

Teacher's Notes

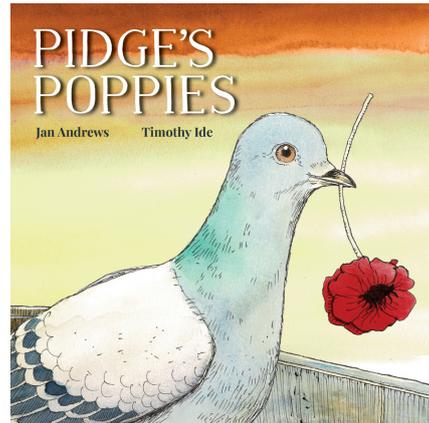
Title: *Pidge's Poppies*

Author: Jan Andrews

Illustrator: Timothy Ide

Publisher: Ford Street Publishing

Age Range: 6+



Synopsis:

Pidge's Poppies is based on a true story about a pair of pigeons at the Australian War Memorial. It remembers the vital role pigeons played in both world wars, their heroism and their sacrifice. Little Pidge chooses nesting material that won't be forgotten.

About the Author:

Jan Andrews has had a career in the public sector, working in education, and in public administration. She has been the beneficiary of Jan Owen's poetry workshop in Adelaide for some years now, and am also currently studying Latin, for the sheer agony of its verbs it seems.

About the Illustrator:

Tim Ide has illustrated a number of children's books, among them: award-winning *Tom the Outback Mailman* and *King of the Outback* with Kristin Weidenbach, as well as Beverley McWilliam's *Born to Fly*, Max Fatchen's *A Country Christmas* and Fiona McIntosh's *Fantastica: Shapeshifter* series. He is also known for his court sketching work for the Adelaide TV news networks. MidnightSun published his children's books *King of the Outback* in May 2017, *Born to Fly* in August 2019 and *The Lanternist* in July 2021.

Themes:

The central themes are honouring and remembering the sacrifices of those who came before us, courage and new beginnings.

Key Selling Points:

- A powerful story about the role of carrier pigeons in war, and about remembering and honouring those lost at war.
- Themes include history, courage, love and loss and the relatively unknown role of pigeons in war.
- The story's inspiration was an event in 2019 at the Australian War Memorial when a pigeon built a nest from remembrance poppies above the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and the remarkable image of the red poppy.

Before Reading - Context and Predictions:

Learning Intention: Provide students with literary and historical context of the book's subject matter and preconceived ideas about pigeons for later examination.

Success Criteria:

- Identify the historical settings depicted in the story as WW1 and WW2.
- Identify the significant symbol of the red poppy as it relates to Remembrance Day and ANZAC day.
- Identify preconceived notions on the book's subject matter and themes based on contextual clues in the cover.

Class Discussion:

Discuss what the class knows about Remembrance Day, ANZAC Day and the world wars.

- What are these days for?
- How do we celebrate on these days?
- What and who are we remembering?

Talk about Australians during WW1 and WW2.

- Where did we go and what did we do?

Read poems *The Inquisitive Mind of a Child* by John F Wilcocks and/or *In Flanders Fields* by John McCrae.

- What is the meaning of the red poppy featured in both these poems?
- Who is talking in these poems and how does that influence their perspective?
- Who is being talked about in these poems and why?

Have the class discuss how they feel about pigeons.

- What do pigeons do all day?
- How do we feel about them as animals? Are they fun, annoying or silly?

Examine the cover of *Pidge's Poppies* and discuss what the images and title suggest about the picture book.

- What feelings does the cover inspire?
- What do these images tell us to expect from the story?

Year Level	Strand	Australian Curriculum Link
1	Literature	Discuss features of plot, character and setting in different types of literature and explore some features of characters in different texts (ACELT1584 - Scootle)
1	Literacy	Engage in conversations and discussions, using active listening behaviours, showing interest, and contributing ideas, information and questions (ACELY1656 - Scootle)
2	Language	Understand the use of vocabulary about familiar and new topics and experiment with and begin to make conscious

		choices of vocabulary to suit audience and purpose (ACELA1470 - Scootle)
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Comprehension and Analysis:

Learning Intention: Students learning to absorb and articulate plot, contextual relationships and examine preconceived notions.

Success Criteria:

- Identify and articulate the plot events.
- Identify contextual relationships to relevant texts.
- Examine any altered preconceived notions and why they changed.
- An increase in understanding about the world wars and the importance of remembering the sacrifices of people and animals.

Class Discussion:

Discuss what happens in the story. Ask the class to identify:

- Who is Pidge? What is her character like and what are her goals?
- Why is Pidge interested in the War Memorial?
- What duties did service pigeons perform during WW1 and WW2?
- Why were pigeons well suited to performing these duties?
- Why are there a lot of poppies in the War Memorial?

Ask the class to think on the poems they read before they read the book.

- What connections are there between the poems and the book?
- What are the differences between the poems and the book?

Look back at the words the class used to describe pigeons.

- Does the class still feel the same way about pigeons?
- Are there any new words the class would use to describe pigeons?
- What are some other animals that help humans?

Activity:

As a class, create word mind-maps to explore the central events of the book, to allow students to work through their acquired knowledge of the book's subject matter.

Discuss the events portrayed in the story and create a timeline of them. In the timeline, explore how the relationship between pigeons and humans and changed.

Year Level	Strand	Australian Curriculum Link
1	Literature	Discuss how authors create characters using language and images (ACELT1581 - Scootle)
1	Literature	Discuss characters and events in a range of literary texts and share personal responses to these texts, making connections with students' own experiences (ACELT1582 - Scootle)

1	Literacy	Engage in conversations and discussions, using active listening behaviours, showing interest, and contributing ideas, information and questions (ACELY1656 - Scootle)
1	Literacy	Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning about key events, ideas and information in texts that they listen to, view and read by drawing on growing knowledge of context, text structures and language features (ACELY1660 - Scootle)
2	Literacy	Discuss different texts on a similar topic, identifying similarities and differences between the texts (ACELY1665 - Scootle)
2	Literacy	Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning and begin to analyse texts by drawing on growing knowledge of context, language and visual features and print and multimodal text structures (ACELY1670 - Scootle)

Themes and Messaging:

Learning Intention: Identify the main themes and symbols of the book.

Success Criteria:

- Identify and explore the ways different families/people choose to honour and remember their ancestors.
- Explore what the courage and sacrifice of animals is regarded by humans.
- Identify how the meaning of symbols can change or mean different things to different people.

Class Discussions:

The main themes of this book are remembering and honouring the sacrifices of the past, and the hope of new beginnings.

- How do the humans honour the memory of those who died in war?
- Why is it important to Pidge that her ancestor's roles in the world wars are remembered?
- How does Pidge choose to honour the memory of her ancestors who died in war?
- Discuss if and how students in the class choose to honour their ancestors.

The courage of service pigeons is another important theme in this book.

- In what ways were the service pigeons shown to be courageous?
- Is there a reason that the courage of service animals like pigeons is often forgotten?

Red poppies are an important symbol throughout this book.

- What do the poppies represent to the humans?
- What do the poppies represent to Pidge and Henry?
- Why were the humans so excited by Pidge and Henry making their nest out of red poppies?
- Does the meaning of the poppies change by the end of the book?

Activity:

In the story, Pidge remembers the ways her ancestors' helped humans during the war. Have the students consider their family pet and write a short story on the ways that animal's ancestors might have courageously helped humans in the past, with a focus on their feelings.

Year Level	Strand	Australian Curriculum Link
1	Literature	Discuss characters and events in a range of literary texts and share personal responses to these texts, making connections with students' own experiences (ACELT1582 - Scootle)
1	Literacy	Engage in conversations and discussions, using active listening behaviours, showing interest, and contributing ideas, information and questions (ACELY1656 - Scootle)
1	Questioning	Pose questions about past and present objects, people, places and events (ACHASSI018 - Scootle)
2	Literature	Identify aspects of different types of literary texts that entertain, and give reasons for personal preferences (ACELT1590 - Scootle)
2	Literacy	Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning and begin to analyse texts by drawing on growing knowledge of context, language and visual features and print and multimodal text structures (ACELY1670 - Scootle)
2	Literacy	Create short imaginative, informative and persuasive texts using growing knowledge of text structures and language features for familiar and some less familiar audiences, selecting print and multimodal elements appropriate to the audience and purpose (ACELY1671 - Scootle)

Visual Storytelling

Learning Intention: Discover and understand how visual language is used to communicate ideas.

Success Criteria:

- Identify the links between the illustrations (visuals) and written text to tell the story.
- Understand that there are multiple ways to communicate ideas in a book.
- Identify how visual elements like colour and symbols can be used to further a story's themes.

Class Discussion:

A picture book uses both words and pictures to tell a story. Ask the students what visual elements they liked the most and why.

- How do the visual elements enhance the text?

The colour red is featured a lot in this book.

- What objects in this book are red?
- Why is the colour red important to the story?

- Does the meaning of the colour red change by the end of the story?

There are two perspectives in this book, Pidge in the present, and the stories of the past.

- What has the illustrator done to help distinguish these two perspectives?
- Why and how has colour been used to show the past and the present?

Activity:

- Ask the class to draw an animal performing a courageous act to help a human. Ask them to create a colourful symbol of that brave act (like the red poppy).

Year Level	Strand	Australian Curriculum Link
1	Language	Compare different kinds of images in narrative and informative texts and discuss how they contribute to meaning (ACELA1453 - Scootle)
1	Literature	Recreate texts imaginatively using drawing, writing, performance and digital forms of communication (ACELT1586 - Scootle)
1	Literacy	Engage in conversations and discussions, using active listening behaviours, showing interest, and contributing ideas, information and questions (ACELY1656 - Scootle)
2	Literature	Discuss the characters and settings of different texts and explore how language is used to present these features in different ways (ACELT1591 - Scootle)

Corresponding Literature:

- *Flapper, VC* by Mark Wilson, Hachette, 2017, based on a true story
- *Lofty's Mission* by Krista Bell, Hachette, 2008 (out of print)