

educator's guide

NO BETTER FRIEND

Curriculum connections

- ❖ Narrative nonfiction
- ❖ History—World War II

Ages 10 & up



By **ROBERT WEINTRAUB**

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Read about War Dogs (p. 250-251) during World War II. Then read how dogs are used in the military today (ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2014/06/war-dogs/paterniti-text). Have students write a tribute to one of the war dogs mentioned in the two articles. Allow time in class to share stories.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Informational Text: Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RI. 5-7.9; Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 5-7.3.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Frank is described as being an “introvert.” Define “introvert,” and debate whether this helps or harms him during his time as a prisoner of war.
2. Explain how Judy uses her nose to “see.” Cite moments in the book when she smells fear. How does she use her natural instincts to protect the men?
3. How does Judy meet Frank? Discuss how their relationship evolves. Explain how Frank is different from the other men Judy encountered. How does she need him as much as he needs her?
4. Judy gives birth to a second litter of puppies while in the Gloegoer POW camp. What does the birth symbolize?
5. Why does Frank think that making Judy an official prisoner of war will protect her? How does he get Lieutenant Colonel Hirateru Banno to agree? Discuss Captain Nishi’s reaction to Judy. How does Frank convince him not to kill Judy?
6. Some of the POWs were forced to build a Japanese temple in the jungle. Explain the following quote from Peter Hartley: “Here was something created in the midst of destruction, something which possessed a certain beauty to those who could regard it without prejudice (p. 111).” What is Peter Hartley’s attitude toward the temple? How might some of the POWs be unable to view the temple “without prejudice”? How does Frank view the temple? Explain why the Japanese destroyed it after the war.
7. The prisoners are taken from the Sumatran jungle to Singapore. Captain Nishi orders Judy left behind. How does Frank protect Judy and train her for the trip? Explain how the other prisoners pitch in to help when they know Frank is exhausted from carrying his dog. Discuss whether they are devoted to Judy, or whether they simply cannot bear to see Frank and his best companion separated.
8. The prisoners are eventually taken back to the jungle to build a railroad. Why is this like a “death sentence” for Frank? Explain why the Koreans were more feared than the Japanese. How does Judy manage to elude the Koreans? Discuss how the bleak conditions created camaraderie among the men. Explain how Judy brings them together and helps them survive.
9. Peter Hartley is amazed by Judy’s “bravery, stamina, and loyalty.” Cite evidence from the book that supports Hartley’s observation of Judy. How does Frank share similar characteristics?



10. At the end of the war, Frank and Judy returned to England. Explain the following quote: “It seemed the men could leave the prison camps, but the camps wouldn’t leave them (p. 235).” Read about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (p. 259), and discuss whether Frank may have suffered this disorder. What are his symptoms?
11. The British government ordered the men not to talk about their experiences as POWs. Why did the government refuse to laud these men for their bravery and honor?
12. What are the qualities of a hero? How is Judy a hero? How does Judy continue to serve soldiers and people after World War II? Why might she be an excellent poster dog for “service dogs”?
13. Tell students that “cliffhanger” is a literary device used to create suspense and to cause readers to ask “what next.” Discuss how Weintraub uses “cliffhanger” at the end of each chapter. Which of the “cliffhangers” create the most suspense?
14. Discuss why Frank never got another dog after Judy’s death.
15. What is the purpose of the “prologue” and the “epilogue”? Frank died on February 16, 2003, and his son, David, spoke at his funeral. How do David’s words (p. 282) offer comfort to all who now know Frank and Judy’s story?
16. The author documents the story with authentic black and white photographs, sidebars, maps, and a timeline. How does this contribute to the overall quality of the book? Explain how the information from these sections clarifies the information given in the story. Why are acknowledgements and a bibliography important in nonfiction?

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 5-7.1, RI 5-7.2, RI. 5-7.3; Craft & Structure RI. 5-7.4; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RI. 5-7.8; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 5-7.1, SL. 5-7.3; Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 5-7.6; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 5-7.1.

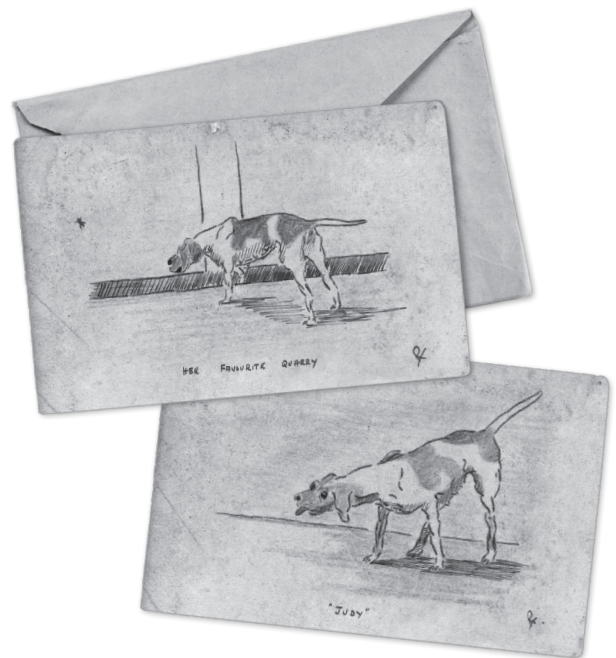
CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

- The following quote from Theodore Roosevelt is used at the beginning of the book: “Courage is not having the strength to go on; it is going on when you don’t have the strength.” Ask students to write a paper that explains how this quote applies to Frank and Judy. Instruct them to cite specific scenes or passages from the book to support their thoughts. *Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 5-7.1.*
- Judy was born in Shanghai, China and was given the name “Shudi,” which means “peaceful one”. A British woman later gave her the name “Judy.” Think about Judy’s qualities and choose another Chinese name for her. The following website is helpful: dog-names-and-more.com/Chinese-Dog-Names.html. Then write a paper that explains the new Chinese name for Judy, and support your choice by making reference to Judy’s special characteristics. *Correlates to Common core language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 5-7.2; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 5-7.4; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 5-7.9.*
- Weintraub uses simile to create certain images. For example: “She (Judy) was crawling on her stomach like a soldier inching into position, head low, not making a sound.” (p. 147) Find other examples of simile in the book. Then have students write a simile that expresses Frank’s feelings when he discovers that Judy is sick. *Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Language: Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 5-7.5.*
- Discuss the term “blind luck.” Think about how “blind luck” contributes to the POW’s survival and write an acrostic poem about Frank, the POWs as a group, or Judy, using BLIND LUCK as the spine word. Allow time in class to read about the poems. *Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Production & Distribution of Writing W. 5-7.4.*

- The POWs at Gloegoer had trivia contests to keep their minds sharp. Divide the class into small groups and assign them a section of the book. Instruct them to identify facts for a class trivia contest. *Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Informational Text RI. 5-7.2, RI. 5-7.3; Writing: Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 5-7.9.*
- Many of the POWs suffered from diseases like beriberi. Find out about the two types of this disease, the causes, symptoms and treatment, and preventive measures. The following website is helpful: kidshealth.org/en/parents/az-beriberi.html. Have them make a brochure that details information about beriberi to be used by Red Cross workers that serve people throughout the world that might be susceptible. *Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 5-7.2; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 5-7.8.*
- Read about the Manhattan Project (p. 217-219) and discuss how it contributed to the end of World War II. Then have the class research the issues related to nuclear weapons today. Sponsor a class debate about the pros and cons of military use of such weapons. What are the implications for a global atrocity? *Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 5-7.7, W. 5-7.8; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 5-7.4; Language: Knowledge of Language L. 5-7.3.*
- Frank arrived in Singapore about the time Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, which propelled the United States into World War II. Divide the class into small groups and ask each group to turn to the book for information about one of the following topics: people, places, or specific battles. Then ask the groups to use books in the library or sites on the Internet to find out more information about the assigned topic. Have each group prepare a PowerPoint presentation using images found on the Internet as documentation. *Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Production & Distribution of Writing W. 5-7.6; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 5-9.*
- Judy is quarantined for six months in England after the war. When she is released into Frank's care a British newspaper features her as a war heroine. She is also presented the Dickin Medal (pdsa.org.uk/what-we-do/animal-honours/the-dickin-medal), an animal version of the Victoria Cross, the highest honor in the realm. Write a front page newspaper article about Judy. Include an appropriate headline, and remember to include what, when, where, and why. Use quotes from Frank and other POWs. *Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 5-7.2; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 5-7.7.*

VOCABULARY/USE OF LANGUAGE

Ask student to jot down unfamiliar words and try to define them taking clues from context. Such words may include: cowering (p. 2), uncanny (p. 6), stalemate (p. 8), plaintive (p. 11), mayhem (p. 20), transfixed (p. 20), commenced (p. 29), evaded (p. 31), marooned (p. 33), sanctuary (p. 36), reconnaissance (p. 38), circumnavigate (p. 42), palpable (p. 45), peril (p. 48), invincible (p. 49), unenviable (p. 54), summarily (p. 56), relentlessly (p. 69), formative (p. 81), atrocities (p. 87), confiscated (p. 90), devoured (p. 118), emitted (p. 120), reliant (p. 128), intermediary (p. 130), malignant (p. 132), pivotal (p. 134), intimidated (p. 137), convoy (p. 153), sadistic (p. 195), apathy (p. 208), tactical (p. 213), and obliterated (p. 231). *Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Language: Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 5-7.4.*



about the book



NO BETTER FRIEND

HC 978-0-316-34467-8

Also as available as an ebook

No Better Friend tells the incredible true story of Frank Williams, a radarman in Britain's Royal Air Force, and Judy, a purebred pointer, who met as prisoners of war during World War II. Judy, who became the war's only official canine POW, was a fiercely loyal dog who sensed danger, warning her fellow prisoners of imminent attacks and later, protecting them from brutal beatings. Frank and Judy's friendship, an unbreakable bond forged in the worst circumstances, is one of the great recently uncovered stories of World War II.

As they discover Frank and Judy's story in this specially adapted text, young readers will also learn about key World War II moments through informative and engaging sidebars, maps, photographs, and a timeline.

about the author



Robert Weintraub is a frequent contributor to *The New York Times* and *Slate* and the bestselling author of the acclaimed books *The House That Ruth Built*, *The Victory Season*, and *No Better Friend*.

praise for the book

"Well-written and engaging, and it will be welcomed by military history enthusiasts and animal-lovers." —*Booklist*

"Riveting and highly moving." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"An enormously readable account of animal and human companionship and survival; recommended for budding historians and fans of survival stories."

—*School Library Journal*



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LittleBrownLibrary.com

This educator's guide was written by Pat Scales, Children's Literature Consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.