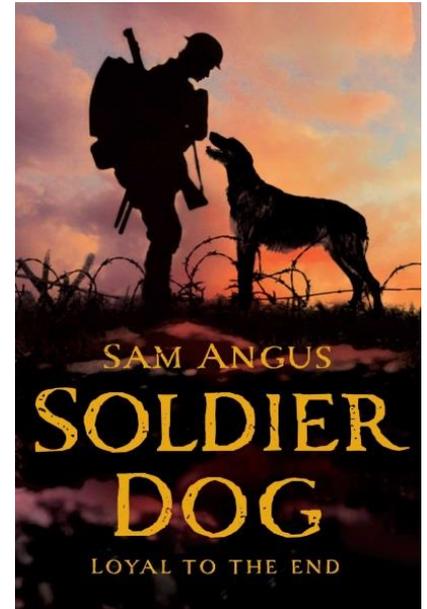
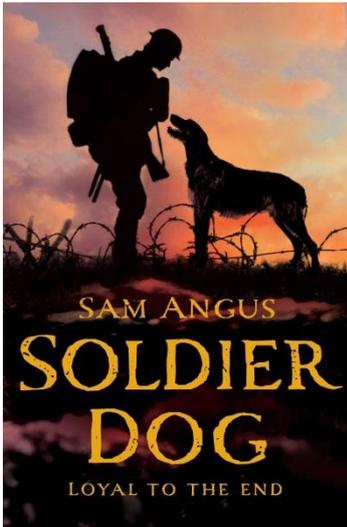


Soldier Dog by Sam Angus – Discussion Notes

1. Did you find that *Soldier Dog* taught you things you didn't know about the First World War? Having read this book, do you think you will now read more books about this this period in history?
2. Da might be considered to be a less-than-perfect father to Stanley, especially at the beginning, and is absent for most of the book. Discuss who else steps into a father-like role throughout Stanley's adventures (e.g. the Colonel and Hamish) – and how they compare to Da. What do you think are the hallmarks of a good father figure?
3. **'[Stanley] had one single idea in his head: to go home, to go to Lara Bird, to Nethercott.'** As the book's only female protagonist, who is only ever described in a domestic setting, what does Lara represent, to Stanley and in general, so far away from the trenches?
4. **'Nothing meant anything to Da any more, not now that all the love had gone out of him and the anger had come into him.'** Can we ultimately excuse Da his bullying and cruel behaviour because of the loss and hardship he has endured? Do you think Da redeems himself by the end of the book?
5. Discuss the book's structure. What do the handwritten letters add to the narrative? How does the author weave the different plot strands together?
6. **'The earth itself was erupting, Stanley's heart pounding a tattoo to the thudding of the guns, the screaming of the howitzers tearing his eardrums, the veins on his temples throbbing.'** Discuss the author's use of language to convey the horrors of the trenches. Which sections did you find hardest to read?
7. **'So many men, so many men, but still a boy could drown in his own aloneness.'** Discuss the idea that family relationships were more important than ever when families were divided because of the war, and when soldiers faced feelings of isolation away from home. How does the thought of Tom help Stanley through his darkest times?
8. The news that Da is in France, that Tom is nearby, and of Pistol's true identity are revealed quite swiftly after a long period of uncertainty for Stanley. Discuss the climactic impact of this pacing.
9. **'No . . . no. I don't, I don't – I won't – go back up, I don't want another dog.'** Discuss the importance of Bones in Stanley's life before Pistol arrives. Can one dog ever replace another? How does Stanley learn to come to terms with Bones's death?
10. Did you learn anything new about the First World War while reading this book? Which specific details do you think the author had to research? Is there anything you'd like to find out more about?





About the Book

Stanley's dad hasn't been the same since his wife died and his eldest son went off to fight in the war. Now Stanley is either invisible to his dad or the object of one of his rages, and his only friend is his dad's prize-winning greyhound, Rocket. But one day Rocket escapes, and the result is a litter of non-thoroughbred puppies that Da says will all have to be drowned, even Stanley's favourite puppy, Solider. Stanley is so angry with his father that he runs away and enlists in the army to train as a messenger-dog handler, and despite being far too young he's soon heading to France with a Great Dane called Bones by his side.

As the fighting escalates and Stanley experiences the horrors of war, he comes to realize that the loyalty of his dog is the one thing he can rely on. But his father hasn't given up on him, and extraordinary circumstances will bring them together once more . . .

About the Author

Sam Angus was born in Italy and grew up in France and in Spain during the final years of General Franco's dictatorship. She studied Literature at Trinity College, Cambridge, and taught A level English before setting up one of the most successful fashion brands of the 1990s, Sam De Teran, worn by VIPs and socialites and mentioned in the same breath as Anya Hindmarch and Kelly Hoppen.

After having her first child, Sam returned to her first love: literature. She now writes full-time and lives between Exmoor and London with an improvident quantity of children, horses and dogs. Sam's peripatetic childhood inspired a love of travelling and of history which continue to be the key themes in her outstanding novels.



Soldier Dog, her debut novel about the Messenger Dog Service, was published in 2012 to great acclaim and won the North East Book Award. It was shortlisted for the Heart of Hawick Children's Book Award, the Warwickshire Teen Book Award and the Worcestershire Teen Book Award, and longlisted for the CILIP Carnegie Medal, the Redbridge Award and the Branford Boase Award. Sam has also written *A Horse Called Hero*, *Captain* and *The House on Hummingbird Island*.

Find out more about *Soldier Dog* by Sam Angus at
<https://www.panmacmillan.com/authors/sam-angus/soldier-dog>