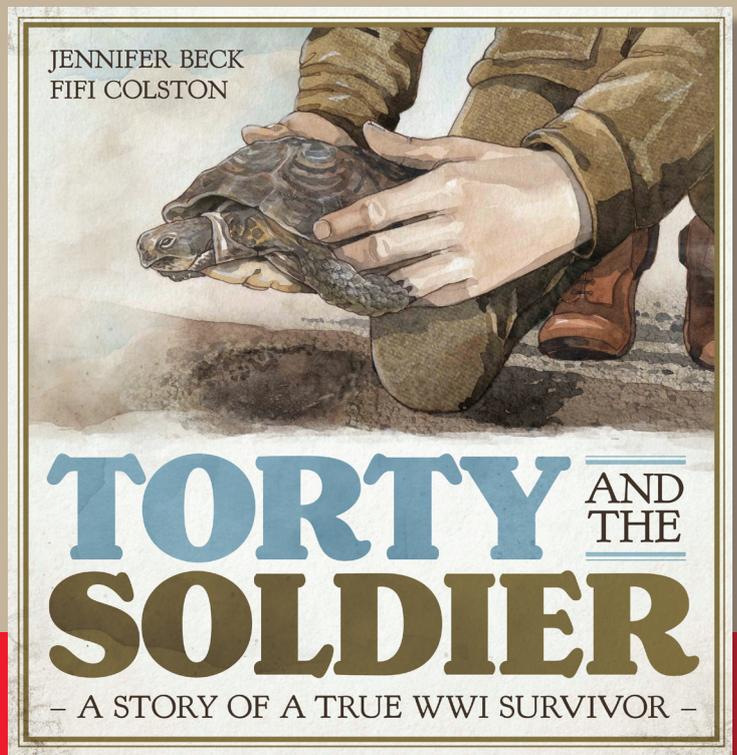


Torty and the Soldier

Text by Jennifer Beck

Illustrations by Fifi Colston

- Maths • Writing • Research
- Social Studies • Science



Synopsis

Torty and the Soldier is the heartwarming story of one plucky tortoise's incredible survival against all odds. Kiwi soldiers brought a number of souvenirs home from World War One, but Torty was perhaps the most unique. Already estimated to be 100 years old at the time she was found, injured, in Greece, the little tortoise was rescued and looked after by Stewart Little, who brought her home to New Zealand on board the *Marama*, a hospital ship. Towards the end of the voyage she went into hibernation and was brought ashore in a kitbag. Torty lived in Dunedin in Stewart's care until his death 60 years later when her care passed on to Stewart's family. And now, 100 years since her arrival in New Zealand, Torty remarkably lives on, a true World War One survivor. This is her story.

About the Author and Illustrator

Jennifer Beck is a former teacher and psychologist, and an award-winning writer and author of more than forty-five children's books, including the Scholastic NZ classics, *The Bantam and the Soldier* (NZ Children's Book of the Year 1997), *The Christmas Caravan*, *John Britten: The Boy Who Did Do Better*, *Stefania's Dancing Slippers* (Silver Medal Picture Book Moonbeam Children's Book Awards USA 2008), *Nobody's Dog* (NZ Children's Choice winner 2006) and *Remember That November*. Many of her books have also been included in the Storylines Notable Books lists. She was the Children's Writer-in-Residence (with illustrator Robyn Belton) at the University of Otago in 2015, where she worked on her latest picture book (due out in 2018). In 2015 she was named an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit for Services to Children's Literature. Jennifer lives in Auckland, New Zealand with her husband.

Fifi Colston is a Wellington veteran of the World of Wearable Art awards: a finalist and award winner over 17 years with a total of 18 entries in the show. She has worked in the New Zealand film industry as a costumier and illustrator, and is the author of the children's 'how-to' costume books, *Wearable Wonders* (winner of the Elsie Locke Award for non-fiction) and its companion volume, *Ghoulish Get-ups* (both published by Scholastic NZ). She has her fingers in many creative pies: junior fiction novelist, children's book illustrator, magazine poet, and a long-standing television presenter of arts and crafts on TVNZ's *What Now* and *The Good Morning Show*. Fifi has also illustrated a number of Scholastic titles, including the acclaimed *The Red Poppy*, written by David Hill.

Writing Style

This is an exquisitely illustrated story of a true WW1 survivor. The story spans several decades and covers themes such as fear, loss, loyalty, friendship and survival in war. *Torty and the Soldier* invites several reading revisits to support the reader/listener to understand and appreciate this layered telling of Torty and Stewart's lives.

Shared Learning and Discussion Points

ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

- Show the children the cover. What does WW1 stand for? Do you know anything about WW1? (p. 1)
- Read the dedication. What jobs do you think were done by the orderlies and nurses? (p. 3)
- What happens in a 'port city'? Do you know the name of a port city in New Zealand? Can you think of a word beginning with 'c' that means a hundred years? (pp. 4–5)
- What is a 'survivor'? Who was dropping bombs on the tortoise's shelter in the woods? (p. 6)
- What do you think 'leave' means? Why might they have needed leave from their ship? What does 'moored' mean? (p. 7)
- Why was Stewart alarmed when he saw the French gun wagon coming? What's a 'goner'? (pp. 8–9)
- How many toes do you think a tortoise has? (*Usually 5.*) Why do you think Stewart cared about finding and helping the tortoise? Do his actions give us a clue about what kind of person he might be? How would you hold your hands like a stretcher to carry an injured tortoise? (pp. 10–11)
- What do you think 'the cost of war' means? How could something like that be measured? What does it mean to 'volunteer'? Have you ever volunteered to do something? What does 'confessed' mean? Have you ever confessed? What does 'torpedoed' mean? (pp. 12–13)
- Even though they wanted to help, how do you think Stewart and his brother were feeling about going to war? What were their first jobs on the hospital ship? How did they help the people who were going to die before the ship got to England? (pp. 14–15)
- What is a 'temporary base hospital'? (pp. 16–17)
- What does Stewart do to take care of the tortoise? What does he name it? What would you have named it? Why was it so important to Stewart to keep the tortoise alive? (pp. 18–19)
- How did they make porridge when they were fighting? Why did the soldiers like Terty? (pp. 20–21)
- What are 'quarantine rules'? What did Stewart do when he heard the rules? What did it mean when Terty 'went into hibernation'? What might have happened to her if she hadn't gone into hibernation? (pp. 22–23)
- Stewart and Terty survived the war, but Terty had trouble keeping out of danger. What other things happened that she survived? (pp. 24–27)
- What did Terty do to help Stewart take care of her? What is 'trench foot'? Where did she like to sleep? (pp. 28–29)
- How did Terty help Stewart at the very end of his life? About how old would Terty be now? (pp. 30–31)
- What colour is used mostly throughout the book? Why do you think this is?

Activities

ACTIVITY 1: ANZAC BISCUITS

Ask the children to research the acronym ANZAC and to find some images and text associated with ANZACs in WW1. Provide them with art supplies and ask them to design a packet for ANZAC biscuits. If time and resources allow, make the biscuits in groups to fill their packaging.

ACTIVITY 2: HIBERNATING ... OR NOT

In the story, Terty hibernates in the ship. Ask the children to rewrite this part of the story imagining that Terty woke up. What kind of adventures might she have had? What kind of trouble might Stewart have got into when it was discovered that he had brought a tortoise on board?

ACTIVITY 3: SEQUENCING THE STORY

Give the children a page divided into 6 or 8 squares. Re-read the story to them and ask them to choose 6 or 8 main events and put them in order in the picture frames on their page. Encourage them to add dialogue in speech bubbles.

ACTIVITY 4: A LETTER HOME

Ask the children to imagine they are on the ship with Stewart and Terty. Ask them to write a letter home about Terty, and if they like or don't like that she's on the ship, and why.

ACTIVITY 5: VENN DIAGRAM

Divide the class or group into two parts. Ask one part to research turtles, and the other to research tortoises. Choose 5–8 distinguishing features of each. Collate the idea on the board, keeping turtle facts on one side and tortoise facts on the other. Ask the children to draw a large Venn diagram, labelling one side Turtles and the other Tortoises. Using these facts, the children can fill their Venn diagram to demonstrate the differences and similarities of turtles and tortoises.

Written by Sarina Dickson



teacher toolkit

 SCHOLASTIC

TORTY'S JOURNEY

