Tales of Faithful Service

By Lisa Hart

Millions of animals played a role in the First World War. They gave soldiers comfort, lifted morale, and much more. They faced much of the same terror as the troops, but we often forget their faithful service.

When rough ground and mud stopped trucks, mules and horses took over. They carried soldiers, doctors, and messengers. They pulled wagons, weapons, and ambulances. Sadly, many never returned. Along with deadly wounds and poison gas, they died from illness, hunger, or lack of rest and shelter.

Even before the war, pigeons were known to be good messengers. They were often used for their speed and sense of direction.

Homing pigeons are known for being able to find their way home from far away. In the war, they flew between command centers and the soldiers at the front, often through gunfire.

Dogs also filled many roles in wartime. Some carried messages through the trenches and fields. Breeds with a strong sense of smell or hearing made ideal guards and scouts. Mercy dogs brought medical supplies to the wounded, and stayed until help arrived or the soldier died. Much like the cats on board ships, terriers in the trenches worked to keep rats from stealing food.
Glowworms were gathered in jars by the thousands to use in place of candles. Their bluish-green glow gave enough soft light to read maps, messages, and letters from home. Unlike candles, their glow did not bring the risk of alerting the enemy.

Even slugs formed their own brigade. Able to detect the very first trace of mustard gas long before the soldiers, the slugs squeezed their bodies and held their breath. The
1. Why were mules and horses needed to carry people and pull wagons?
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

2. What skill or skills mentioned in the article helped make pigeons good messengers?
   a. their ability to repeat words after people
   b. their speed and sense of direction
   c. their strong beaks that could hold on to letters
   d. their strong senses of smell and hearing

3. What does the author say both dogs and cats did in the war?
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

4. Other than alerting the enemy, what is one risk candles could have caused that glowworms likely did not cause?
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
Tales of Faithful Service

By Lisa Hart

Match each vocabulary word from the article with the correct definition.

1. ______ morale
   a. vehicles used to carry sick or hurt people

5. ______ brigade
   e. long narrow ditches often used to protect soldiers

6. ______ detect
   f. a poison gas used in war

7. ______ mules
   g. animals or objects used to represent a group

8. ______ trenches
   h. to discover or notice something

9. ______ mascots
   i. feelings of loyalty or excitement about a job

10. ______ mustard gas
    j. a group of soldiers
In the article, “Tales of Faithful Service,” you learned about animals that had important jobs in World War I.

Pick an animal not mentioned in the article and write about a job you think it might be good at. Explain what the job would require and why you think the animal might be good at it. Use your imagination!
1. Why were mules and horses needed to carry people and pull wagons?
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

2. What skill or skills mentioned in the article helped make pigeons good messengers?
   a. their ability to repeat words after people
   b. their speed and sense of direction
   c. their strong beaks that could hold on to letters
   d. their strong senses of smell and hearing

3. What does the author say both dogs and cats did in the war?
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

4. Other than alerting the enemy, what is one risk candles could have caused that glowworms likely did not cause?
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

Tales of Faithful Service
By Lisa Hart

Mules and horses were needed because rough ground and mud stopped trucks from getting through.

Both dogs and cats kept rats from stealing food.

Answers may vary. Most common correct answer will likely be, “Candles could have caused fires.”
Tales of Faithful Service

By Lisa Hart

Tales of Faithful Service

9. g. mascots
   i. feelings of loyalty or excitement about a job

10. f. mustard gas
    j. a group of soldiers

Please log in to download the printable version of this worksheet.