

A Soldier's Friend

4. Dogs and cats

by Megan Rix



Extract from Chapter 5

'Do they really have cats at the front? Why do they need trench cats?' Lizzie asked. 'Because of the rats,' Kenneth told her. 'And as an early warning if there's a poison gas attack, of course.'

'Shh, Kenneth,' Amelia said, looking at Lizzie and Arthur's stricken faces. 'There won't be any poison gas attacks.'

'No,' Kenneth quickly agreed. 'But if there was one the cats and dogs, being so much smaller than the soldiers, would feel the effects of it first and it'd give the soldiers time to react.'

'Like canaries in mines,' Arthur said slowly. 'As long as the birds keep singing, the miners know they're safe.'

Extract from Chapter 7

'Stand back!' the sergeant yelled suddenly. Oliver dropped his shovel and stepped back in surprise as a collie dog came racing down the tunnel towards them, its face steady in concentration and a tin canister attached to its collar.

Oliver reached out to the dog. It seemed so desperate to him. But one of the more experienced soldiers, who'd been at the front almost since the start of the war and the Boer War before that, grabbed Oliver's arm and pulled him back as he was about to touch it and the dog ran past.

'Didn't you listen in your training when they said it's a court-martial offence to stop a messenger dog from doing his duty?' the grizzled-looking soldier hissed.

Use the Carroll diagram on the next page to analyse how cats and dogs cope with combat.

Use these passages as well as earlier ones to help you think of reasons why people might be prepared to let their animals go to the Western Front.

Then make a poster to persuade people to donate their animals to the war effort.

