

## MIDNIGHT

MARK GREENWOOD & FRANÉ LESSAC

ISBN (HB): 9781760995584

YEAR LEVEL: K–6

### ABOUT THE BOOK

**‘A foal is born at midnight, on the homestead side of the river. Coal black. Star ablaze. Moonlight in her eyes.’**

On 31 October, 1917, the 4th and 12th Regiments of the Australian Light Horse took part in one of the last great cavalry charges in history. Among the first to leap the enemy trenches was Lieutenant Guy Haydon riding his beloved mare, Midnight. This is their story.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mark Greenwood is a history hunter. He enjoys searching for lost explorers and glittering treasure, delving into baffling mysteries and investigating famous cold cases. His award-winning books examining history and multicultural themes have been honoured internationally.

### ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Frané Lessac is originally from New Jersey and is an artist of international renown having exhibited in London, Paris, New York, Los Angeles, and the Caribbean. Residing in Western Australia, Lessac now has over 30 children’s books published throughout the world. Her work has won Australian and international awards and has been translated into numerous languages. In 2010 she was awarded the Muriel Barwell Award for Distinguished Service to Children’s Literature.

### THEMES

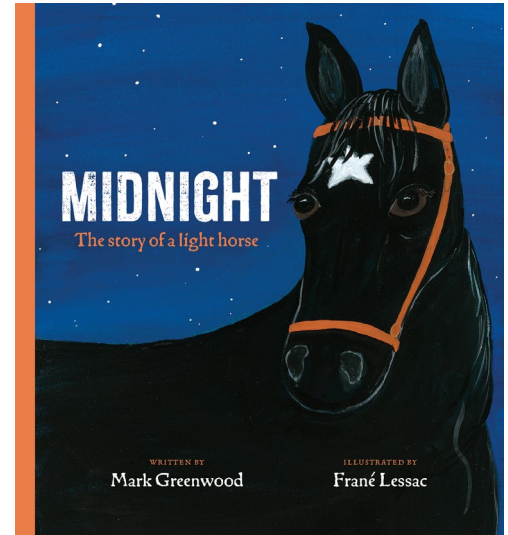
- Heroes
- Anzacs
- Animals in war
- Bravery
- Courage
- Mateship

### AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

- K–6 English
- K–6 History
- K–6 Arts

### USEFUL WEBSITES

- Author’s website: [markgreenwood.com.au](http://markgreenwood.com.au)
- Illustrator’s website: [franelessac.com](http://franelessac.com)
- The Australian Light Horse Association: [lighthorse.org.au/famous-battles](http://lighthorse.org.au/famous-battles)



## CLASSROOM IDEAS

### BEFORE READING

#### Discussion questions

1. Look closely at the front cover of the book. As a class, discuss your expectations of the book.
  - a. What do you think the story will be about?
  - b. Where and when might it be set?
  - c. What genre do you think it will be (e.g. fantasy, suspense, comedy, true story)?

Provide reasons for your responses.

2. The subtitle of this book is 'The story of a light horse'. What is a light horse? For more information visit [lighthorse.org.au/famous-battles](http://lighthorse.org.au/famous-battles)
3. Look at the title page. What extra information does it give the reader about the story?
4. Listen to the story being read aloud, without looking at the illustrations. Then, read or listen to the story being read again, this time looking at the illustrations.
  - a. How did the illustrations add to, or change, the meaning of the story?
  - b. Did they look as you expected them to, or were there significant differences between the way you?

### Language and Literacy

This book tells a vibrant story in prose style, which captures both the bond between horse and rider, the journey to war and an important moment in Australian military history.

1. The story is told in the third person, allowing distance from the subject of the narrative. How might Guy Haydon have told the story in first person narrative voice?
2. Read other picture books about ANZACs and particularly the light horse. Discuss and compare them.
3. Write an acrostic poem using the letters in the name 'Midnight' to describe what Guy's beloved mare was like.
4. **'Weary riders dismount on the outskirts of an ancient city'**. Research the history of Beersheba and the fabled seven wells of water that the enemy entrenched there were defending.
5. Where are the 'dunes of Sinai'?
6. Research Guy Haydon's Unit, the 12th Light Horse Regiment, B Squadron. When did they arrive at Gallipoli? When did they leave?
7. Why did they call the light horsemen the 'Kings of the Feathers'?
8. Who was the Australian general who commanded the light horse?
9. Research other horse and rider stories from the light horse. What happened to the horses? Did they ever return to Australia?
10. Riding Midnight, Guy Haydon joined the advance into Palestine, surviving the battles of Romani and Gaza. In the text, the author writes, **'In battle, Midnight works hard for her praise'**. What is the author referring to here?
11. Research the famous light horse battles prior to the charge at Beersheba. Where is Beersheba, and what is it officially known as today?
12. Imagine you are a rider in the desert column, slowly snaking across the wilderness towards the enemy garrison at the foot of the Judean hills. Describe your thoughts and feelings.
13. In the story, the author writes that Guy **'shares a secret between horse and rider'**. What do you think that secret might be?
14. Research the author and illustrator.
  - a. What other books have they written/illustrated?
  - b. Which of these books can you find in your school library?
  - c. Choose your favourite and present it to the class using persuasive language to encourage others to read it.
15. Follow Guy's journey on a map or globe. Discuss how he might have travelled to these places in 1915 and how that might be different today:
  - a. Hunter Valley, NSW (the homestead)
  - b. Gallipoli
  - c. Giza
  - d. Sinai
  - e. Beersheba

- f. Cairo (Australian General Hospital)
16. What is the significance of Guy sharing his water with Midnight? What does it show about the relationship between Guy and his horse?
  17. *Midnight* is narrative nonfiction. List the parts of the story that are historical facts and those that may be the author's creative interpretation. How would the story be different if it was purely nonfiction?
  18. Discuss the use of descriptive language in the passage, '**Coal black. Star ablaze. Moonlight in her eyes**'.
    - a. How is this more effective than if the author had simply written, 'Midnight was black and had a star shape on her head'?
    - b. What extra feelings or ideas does this imagery conjure up for the reader?
    - c. Can you locate any other examples of imagery in the book?
    - d. Why do you think the author has included them?
  19. *Midnight* is the story of a man's special bond with his horse. Write a story about a special bond you have with an animal. This could be a true story about a pet or another animal, or it could be an imaginary story. Describe the animal in a similar style to Mark Greenwood's description of Midnight on the first spread.
  20. Write a letter to Mark Greenwood and Frané Lessac giving your thoughts on the book. Use the following prompts if needed:
    - a. What did you like about it?
    - b. What did it teach you?Edit your letter then send it to Fremantle Press to pass on to Mark and Frané!
  21. What do the following words mean when describing horses?
    - a. Foal
    - b. Filly
    - c. Mare
    - d. Waler

## Visual Literacy

1. Discuss the layout and design of the book, and of the individual double-page spreads and information page.
  - a. How do they affect the reading of the book and complement the text?
  - b. Why are some lines written in a different font?
  - c. What effect does this have on the way you read the text?
2. The title page contains a picture of a young boy and his horse.
  - a. What does this image suggest?
  - b. What feelings or themes does it evoke?
3. Encourage students to read for the 'subtext' and observe how the pictures and the text work together; how images illuminate meaning within the text.
4. The artist's images are created in gouache. Discuss the artist's choice of mediums with students and encourage them to create a picture in the same style and an illustration using a different medium.
5. What colours are particularly emphasised in this book?
6. How does Frané Lessac convey emotions in her illustrations?
7. If you were illustrating the story, which pictures (if any) would you do differently? Why? Choose one passage from the book and create your own illustration to accompany it.
8. If you were designing a recruitment poster to encourage young men to volunteer to go to war, what would you put in it?
9. Read the information page and then discuss the double meaning of the line: '**moonlight in her eyes**'.
10. Midnight was born on 31 October 1905. What is the relevance of that date in the story?
11. Look at the clothes worn by the crowd during the farewell parade. How are these clothes different to the clothes people wear today?
12. Look at Guy's expression and body language as Midnight is unloaded from the ship. List words that describe how he is feeling on this page. Why would he be feeling this way?

## History: World War I

1. Have a class discussion about the battle of Gallipoli. As a class, draw a mind map about what students already know about the battle.
  - a. What date did the Anzacs land on Gallipoli?
  - b. How does Australia and New Zealand commemorate this historic battle?
2. In Australia all WWI soldiers were volunteers.
  - a. Why do you think so many young men volunteered to go to war?
  - b. Why do you think Guy enlisted in the army?
  - c. What did he hope would be the outcome of enlisting?
3. Study the illustrations depicting the conflict at Gallipoli.
  - a. In small groups, brainstorm the difficulties the soldiers may have been experiencing. Imagine you are a soldier and write a letter home discussing the difficulties during the first few days of the landing.
  - b. What do we learn about the lives of WWI soldiers from this book?
  - c. Do some additional research on the internet, then write a series of journal entries from the point of view of a soldier fighting in the war.
4. As a class, discuss some things you can do in your school on Anzac Day or Remembrance Day so that people remember and pay respect to the soldiers who died in WWI.

## Creative Arts

The story of the light horse has been told in numerous books for children and adults. The book, stage play and movie, *War Horse*, brought the plight of a brave horse and rider to the big screen.

1. Listen to Eric Bogle's song 'As If He Knows'. Encourage students to create their own dramatised retelling of the *Midnight* story in a range of creative arts such as acting, improvisation, music and dance.
2. Enact scenes in the book, i.e. where Guy Haydon whispers into Midnight's ears a secret before the charge of Beersheba.
3. Choose pieces of music that might be suggestive of feelings and the conflict about to unfold.
4. Have the class create a mural and create different panels telling Midnight's story.
5. As a class, brainstorm a list of emotions or feelings Guy might have experienced during the story. For example, fear, sadness, confusion, determination and hope. Find your own space in the room. As the teacher says each emotion, use your whole body to express this idea. Next, try to reveal this emotion just through one part of the body, for instance, the hands or face. Transform these different emotions into a dance symbolising Guy's journey.

## Themes and Values

1. Heroes
  - a. Have your students research, discuss and then debate the topic of heroes with reference to both Guy Haydon and Midnight.
  - b. What defines a 'hero'? Is it bravery, or is it a combination of other qualities such as kindness, nobility, or intelligence?
2. Bravery
  - a. Bravery is often narrowly defined as a willingness to go into battle and risk one's life. Can animals demonstrate bravery? Ask students to find examples. In particular, look for examples of animals in wartime who have demonstrated bravery.
  - b. What brave things have you ever witnessed?
  - c. Are there any brave people in your family? Why do you think they are brave?

## Story Starters

1. In the information page the author states that Guy wrote a letter to his mother. Imagine you are Guy Haydon in hospital and write a letter describing the charge at Beersheba in detail.
2. Write a letter by Guy describing the first time he saw Midnight.
3. Story Starter: 'There she stood, black like the night. On her forehead was a white star. I knew then ...'
4. Write an account describing the bond between a soldier and his horse, starting with 'A horse was your mate ...'

5. While training in the Egyptian desert, Guy and Midnight were chosen to represent Australia in a friendly equestrian competition against the British cavalry. Midnight, the 'Bloomfield Mare', won the sprint race and flag race. Write a story about how the Anzacs 'let off steam' and this untold moment in the *Midnight* story.

Teaching notes created by Brightpath Assessment.



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