



PRESS RELEASE

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Innovative Warhorse literacy project developed at Harrow Way

Warhorse, the famous Michael Morpurgo book which inspired the West End play and Steven Spielberg film is now the centrepiece of an innovative literacy project developed by Harrow Way Community School. The Warhorse Literacy Transition programme for incoming Year 7's recognises the huge value reading makes to both academic achievement and future career opportunities.

Assistant Headteacher Graeme Fluellen, who is spearheading the project said: "There is overwhelming evidence that literacy has a significant relationship to people's life chances. Reading books is an out-of-school activity for 16-year-olds demonstrably linked to securing managerial or professional jobs¹. We obviously want our students to do well at school and literacy is one of the keys to this, but the benefits out of school both personally and professionally are invaluable."

During the summer when the then Year 6's attended their induction day at Harrow Way they were all given a copy of Warhorse and asked to read the novel before they arrived at school in September. All were encouraged to read the book as many lessons would rely on the text and the school was keen to inspire more widespread 'buy in' from students with this incentive.

The objective was to promote literacy as something relevant and cross curricula which can inform many lessons and many approaches. As part of a whole school literacy initiative Harrow Way wanted to get Year 7 'hitting the ground running' in connection with their other plans to encourage reading.

During the autumn term all the curriculum departments have focused their lessons inspired by or factually/thematically linked to Warhorse. Hence word processing skills in an ICT

lesson were based around the story, geography looked at a travel journal comparing England and France and history explored The Great War and animals in war. The Creative and Performing Arts department also followed the same theme with clay poppies and shadow puppets being made in art, dance lessons looking at battles and marching, drama working on script and sound effects and songs of the period for music. In science the anatomy of horses was examined, along with their adaptation to feeding, their digestive tracts and the evolution of the horse with selective breeding.

Graeme Fluellen continues: "Whether studying text in English, looking at numbers in Maths, or conversations and role play in a modern language class, Warhorse has been the theme to this term's lessons. Even when you wouldn't expect a book like Warhorse to feature – we've done it! So in Resistant Materials students looked at the influence of war on materials, in technology they made wooden toys, in PE they examined the anatomy of horses with regard to training and in catering, rationing and food substitutes were the focus."

Feedback suggests that both students and staff have really enjoyed the project and the variety that it has offered around the same theme. Many students have also commented that they have enjoyed the challenge of activities and that it has helped them make a great start to year 7.
