

MY FATHER'S WAR



STUDY GUIDE

MY FATHER'S WAR A WWII WARRIOR'S STORY

My Father's War is a riveting two-person Reader's Theater performance with songs and underscoring based on the memoir of a WWII fighter pilot in the European Theater.

Lt. Herschel Ponder's WWII memoir was written in his storytelling voice - droll, sincere, and sometimes cruelly straightforward. In it, he wrote of his fears, his joys, and his struggle to remain human during and after an inhumane war.

"... I had a sudden urge to tell you about my war, World War II - and the subsequent coping - my peace. After 45 years, some of the events are as vivid as ever ... There is no fiction in what is to follow. The time, places, the people, the involvements are as I remember them."

- Lieutenant Herschel Ponder,
July 4, 1989

Carol Ponder, Lt. Ponder's middle daughter and her husband, Robert Kiefer, have crafted a performance using verbatim excerpts from the memoir, adding songs from WWII and from Ponder's family's native southern Appalachia to create the performance.



GO FURTHER AT myfatherswar.weebly.com:

- **READ** a historical overview of WWII, including the geographic and strategic context of Lt. Ponder's involvement, written by David Grier, PhD in history and WWII specialist.
- **ORDER** a copy of Lt. Ponder's published memoir *Ponder Anew: What the Almighty Can Do*

ABOUT THE SHOW:

“I was seeing a movie in the Plaza Theater, in my hometown of Asheville, North Carolina, and all at once the screen went blank, the lights came on, and the manager climbed on stage to announce that we, no doubt, were at war.”

Lt. Ponder was a mountain boy, born in Asheville, NC in 1922. At the age of 20, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps and flew 51 missions in his beloved P-47 Thunderbolt fighter bomber in the European Theatre. His war memoir was written in 1989. ***My Father’s War*** is a production that evokes the essence of war and warriors, their victories, sacrifices, loyalty to each other, and the sweet pain of coming home.



Lt. Ponder in the cockpit of a P-47 Thunderbolt fighter jet.



After the war ended, Lt. Ponder visited Eagles' Nest, one of Hitler's hideouts.



Upon his return, Lt. Ponder married Eleanor Israel and they attended UNC Chapel Hill.



Carol Ponder and Robert Kiefer in performance of Ponder Anew: A WWII Warrior's Story.

SONGS YOU'LL HEAR:

Songs and music are an integral part of ***My Father’s War***. Listen for:

“Don’t Sit Under the Apple Tree
(With Anyone Else but Me)”

“The Minstrel Boy”

“Dear Little Boy of Mine”

“Goober Peas”

“The Army Air Corps/The U.S. Air Force Song”

“Going Across the Mountain”

“When Johnny Comes Marching Home”

“Danny Boy”

“Pretty Bird”

“Carolina Moon”

“Smilin’ Through”

“I’ll Be Seeing You”

ACTIVITY: PLANES AND TRAINS

Lt. Herschel Ponder was a fighter pilot during World War II. He primarily flew P-47 Thunderbolts, though he did train on other types of planes. Rail transportation was very common during the war, not only for troops traveling between bases, but also as a way to move supplies, including ammunition, to the front lines.



The first plane that Lt. Ponder flew in flight training was the Fairchild PT-19 with a Ranger engine.



Lt. Ponder flew P-47 Thunderbolts with the 510th Fighter Squadron, 405th Fighter Group in the Ninth Air Force.



Lt. Ponder flew with his unit from Shrewsbury, UK to Paris, FR in a C-47 transport plane.



Lt. Ponder boarded the Carolina Special from Asheville, NC on his way to basic training in Miami Beach, FL.



Upon arriving in Europe in 1944, Lt. Ponder traveled by train with his unit from Glasgow, UK to Shrewsbury, UK.



Many of Lt. Ponder's missions included destroying German ammunition trains.

INVESTIGATE

Research one of the planes or trains with which Herschel Ponder interacted during WWII or choose another plane or train that shaped history during WWII. Find images, videos, or audio files that support your research.

EXPLAIN

Using VoiceThread or Prezi, create a presentation that illuminates the usage and significance of the plane or train during WWII. Did it exist prior to the war? If so, in what form? Does it still exist today? Is it still in use?

SHARE

Present your research to the class. Be prepared to listen to feedback from your classmates - and be ready to provide your own during their presentations!

ACTIVITY LINKS

VoiceThread - voicethread.com

Prezi - prezi.com/prezi-for-education

ACTIVITY: PLACES AND BASES

Lt. Herschel Ponder trained throughout the United States and traveled throughout Europe as a fighter pilot during WWII.

DISCOVER

Using a map, find the following places:

IN THE UNITED STATES:

- Asheville, North Carolina
- Miami Beach, FL
- Clarion, PA
- San Antonio, Texas
- Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
- Enid, Oklahoma
- Victoria, Texas
- Richmond, Virginia

IN EUROPE:

- Glasgow, United Kingdom
- Shrewsbury, United Kingdom
- Saint-Dizier, France
- Saarbrücken, Germany
- Zwartberg, Belgium
- Linz, Austria
- Kitzingen, Germany
- Berchtesgaden, Germany



Lt. Ponder's Army training took place on bases and airfields across the USA.



Lt. Ponder flew missions across the European Theatre; these sites represent mainly the places and bases where he was stationed with his unit.

RESEARCH

Research one of the places or bases where Lt. Ponder visited or was stationed. What changes did WWII bring to the city or town? How was the area used during WWII? How has the area changed since Lt. Ponder was there in 1943-45?

CREATE

Using VoiceThread or Prezi, choose 5 pictures or documents that support your research to upload into a slideshow. Narrate the slideshow to share your information. Post for comments from your classmates!

ACTIVITY LINKS

VoiceThread - voicethread.com

Prezi - prezi.com/prezi-for-education

To use an interactive map dedicated to **My Father's War**, please visit:
<http://myfatherswar.weebly.com/activities.html#placesandbases>

ACTIVITY: STORIES AND GLORIES

Lt. Herschel Ponder wrote his memoir 40 years after the end of WWII in part to tell his story for his children - to communicate across generations. He also found that writing the memoir helped him remember and process his experiences, as well as provide a touchstone for others who had lived through similar events.

WRITE

Think of a story, an event, or a relationship in your life that has personal significance. It can be meaningful and serious or playful and funny - but it should be something that you are willing to share with the rest of the class! Jot down an outline for your story, making sure that you have included a beginning, a middle, and an end.

EVALUATE

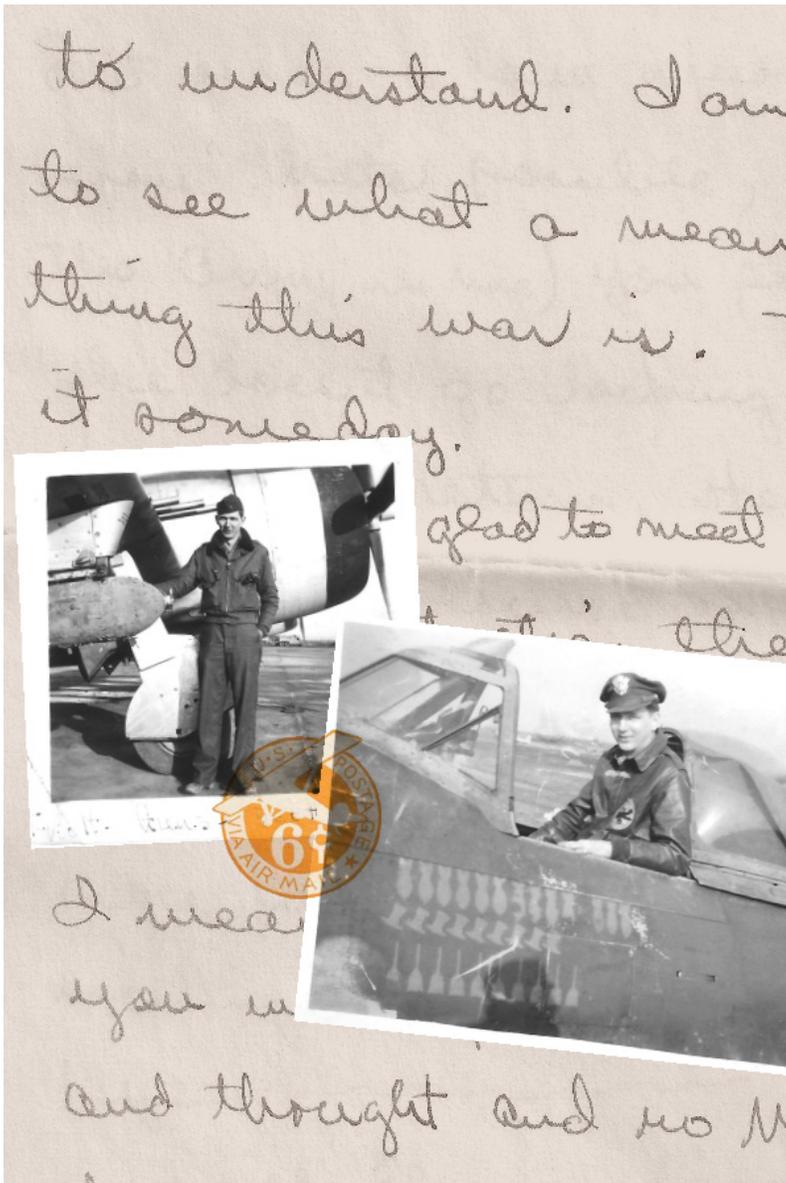
How would you like to share your story? Do you need to add narration, images, or a musical underscore? Choose a tool that fits your style, but also presents your story in a clear and understandable manner. Some suggested tools are:

- Animoto (Video Tool)
- Glogster (Collage Tool)
- Pixton (Comic Strip Tool)
- Tar Heel Reader (Digital Book Tool)

Another option is to establish a classroom site on Soundcloud or PodOmatic. You can record your story as an audio file and share it as a podcast.

PRESENT

Share your story with your class. If you'd like, post it for others, too.



ACTIVITY LINKS

Animoto - animoto.com
Glogster - edu.glogster.com
Pixton - pixton.com/schools/overview

Tar Heel Reader - tarheelreader.org
Soundcloud - soundcloud.com
PodOmatic - podomatic.com

ACTIVITY: VOICES AND CHOICES

In Reader's Theater, with its focus on the written word and presence of scripts, actors rely on their voices even more than in other theatrical forms - but they still use facial expressions and body language, even if they are seated, to complete the performance. Reading with expression (one of the key elements of fluency) is vitally important!

IDENTIFY

Explore the basic elements of music as they are expressed vocally: pitch (high/low), tempo (fast/slow), dynamics (loud/soft), staccato (sharp, separated sounds), legato (smooth, connected sounds), texture (rough, smooth, squawky, lilting) and pauses, the strategic use of silence.

EXPERIMENT

Before going onstage, an actor should prepare his or her voice for speaking. Just like you would stretch your muscles before running a marathon, your vocal chords need to be warmed up prior to speaking or singing from the stage.

- 1) Stand straight and tall, keeping your feet planted firmly on the ground and about shoulder width apart. Relax your shoulders and arms.
- 2) Take a deep breath, and exhale slowly and evenly.
- 3) Repeat the vocal exercises listed below, speaking clearly and focusing on each word. Then, choose an exercise and experiment by applying one or more of the basic elements of music outlined above to the words.

VOCAL EXERCISE 1

Red leather yellow leather
(repeat 4x)

VOCAL EXERCISE 2

The big black bug
Bled black blood
(repeat 4x)

VOCAL EXERCISE 3

Unique New York
Unique New York
You know you need
Unique New York

PERFORM

Read excerpts from the script or from another literary non-fiction passage chosen by your teacher. Explore creating facial expressions and meaningful body language in support of your vocal choices. Then, it's time for an encore! Perform the piece again!

CRITIQUE

Provide constructive feedback for your classmates after their performance.

ACTIVITY LINKS

To view an example of vocal warm-up exercises, please visit:
<http://myfatherswar.weebly.com/activities.html#voicesandchoices>

WWII: THE BASICS

- World War II is generally considered to have begun on September 1, 1939, with Germany's invasion of Poland.
- The United States entered the war on December 8, 1941, after the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor by Japan.
- Franklin D. Roosevelt was the U.S. President during World War II.
- The war was fought between two opposing alliances: The Allies (consisting of the United States, the Soviet Union, the British Empire, France, Canada, Mexico, Australia, and others) and the Axis (consisting mainly of Germany, Japan, and Italy)
- On May 7, 1945, Germany formally surrendered to Allied forces. V-E Day or, Victory in Europe Day, was celebrated on May 8, 1945.
- On September 2, 1945, a ceremony was held in Tokyo Bay aboard the battleship USS *Missouri*, where Japan signed formal surrender documents, thus ending the war.



Lt. Ponder received the Purple Heart, a medal awarded in the name of the President to those wounded or killed while serving on or after April 5, 1917 with the U.S. military. It is one of the most recognized and respected U.S. military medals.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS & STANDARDS

- To support teachers and learners in addressing the three Instructional Shifts outlined in the Common Core:
 - 1) Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction - especially literary nonfiction, in this case, the original memoir and the script adapted from it.
 - 2) Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text - the actors' interpretation of the text provides an excellent example of, and inspiration for, in-depth text analysis and understanding.
 - 3) Regular practice with complex text and its academic language - the memoir and script, while written and spoken in a storytelling voice, include complex ideas (both historical and personal) using commensurately sophisticated language.
- To offer an entertaining and compelling exemplar of literary non-fiction, inspiring students to:
 - 1) Relate more personally to information in history and social studies;
 - 2) Investigate different points of view when learning in history and social studies;
 - 3) Explore history and social studies through memoir-writing of their own;
 - 4) Comprehend biography, autobiography, memoir and other historical works through creating Reader's Theater performances of their own.
- Through this exemplar, to introduce Reader's Theater as a genre and to make the connection for students between Reader's Theater and writing for and speaking in public, skills that are crucial to success in today's world.