

# Lesson Title: Four-Footed Soldiers

## Grade Level(s)

3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade or 9-11 year olds

## Objective

Upon completion of this lesson, students will learn, and be able to identify, the different roles military dogs have played in saving soldiers' lives throughout American history. Additionally, students will do a presentation (in groups) about famous war dog heroes. Each group will also be responsible for creating a different type of memorial for their dog.

## Character Concepts

Students will gain an appreciation for the contributions and sacrifices these often forgotten war heroes have made for our freedom and for the canines themselves.

## Materials Needed

Supplies for lecture:

- Chalk or dry erase board w/chalk or dry erase markers and eraser
- *Dogs On Duty* by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent  
*Note: This book is available on Amazon.com. I will cite the book (including pg. numbers and material) throughout the lesson. Will refer to book from here on as DD.*
- War Dog Tribute (provided below)

Supplies for reports:

- Computers w/Internet access
- Pencils
- Writing paper or small notebooks for students to take lecture and research notes

Art supplies for memorials:

Will vary depending on what the students decide to make

## Preparations

<https://mwdtsa.org/>

<http://www.uswardogs.org/war-dog-history/> (good link if looking for more information to provide in lesson)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_individual\\_dogs#War\\_dogs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_individual_dogs#War_dogs) (provide this link to students to for their reports)

**Please Note:** Completion of this activity will involve four lessons.

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## Opening Activity or Activating Strategy

Throughout American history, men and women have defended our country against enemies.

### Lesson One

1. Ask the students: What are some traits you think a hero has?  
List traits on chalk or dry erase board
2. Ask the students: Can you give me some examples of some jobs whose workers have some of these traits?  
List jobs on chalk board or dry erase board next to traits
3. Read the following excerpts to the students:

*..."His superb sense of smell alerted him to a nighttime poisonous gas attack, giving the troops precious seconds to don their gas masks." Another time, "after spending weeks in a hospital recovering from wounds he received from German grenades, he returned to the battlefield and continued to serve fearlessly." (DD, page 9)*

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*(Just as) “the outfit landed on a beach in Sicily, gunfire suddenly erupted.” The soldier “charged the gun nest and attacked the (enemy). In minutes, four bleeding soldiers surrendered.” Another time, the same soldier, “sneaked back to base with a phone cable, dodging gunfire.” Safely back at base, “the cable allowed U.S. soldiers to establish contact and request badly needed reinforcements.”*  
*(DD, page 11)*

*So who were these brave military heroes?*

*The first was Stubby...a dog that served during World War I.*

*The second was Chips...he was a dog soldier during WWII.*

*These are just two of many four-footed soldiers who fought for the U.S. throughout history.*

4. After reading the story, ask the students: Do you agree or disagree with the story that these dogs were heroes?
5. Follow-up that question with: Again using the stories you just heard, and using some of the traits we said a hero has, give me an example of how Stubby and Chips were heroes?
6. (Read aloud) Just like human soldiers, military working dogs (also called MWDs) serve their country in many different jobs. Over the years, changes in how we fight wars have made some of these jobs no longer needed; while others have been changed or created to better help fight the enemy. The following are some of the duties dogs have been trained to do.

**Scout:** Trained to work with combat units and to give silent warnings about the presence of the enemy.

**Sentry:** Guards camps and supplies. Trained to bark, growl, or silently indicate the approach or presence of strangers or the enemy. Taught to attack on command.

**Messenger:** Carried information to and from the front lines and back again. Information was put in a pouch tied around the dog’s neck.

**Casualty:** Helped the medical team in finding the wounded after battles.

**Draft/Sledge:** Carried ammunition and supplies across battlefields.

**Mine Detection:** Called M-dogs these dogs were trained to sniff out and locate deadly mines planted by the enemy.

“Today, they help keep servicemen and women safe from hidden explosives planted by invisible enemies who aim to kill and disable our troops. They guard military bases and search Naval ships for explosives...Sometimes they can learn to jump fearlessly from high-flying planes and parachute to the ground in remote locations, and scramble over piles of unstable rubble to find hidden explosives.”  
(DD, page 5)

7. Follow-up with these questions:

- How would you compare a human soldier to a dog soldier?
- How are they similar?
- How are they different?

8. Organize the students into groups. Assign each group to do a report on one of the famous war dogs from the list below. Before they start researching, make sure no groups are doing the same dog. Note: All dogs on the list have separate links to their stories.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_individual\\_dogs#War\\_dogs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_individual_dogs#War_dogs) (provide this link to the students for their reports)

*More* ►

## **Assignment 1**

Research the dogs and write a short report about each dog. Tell the groups that each report must contain the following information about the dog:

1. Breed of dog
2. War fought in
3. Job function in military (sentry, patrol, messenger, etc., if any)
4. Actions performed during service
5. Post-military life (if not killed in service)
6. Traits that made them a hero dog

Groups will report their findings to the rest of the class in lesson 4.

Allow students to use online sources (starting with the link provided) and give them time to conduct research—and put the report together—during lesson 2.

## Lesson Two

1. Student groups will continue to do research on the military dog they chose in the previous class.

Walk around and check on each group check to see if they are finding the information on their dog, answer any questions they may have, etc. Spend half the class time on this activity.

2. Begin last half of lesson 2 by reading aloud “**War Dog Tribute**” (below) to students.

Link: <http://www.uswardogs.org/us-war-dog-memorial/>

*Dedicated on June 10, 2006, the United States War Dogs Memorial, guarding the gateway to the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial in New Jersey, consists of a bronze statue of a kneeling Vietnam War soldier and his dog, set on a black granite base.*

*The U.S. War Dogs Memorial, while directly representing the War Dog Teams of the Vietnam War, honors all our nation’s war dogs and their handlers – past, present and future.*

3. After reading this, ask the students:
  - What is a memorial?
  - What are some examples of memorials?

Memorial: Something created to remind people of a person or event.

Examples: Statues, monuments, plaques, stamps, medal for dog

List types on chalk/dry erase board

## Assignment 2

Each group will create a memorial for military dogs.

**Here are some ideas:** Design a statue or a monument, a plaque, a stamp, or a medal for the dog. Use at least 3 words from Lesson One that describe a hero (or any other words you thought of while researching your dog), and put those words on the memorial.

5. Allow the groups to meet again for the last 15 minutes of the lesson to decide what type of memorial they would like to create for their war dog hero and the materials they need to make it.

6. Before leaving, make sure each group tells you what type of memorial they will be making and a list of what materials they need you to provide for their memorial (to be created during the next lesson.)

### **Lesson Three**

Before class starts, put art supplies requested by each group on a separate table.

Let groups gather to work on memorials and finish reports for the next meeting. Walk around and answer any last minute questions, etc.

Make sure students know who is going to say what (let them know that each of them will be required to say something).

### **Lesson Four**

Have each group present its report and memorial to the class.

Ask students' reactions to the findings. After each group has shared their war dogs' story, have them share their memorial and the words they choose to put on it. Ask each group why they choose those words.

### **Closure (to be done after everyone has completed their presentations)**

Ask these questions to end the lesson (in an open discussion forum):

1. Why do you think it's important to remember these dogs?
2. How could memorials (like the ones you created) be used to help remember these dogs of war?
3. Do you think the United States should do more to remember these dogs, and if so, how?

### **Extension**

Contact local veterans groups and invite members to Lesson Four to hear the presentations.