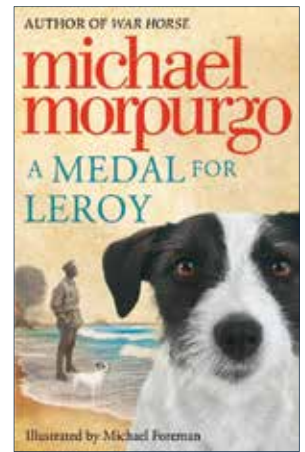


michael morpurgo



A Medal for Leroy



A Medal for Leroy – Lucky Beggar

READ THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPH AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ABOUT IT.

'They said what a 'lucky beggar' he was, Bobby did most of the talking when they came – he'd been the goalkeeper in the football team back home. He was the one who told me how it happened, how the whistle had gone, they'd gone over the top into No Man's Land, Leroy kicking a football ahead of him, Jasper running along beside him, as he always did. But they hadn't got far, about halfway across, before the German machine guns opened fire and the shells started falling all around. Several of them went down. They had to take shelter in a crater, in a shell hole, Jasper still with them. They lay there all day and into the night.

When it had all quietened down, they heard the sound of a man crying out for help, screaming in pain. Leroy didn't think twice about it, they told me. He clambered up out of the shell hole and went out there, out into No Man's Land, to fetch him back. But once he found him he discovered there were two more men lying out there as well, both badly wounded, one of them unconscious. Twice more he crawled out into No Man's Land to bring them back. And still no one spotted him. But the last time Leroy went out there, the flares went up and he was caught out in the open. Machine guns opened up, rifle fire. That was when he was hit, shot in the leg.

Three lives he saved that day, and without a thought for his own. They were all on the way back across No Man's Land, carrying the wounded men with them when the shelling started and Leroy went down, hit again, a shrapnel wound this time. Bobby piggybacked him back to the trenches. "He was awful heavy to carry, I can tell you," he said. It was from Bobby and his other pals that I learnt so much more about Leroy than he'd ever told me himself. He was just a Private soldier, the same rank they all were, but Leroy was the one they always followed. They believed he was lucky. Leroy and Jasper – they were like talismans to them, lucky mascots.

"All we've got out here is luck, luck and pluck," Bobby told me one day after the visit was over, as we walked out of the hospital ward together. 'Leroy's lucky. So we stay as close to him as we can. That way we get lucky too. He got a lucky wound, a Blighty one, so like as not they'll send him home. Never seen pluck like it bringing those boys in like he did. He should get a ruddy Victoria Cross for that, if you ask me. It's what we all want, a medal for Leroy. We told the officers what he did, the whole story, that he deserves a medal. Course, being like he is, they probably won't give him one. But I'm telling you, there won't be no justice in this world if Leroy doesn't get a medal.'"

(A Medal for Leroy, Chapter 15, Lucky Beggar, Pages 154 – 158)

Questions

1. What is No Man's Land?
2. What position did Bobby play on the football team?
3. Who do you think sent a flare up and why?
4. Where was Leroy shot?
5. What is a Victoria Cross?
6. Who did Bobby believe were lucky mascots?
7. Why did he describe Leroy's wound as a lucky wound?