Helping your children choose books they will love

I ♥ reading

Lovereading4kids.co.uk is a book website created for parents and children to make choosing books easy and fun

Opening extract from

The Pigeon Spy

Written by

Terry Deary

Published by

A&C Black Publishers Ltd an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing PLC

All Text is Copyright © of the Author and/or Illustrator

Please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

First published 2013 by
A & C Black, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square
London WC1B 3DP

www.bloomsbury.com

Text copyright © 2013 Terry Deary
Illustrations copyright © 2013 James de la Rue
Cover illustration © 2013 Chris Mould

The rights of Terry Deary and James de la Rue to be identified as the author and illustrator of this work have been asserted by them in accordance with the Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

ISBN 978-1-4081-9171-2

A CIP catalogue for this book is available from the British Library.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means – graphic, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping or information storage and retrieval systems – without the prior permission in writing of the publishers.

Printed and Bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd., Croydon CR0 4YY

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2



Chapter 1

Doves and dollars

I never left the state of Kansas until I joined the army. In fact, I'd hardly ever left our farm.

'That Great War is nothing to do with us,' Ma used to say. 'You stay out of it, Joe.'

Our farm was a patch of dirt. Dad did the ploughing and sowing – I never liked horses, and they didn't like me. Ma kept the old tractor running and the pick-up truck that got us to Great Bend – every time I touched a machine, it broke. I minded the pigs and chickens, and the pigeons. Maybe you wouldn't think of farming pigeons.

But Ma sold them to Mr Lamarr at his White Dove restaurant in Great Bend to be made into pigeon pie. We needed the money, but I felt bad about the pigeons.

I liked to train my birds to fly back home. Some days I'd run ten miles across the range, then tie a message to the bird's leg and set it free. Those little messages got back to our farm long before I did.



From time to time Ma came back from Great Bend with a newspaper. After dark we'd sit round the oil lamp and read about the Great War over in Europe.

'Looks like America's going to send men across to fight,' Pa said one night in the lamplight.

'Well, they ain't taking my little Joe,' Ma said.

'He has to be eighteen to fight. Joe's only sixteen.'

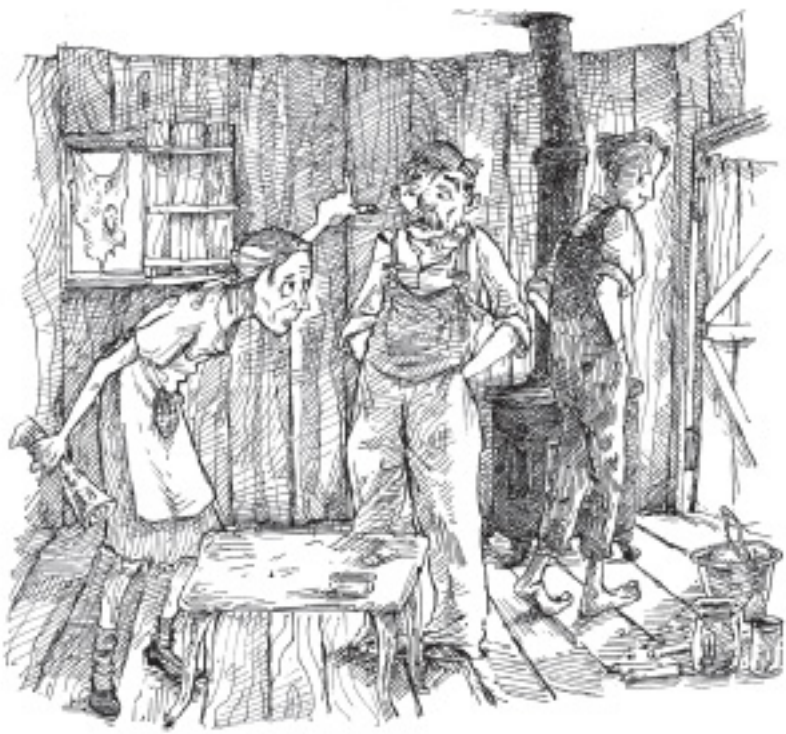
'He looks eighteen,' Ma argued. 'If the army send men out to look for soldiers you hide in the barn, you hear, Joe?'

Then one day in the spring of 1917 Ma came home wild as a mountain lion. 'Some low-down crook of a farmer over in Dry Walnut Creek is selling Mr Lamarr pigeons for half what we charge. I had to take even less. We'll hardly afford to eat this

month,' she sobbed, and tears ran down her thin, sun-stained cheeks. 'All because of this farmer Muller.'

'Muller?' Pa said. 'Sounds German to me.'

'Exactly!' Ma shouted. 'And we're at war with the Germans!'



I tried to remind her: 'You said the Great War is nothing to do with us.'

She wasn't listening. 'It'd serve them right if I sent our Joe to fight them. They'd be beaten inside a week.'

I tried again. 'You said I was too young.'

'I'll drive you in to Great Bend tomorrow. You can sign up for the US Army there.'

'But you said...'

Ma wasn't listening.

We drove into the town the next day and saw a line of men outside the door of the Town Hall. Ma pushed me out of the pick-up truck. I joined the line and shuffled along with the rest till I got to the desk.

'Name?' the man in a khaki uniform asked.

'Joe. Joe Clay.'

'Age?'

'Sixteen.'

The man rubbed his tired eyes. 'We don't take men as young as sixteen. You reckon you mean eighteen?'

'I suppose,' I said. It was a lie. We both knew it.

'I'll put down eighteen,' he said. 'Now put your mark here.'



'I can write my name,' I said proudly.

'That'll come in useful when you're digging trenches,' he muttered. 'Here is a rail pass. Report to Kansas City troop depot a week today and they'll train you up.' He reached out to shake my hand quickly. 'Welcome to the army, son,' he said, then shouted, 'Next!'

And that was how I came to fight in the Great War. All because Ma got in a temper over a few pigeons.

I can't complain. Pigeons got me into the war, but it was a pigeon that got me out of it alive.