

## Teaching Eighth-Grade **Nonfiction Text Features** Using ***Dogs at War: Military Canine Heroes***

Features that help students understand how an informational text is organized:

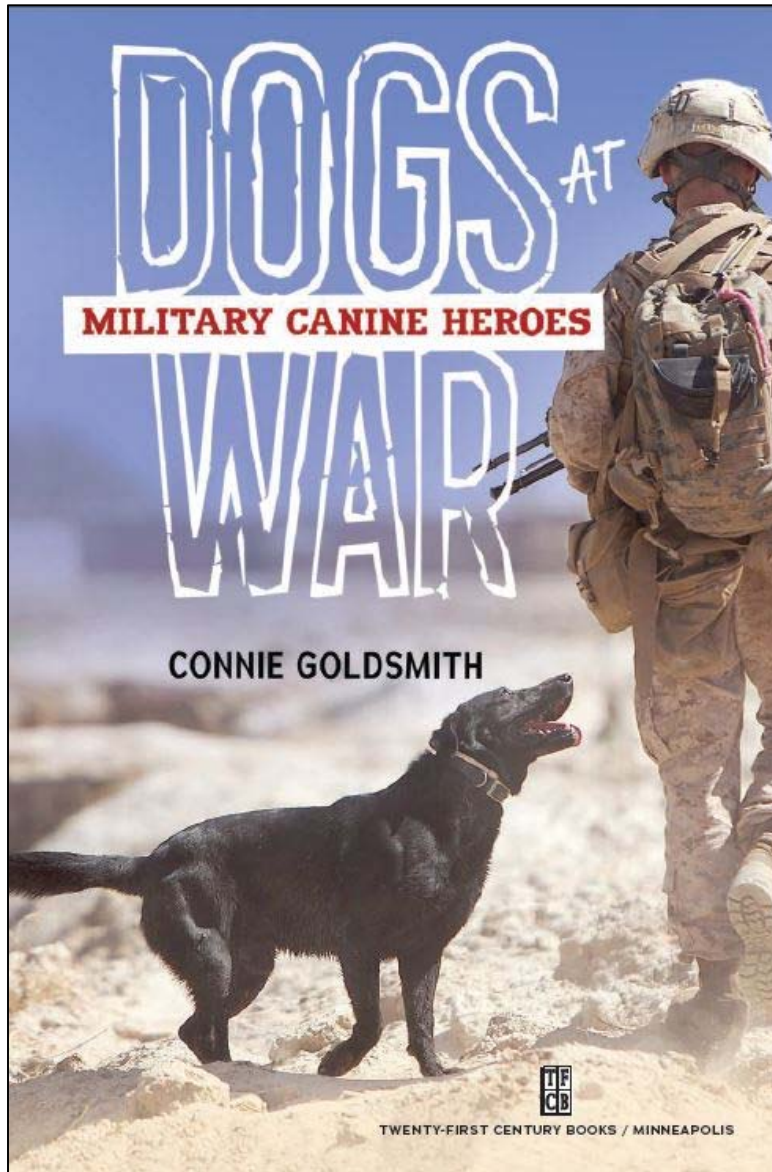
<b>FEATURE</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>
Title page	Confirms title, author’s name, and publisher
Table of Contents/Contents Page	Identifies the topics to be presented and their order
Chapter name, heading, or subheading	Helps students identify main topics on a quick pass through the text
Further reading and websites	Helps students expand their knowledge of the topic by listing other informational texts in print or on the Internet
Index	Lists the main ideas in the text, with page numbers to help students find them

Visual aids that help students understand informational texts:

<b>VISUAL AID</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>
Photo, drawing, or illustration	Shows how something in the text looked or might have looked
Graph	Shows how bits of information on the same topic relate to one another
Diagram	Gives a more detailed view of a complex topic
Map	Puts the places in the informational text in the context of space and time

Features that point out important or additional information:

<b>FEATURE</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>
Copyright page	Tells students how current the information in a book is
Pull quote	Highlights an important quotation or idea from the text
Italic Print	Tells students the word is supposed to stand out. It may be for emphasis or because it is a book name, newspaper, movie title, foreign word, or the directional for a photo or illustration.
Caption	Points out what’s in a photo, a drawing, or an illustration and relates it to the informational text; often gives more information
Label	Identifies important points of interest in a diagram or photograph
Sidebar	Boxed or otherwise highlighted bits of information that relate to but are not the same as the main informational text; likely not a main idea
Source Note	Tells the student where the quoted material came from
Timeline	A chart or list that helps students understand the sequence of events in the informational text

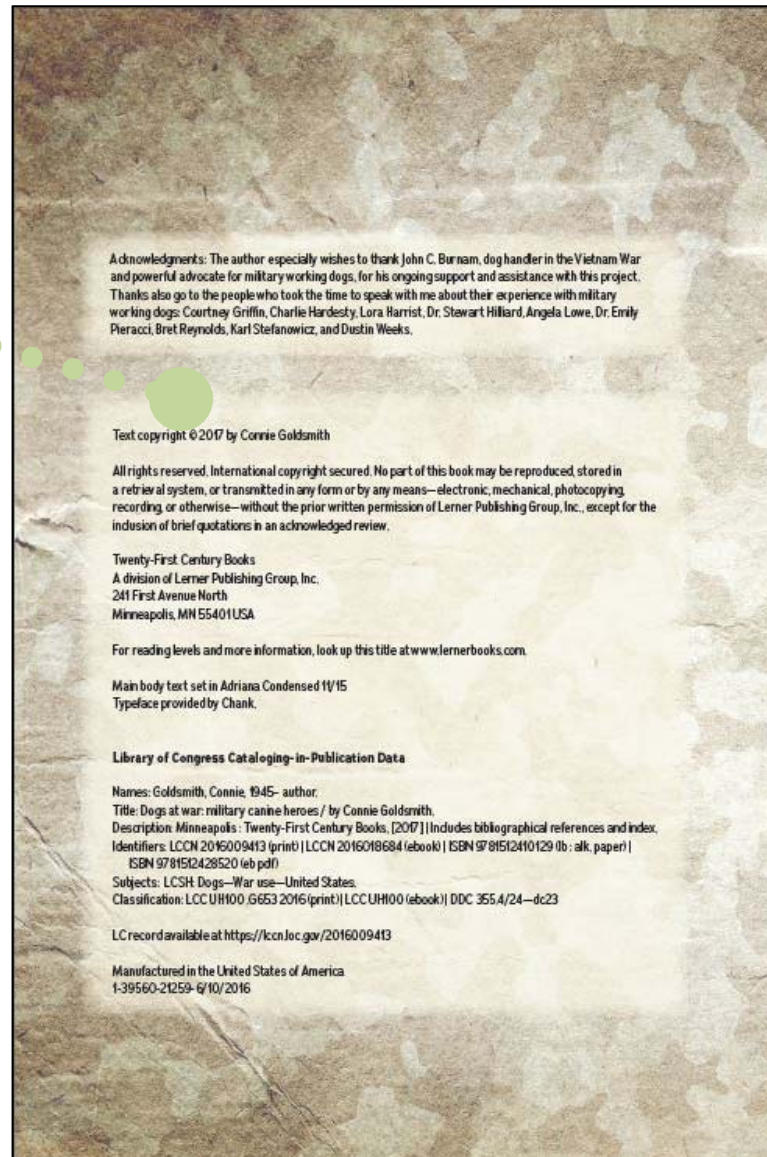


**TITLE PAGE:** This page tells you the title, author, and publisher of a book.

## COPYRIGHT YEAR

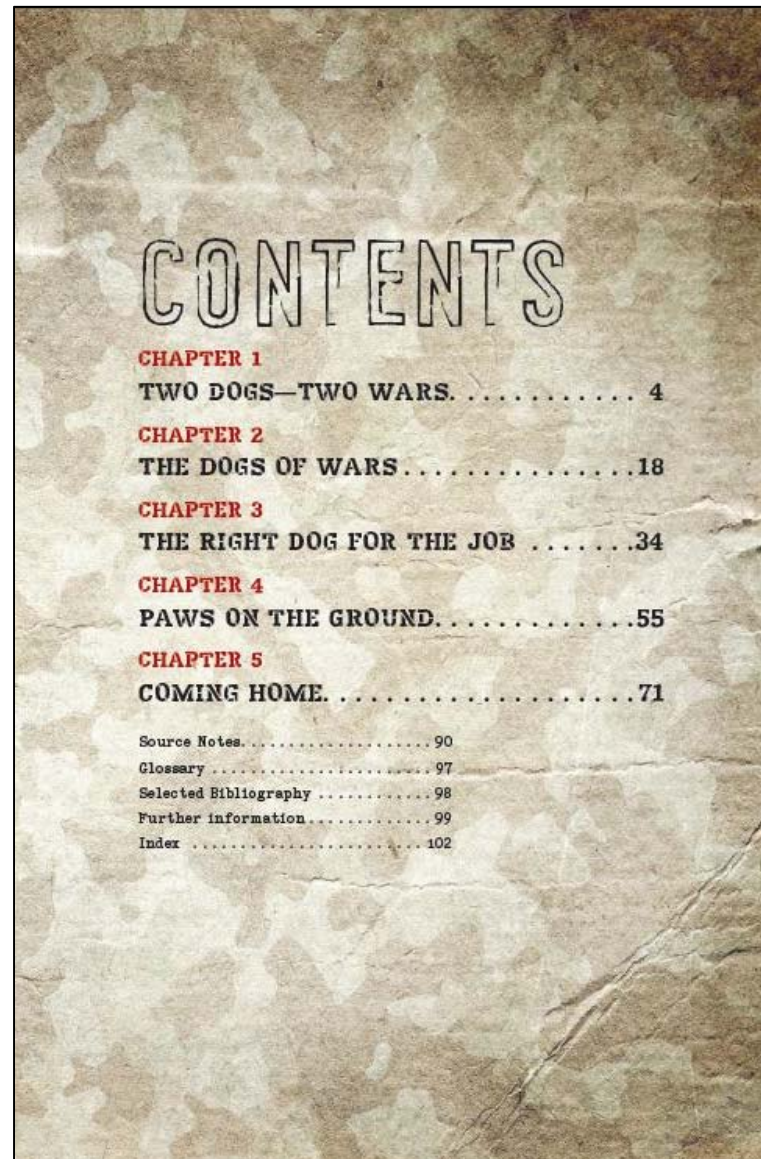
### COPYRIGHT PAGE:

This page tells you the year the book was published. This may be important for report writing when you need up-to-date information. On this page, you can also find the address of the publisher.



**TABLE OF CONTENTS PAGE:**

This lists the chapters by chapter title and the pages on which they begin. After the chapter list, there may be a list of extra features, such as source notes or an index, that you'll find at the end of the book.



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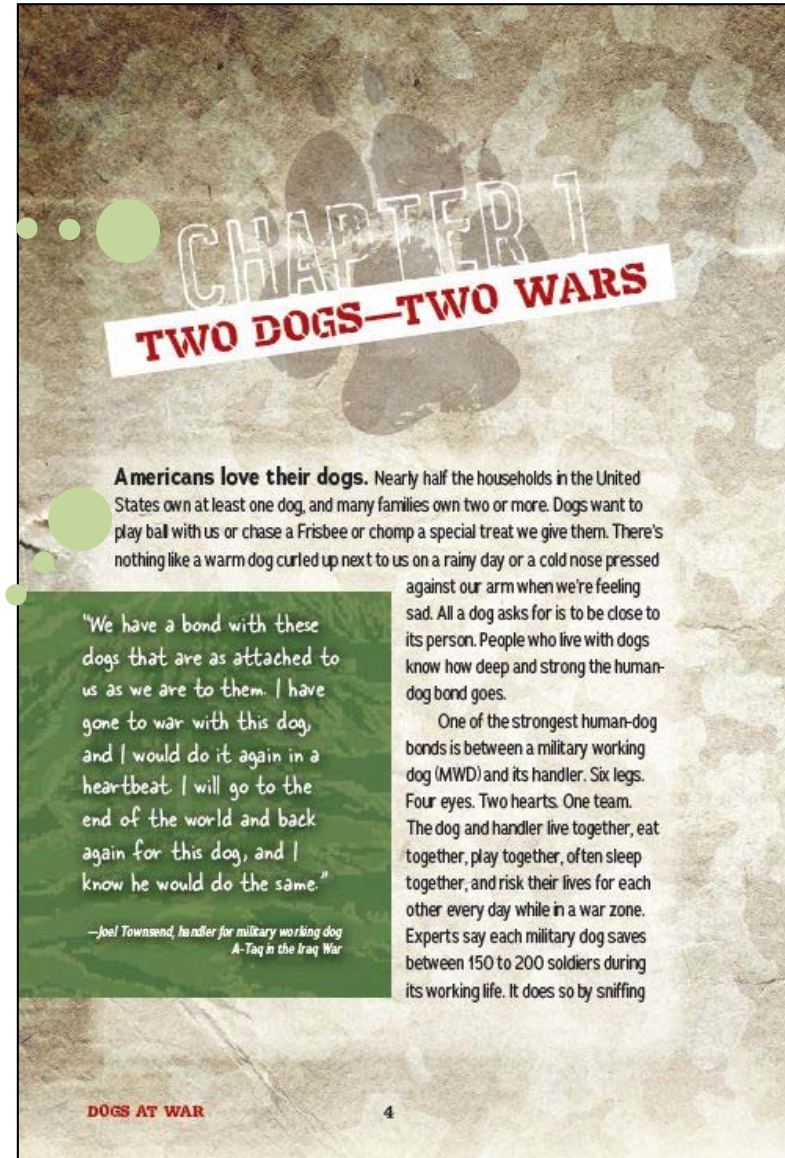
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**CHAPTER TITLE:** This tells you what topic will be discussed in the chapter. Chapter titles often give you the main ideas of the book.

**TEXT OR MAIN TEXT:** These are the words and sentences that discuss and explain the main ideas of the book. Main text looks different from chapter titles or captions.





Staff Sergeant Stephanie Pecovsky and her military working dog take a break during a ruck march training. In this exercise, a dog learns to walk at a relatively fast pace over distance while carrying a load.

out concealed bombs and weapons and by alerting its handler to hidden enemy soldiers.

Meet Mike Dowling and Rex, and John Burnam and Clipper. These outstanding teams worked in two wars separated by time and space, with very different outcomes for the heroic dogs.

**WAR DOG TEAM IN IRAQ: MIKE AND REX**

"This is arguably the single most dangerous place in the most dangerous war in the world right now," Mike Dowling said, writing about the time when he and Rex climbed out of a helicopter at the US Marine base at Mahmoudiyah, Iraq, in 2004. "And Rex and I have come here to do the most dangerous job in the world—tracking down the [rebel's hidden stash of] arms and explosives, plus their murderous improvised explosive devices." In 2004 Mike had every reason to worry. Soldiers in the US-led Iraq War (2003–2011) called this camp the capital of Iraq's Triangle of Death, an area south of Baghdad known for horrific violence.

**CAPTION:** These words tell you about the picture on the page. A caption is usually close to the picture it describes.

## CHAPTER 3 THE RIGHT DOG FOR THE JOB

**Most American companion dogs live comfortable, healthy lives.** They have food, toys, affection, health care, and plenty of time to play and exercise. They are happy and behave well. However, some dogs sit at home on the couch or in the backyard for many hours, alone and bored, waiting for their people to come home. That boredom can lead to anxiety and to destructive or dangerous behaviors. Some dogs have jobs—real jobs that give their lives purpose. They herd sheep, pull sleds, and find lost children. They detect illegal drugs and termites and are even used to detect some kinds of cancer, just by the odor of a patient's breath. If the dogs work with the police, they help catch criminals. These working dogs love their work, and they don't demand any payment for the jobs they do.

Military working dogs have jobs too. And their handlers say the

animals love their work. The dogs work hard, play hard, and seem to enjoy every minute of it. They don't understand the concept of the danger they may face, yet they serve faithfully. To the dogs, it's all about doing their assigned jobs to the best of their ability, chasing toys, and getting praise and love from their handlers. It all starts with puppies born from top-notch parents with proven abilities.

**PUPPIES: THE EARLY DAYS**

Nearly all MWDs, whether destined for the army, navy, air force, or marines, receive at least part of their training at Lackland Air Force Base. Lackland is the only US facility that trains dogs for military use. In 1998 the US Department of Defense started a breeding program at Lackland with the goal of ultimately providing the US military with one-third of the MWDs needed each year. Currently, about 85 percent of all military dogs come from European breeders known for



Staff Sergeant Christa Quam holds her puppy, which has passed its puppy evaluation at Lackland Air Force Base. It will enter the military working dog program with the base's 341st Training Squadron when it is about seven months old.

“There is the dog that is the fine animal that is useful for military working dog service. But there is a quality of dog above that . . . the dog whose drive is stronger, whose nerves are stronger and whose courage is higher.”

*—Stewart Hibbard, chief of MWD breeding, Lackland Air Force Base, Texas*

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**HEADINGS AND SUBHEADINGS:**  
These separate the main text into smaller chunks of information.

**SIDEBAR:**

This short bit of text is usually boxed and separated from the main text. Sidebars give additional information.

**PHOTOS:**


The photos or pictures in a book show what the words, or text, describe. Looking at photos can help you understand the meaning of the text.

**MEGAN AND REX**

Marine corporal Megan Leavey was one of the ten handlers with whom Rex worked during his career. Megan and Rex completed one hundred missions during their time together in Iraq in 2006. Their luck ran out when an IED exploded outside Ramadi in central Iraq. The explosion knocked Megan unconscious and damaged blood vessels inside her ears. All she could think about was Rex. "I remember waking up and pulling my leash and thinking, 'Oh, my God, please be something on the other end of this leash!'" Rex sustained a serious shoulder injury while Megan suffered a traumatic brain injury. Both Megan and Rex survived their injuries, although it took a year of recovery and rehabilitation for both of them to fully recover.

Megan was discharged in 2007 with a Purple Heart, a US military decoration awarded to soldiers wounded or killed during military service. The US Marines assigned Rex to a new handler. Megan tried for five years to adopt Rex. But the marines considered Rex such a valuable asset that they repeatedly denied her request. Rex developed paralysis of a facial nerve and became unable to work. The marines finally released him to Megan in April 2012.

By this time, Megan had been working as a security officer with a different dog at New York's Yankee Stadium. After Megan adopted Rex, the Yankees held a special ceremony for her at the stadium. Infielder Alex Rodriguez of the New York Yankees team presented Megan with a charm engraved with Rex's name. Rex died just a few short months later. "I am so grateful for the last eight months I got to spend with my partner and my best friend," Megan said. "Rex got to swim in a pool and play with my other dogs . . . sleep in a cozy bed next to me every night. He was one [heck] of a dog, one tough . . . Marine, and one very special soul."



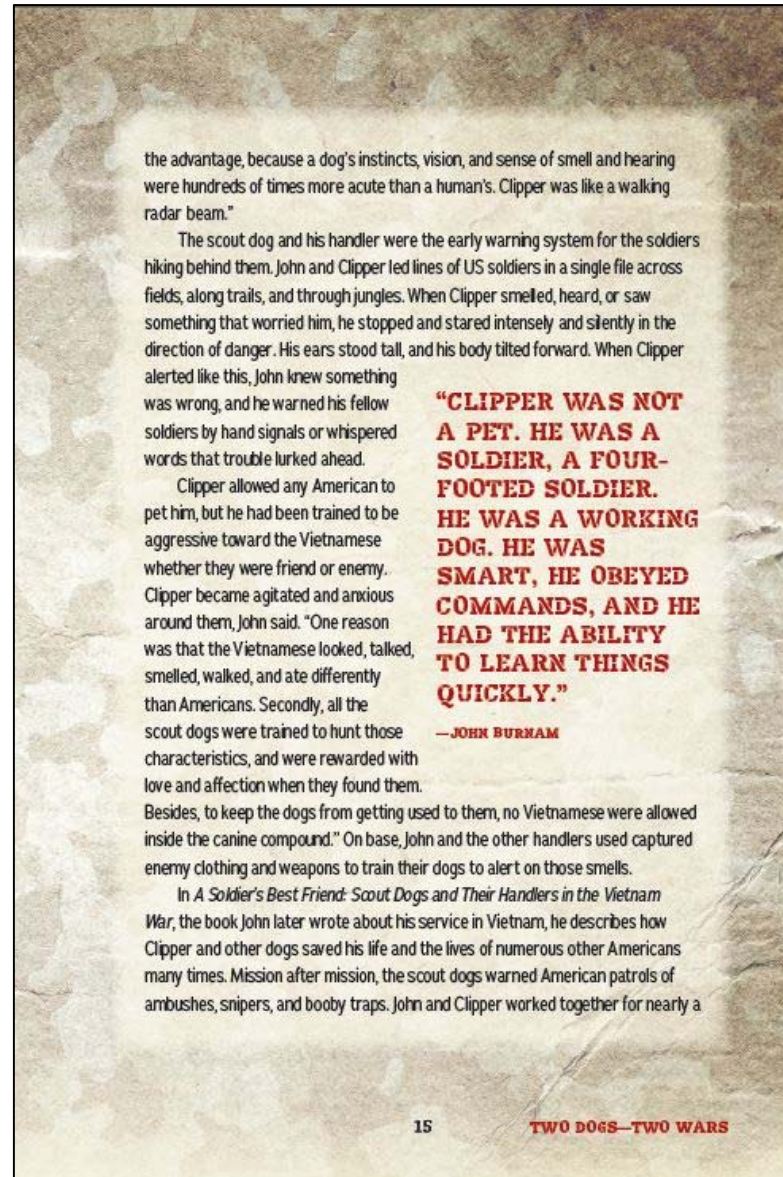
Alex Rodriguez (left) greets former US Marine corporal Megan Leavey (center). Randy Levine (right), president of the New York Yankees, looks on during the May 2012 ceremony to honor Leavey and her MWD Rex (on the leash) at Yankee Stadium in New York.

11 **TWO DOGS—TWO WARS**



**PULL QUOTE:**

A pull quote highlights an important quotation or idea from the text by setting it aside from the main text, often in a bold or colored text.

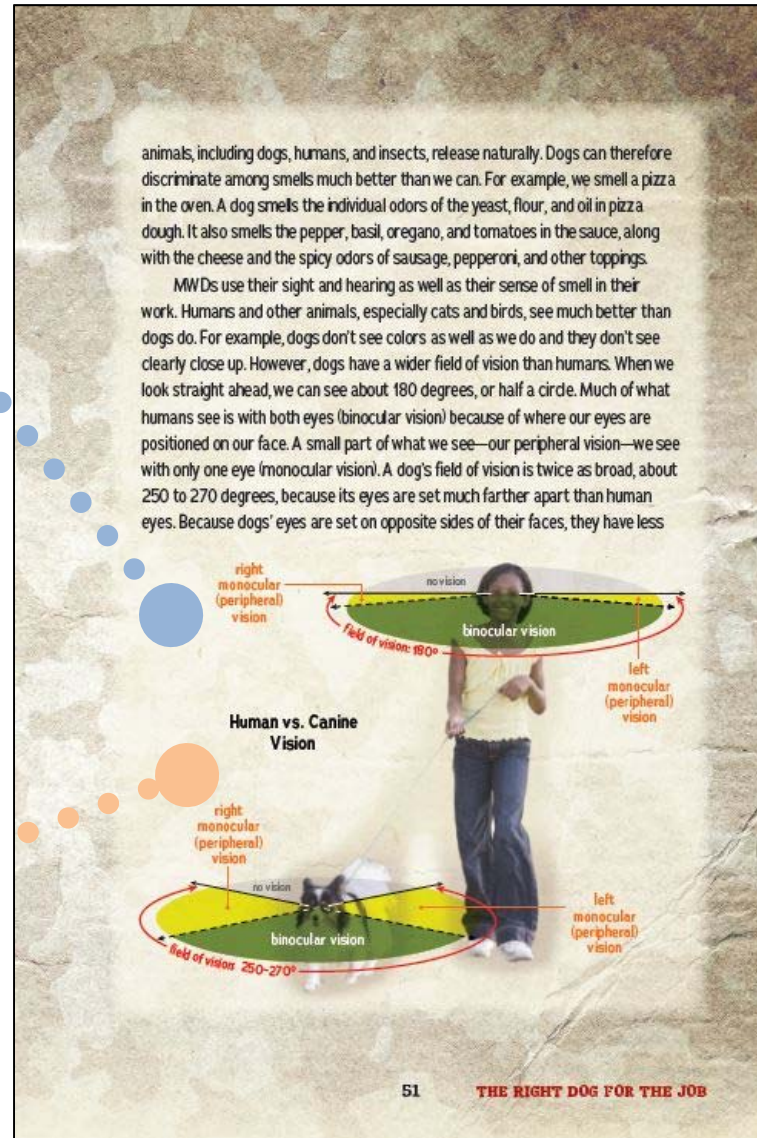


**DIAGRAM:**

This is a drawing that gives a simpler view of complex information. Short labels point out important parts of the drawing.

**LABELS:**

These are words on a diagram or photo that point out the important parts of the diagram or photo. On a map, labels name important features, such as rivers or cities.



## GLOSSARY:

This is a list of the book's unfamiliar words or phrases with a definition after each.

## GLOSSARY

**canine post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD):** a mental health condition that can affect dogs after a life-threatening, terrifying, or horrific event, such as military combat, assault, and other trauma. Dogs with PTSD are anxious, fearful, and withdrawn. About half the dogs with PTSD are unable to continue their military duties, while the other half recover with rest, play, and medication.

**deployment:** sending troops, dogs, and other military personnel to serve at bases or in conflicts overseas or away from their home bases.

**handler:** the man or woman who trains and works with a military working dog over a period of time.

**improvised explosive device (IED):** a device made from easily available materials and explosives for the purpose of injuring or killing others. IEDs are usually hidden in abandoned buildings, cars, and homes or under sandy roads and ditches. Triggered remotely or when a person or a dog unexpectedly comes in contact with the IED trip wire, the devices cause tremendous damage, injury, and even death.

**insurgent:** a person who revolts against civil authority or an established government. The term can also refer to people independently fighting US forces and their allies in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria.

**Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS):** also called the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), this international terrorist organization is committed to destroying the modern Islamic State to restore the Islamic caliphate, a form of Islamic government in which a person considered to be the political and religious successor to Muhammad (who founded Islam in the seventh century CE), rules all the Muslim world.

**inmate master:** the soldier in charge of military working dogs and their handlers at a military base.

**military working dog (MWD):** a specially trained dog owned by the US Department of Defense that works with a handler to perform duties such as bomb and drug detection and to chase, catch, and detain intruders and suspects. The dogs also patrol bases and military camps and provide protection for high-profile political leaders and other public figures. After retiring from the military, the dogs are sometimes reassigned to police departments or to security agencies.

**Not Forgotten Fountain:** part of the US Military Working Dog Teams National Monument, this fountain was dedicated in 2013 to commemorate the military working dogs left behind after the Vietnam War. The fountain also provides drinking water for visiting dogs and handlers.

**al-Qaeda:** a global militant Islamist organization founded by Osama bin Laden in 1988. The group was responsible for the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in New York City and in Arlington, Virginia.

**Robby's Law:** the US Congress passed this law in 2000 to promote the adoption of military working dogs by former handlers instead of the disposal of the dogs by other methods, including euthanasia (except when medically necessary).

**Taliban:** an Islamic fundamentalist political movement based primarily in Afghanistan. The group ruled that nation from 1996 until 2001. It promotes a strict interpretation of Sharia, or Islamic law.

**temporary duty (TDY) assignment:** a short deployment to a war zone or to a military base.

**US Military Working Dog Teams National Monument:** a monument at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. Dedicated in 2013, the bronze sculptures of the monument include a handler and four military working dogs, as representatives of the handler-dog teams that have served the US military since World War II. The monument honors dog teams in all branches of the US military.

## SOURCE NOTES:

These notes tell students where quoted material came from. They can be helpful when writing reports.

## SOURCE NOTES

- 4 Joel Townsend, quoted in "Man's Best Friend, a Soldier's 'Battle Buddy,'" *DVIDS*, March 4, 2009, <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/30710/mans-best-friend-soldiers-battle-buddy#.VfjChFVtHw>.
- 5 Mike Dowling, *Sergeant Rex: The Unbreakable Bond between a Marine and His Military Working Dog* (New York: Atria, 2011), 7.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 74.
- 7-8 *Ibid.*, 13.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 25.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 55.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 27.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 169.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 169.
- 9-10 *Ibid.*, 118.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 279.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 286.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 288-289.
- 11 Megan Leavey, quoted in James O'Rourke, "Ex-Marine Hopes to Adopt the Canine Partner She Served With," *USA Today*, last modified March 11, 2012, <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/story/2012-03-09/marine-military-service-dog-reunite/53431138/1>.
- 11 Megan Leavey, quoted in *CBS New York*, December 27, 2012, "Beloved Bomb-Sniffing Dog Who Retired to Live with Marine Handler Dies," <http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2012/12/27/beloved-bomb-sniffing-dog-who-retired-to-live-with-marine-handler-dies/>.
- 12 John Burnam, *A Soldier's Best Friend: Scout Dogs and Their Handlers in the Vietnam War* (New York: Union Square Press/Sterling Publishing, 2008), 171.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 72.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 69.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 79.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 83.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 96.
- 14 "John Burnam and Clipper," YouTube video, 1:22:9, posted by John Burnam, March 14, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDUBpPKlzU>.
- 15 Burnam, *Soldier's Best Friend*, 144.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 141-142.
- 16-17 *Ibid.*, 244.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

### Books

Burnam, John C. *A Soldier's Best Friend: Scout Dogs and Their Handlers in the Vietnam War*. New York: Union Square, 2008. The author tells the story of his tour of duty in the Vietnam War and the three MWDs with which he worked there.

Goodavage, Maria. *Soldier Dogs: The Untold Story of America's Canine Heroes*. New York: Dutton, 2012. Based on many personal interviews and visits to American bases, this book discusses what military working dogs do, their training, and the bond between dog and handler.

Kadhdaha, Cynthia. *Cracker! The Best Dog in Vietnam*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2007. Newbery-winning novelist Kadhdaha tells the story of military working dog Cracker and his young handler in the Vietnam War. Told in alternating points of view between the dog and handler, the story is ideal for ages ten and up.

Patent, Dorothy Hinshaw. *Dogs on Duty*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2014. Readers of all ages will enjoy this thorough and colorful exploration of the modern military war dog and how it is selected, trained, and deployed.

### Videos

Barrell, Ryan. "Conan O'Brien Trains with a Military Dog Unit at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar." *Huffington Post*, January 27, 2016. [http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2016/01/27/conan-obrien-trains-military-dog-unit-al-udeid-air-base-qatar\\_n\\_9087094.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2016/01/27/conan-obrien-trains-military-dog-unit-al-udeid-air-base-qatar_n_9087094.html). This article includes a 6:17-minute humorous video of Conan O'Brien "training" with a MWD at the US Air Force base in Qatar. He jokes with the handlers, then dresses in protective gear as a dog chases him and brings him down.

"Dogs of War." Military.com video, 3:18, April 10, 2015. <http://www.military.com/video/operations-and-strategy/military-tactics/dogs-of-war/4165410101001/>. Military war dogs have saved tens of thousands of lives since the beginning of their military service. This short video describes their contributions to American war efforts since World War II.

"Dogs in WW II: The Use of War Dogs, 1943 War Department (US Army); K-9 Corps." YouTube video, 11:55. Posted by "Jeff Quinney," September 17, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTb2ZEA7Ms>. This video shows how the US military used dogs in WW II for various duties, such as messenger dogs carrying supplies as well as messages.

Gibry Hounds. YouTube video, 1:24:05. Posted by "kekazocie," January 13, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iM5o5vXAUBI>. Filmed in Afghanistan, this video profiles four military dogs and their handlers in the war zone as they locate insurgents and dangerous explosives.

"Hero War Dog Skydives with Soldier." *National Geographic* video, 3:44, June 12, 2014. <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/06/140612-war-dog-parachute-pets-skydive-jump-george-hw-bush/>. See MWD Layka make her first tandem parachute jump from a small plane using a newly designed parachute harness.

Neaves, Alicia. "Military Dogs Trained in San Antonio Go on to Serve around the World." KENS5 video,

**FURTHER READING:** This list at the end of the book suggests books and websites on the same or related subjects. This list can be helpful in doing research for reports.

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