

WW1 – Shot at Dawn

Based on **The Good Son** by *Pierre-Jacques Ober, Jules Ober and Felicity Coonan*

The Good Son has study notes on the website <https://bit.ly/GoodSon1>

About one hundred years ago, the whole world went to war. The war was supposed to last months. It lasted years. It is Christmastime, 1914, and World War I rages. A young French soldier named Pierre had quietly left his regiment to visit his family for two days, and when he returned, he was imprisoned. Now he faces execution for desertion, and as he waits in isolation, he meditates on big questions: the nature of patriotism, the horrors of war, the joys of friendship, the love of family, and how even in times of danger, there is a whole world inside every one of us. [From Walker Books website](#)

It is a difficult topic to cover with children, but it is not the first book for children to do so **Private Peaceful** by Michael Morpurgo covers a similar topic. The BBC website has [a broadcast](#) of the whole book **Private Peaceful** plus [teacher notes](#) to support it. The notes lead students to research topics such as: How was being shot for cowardice justified?

Compare what different countries did with deserters?

Which countries executed more of their own soldiers than others? Why? How do people today feel about what happened? What happened to Australian soldiers and why?

Explore these websites

- <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-25841494>
- <https://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/world-war-one/the-western-front-in-world-war-one/world-war-one-executions/>
- http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/britain_wwone/shot_at_dawn_01.shtml
- <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/desertion>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/nov/14/firstworldwar.uk>
- <https://www.bjp-online.com/2015/07/remembering-the-forgiven-british-deserters-of-world-war-one/>
- <https://www.thehistorypress.co.uk/articles/executions-for-desertion-in-world-war-i/>
Shot at Dawn memorial
- <http://www.greatwar.nl/frames/default-shotatdawn.html>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/01/france-first-world-war-soldiers-cowardice-executed-memorial> France
- <https://www.equaltimes.org/a-remembrance-some-would-rather#.XqE9w5kRWUk>

Another book to explore

- **My Brother's War** – David Hill, Penguin NZ (topic: conscientious objectors)
<http://www.firstworldwar.tki.org.nz/en/resources/voices-through-writing/>

Poetry

Look at some poetry from the War <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/wilfred-owen>

Write your own poem as a response to **The Good Son**.