

Private peaceful

[Experience](#), [Peace](#)



Private Peaceful... Innocence, love, courage and cowardice. Michael Morpurgo is most famous for his children's literature, such as *The Butterfly Lion* or *War Horse*, so it might seem odd that what is considered a children's book should appear on a newspaper for students, but the truth is that this book is moving. The story is written from the point of view Thomas "Tommo" Peaceful, a young man born around the turn of the 20th century who is, for reasons unknown until the end, reliving his whole life in one night, with each chapter beginning with a different time reference and a short passage from the present before indulging us within the past.

He tells the reader about his life as a child in a small English village: his school life, his family, the death of his father and the goings on up at the big house, but mainly he speaks of his admirable older brother, Charlie, and his love for his friend Molly and their growth into adulthood together. When war breaks out in Europe Charlie refuses to go and fight until he is threatened with the eviction of his family from their house, and is forced to sign up.

Thomas, despite only being fifteen, signs up as well, rejecting the idea of letting his brother go and fight on his own. And so they go off to war, and the story tells of the horror of life along the front line in Belgium, of the bad guys on our side, and the good guys on theirs, from the point of view of an innocent country boy, with constant interjections from the present that build up, leaving the reading in suspense about what the dreaded morning will bring for Private Peaceful, with a climatic and beautiful finish.

At its roots, *Private Charlie Peaceful* is an angry response towards the capital punishment of the soldiers on the front line during the First World War,

however somewhere along the line Morpurgo managed to conjure up a beautiful story of brotherly love during a dark period of our history.

The narrative style he adopts is touching and powerful in a subtle way, and his use of historical context and repetition create a believable and likable narrator and an older brother every reader wants in hard times. The imagery Morpurgo uses crafts the peace of the countryside and the madness of war perfectly, and his astounding knowledge of both the character's social and historical background are fantastic and worthy of incredible amounts of praise.

Why this book didn't win the Whitbread Award it was shortlisted for will continue to confuse me, unless by some freak accident it was competing against the Bible and/or War and Peace. I would recommend this to any child that's interested in action, love, war or is just looking for a good read. Morpurgo writes so many good books but by far this is the best. And I'm sorry I could not give away the ending... ' I have promises to keep. '