggle, danger, bereavement, and family.

Some can be used for guided reading sessions, talk time, drama activities, to debate issues, consider and compare to real events that are happening in our world now. As with all activities be mindful and sensitive to any children in your group or class whom this may affect.

Ask - Why is Cobweb so important to Bethan? Show the children this extract from the story ...

‘Tad,’ she went on, still clutching me to her, ‘I’m taking him home. And don't you try to stop me neither. Or next time I'll run away with him, and for good too, and then you won't have anyone to make your lunch or tea, will you? No one to help you look after the sheep, to bring in the wood for the fire, no one to feed the hens, no one to darn your socks, or cook your food either’ (page 61 Chapter 4)

This could lead into a discussion about bereavement within a family.



Computing

Ask the children - Can you walk the Drovers' way now? Ask the children to investigate what walks are possible today. Compare ease and efficacy of mapping softwares such as Google Maps, Apple Maps etc in designing a similar route to the one that the characters took, by car/bicycle/on foot in modern times. **Write a list of instructions**, which roads would you take? How many miles would you travel to get to the same destination now, travelling on roads rather than the Drover's Way, would it be more, less or the same as the 250 miles Cobweb travelled? How long would it take you to drive there using roads and motorways?

Create a page for a website advertising a short holiday where you can walk a Drover's way walk.

[Find out about The Wild Drover's Walk here](#)

Research - Michael Morpurgo, research facts about Michael's life, his writing, awards he has won and his Farms For City children charity Find out about Farms For City Children here . Create a quiz based on the facts learnt for other members of the class.



Art

Research the illustrator **Michael Foreman** who has written and illustrated a vast range of books and won many awards, look at his fantastic use of colour as he uses watercolour and paints illustrations.

[Find out about Michael Foreman here](#)

Paint in watercolour a scene or an animal from the story. Alternatively paint their own pet (or a pet they would like to own if they do not have one) using a photograph of their pet and place them in an outdoor scene.

Cobweb's Story - create a 'photo album' of Cobweb's life throughout the story noting the important events. Children can draw rectangles (as if outlines of photographs) on an A3 piece of paper or by making a zig zag book. Draw a picture of each event and label it with a caption to create a story map showing the plot, characters and settings within the book.

