***Extract from ‘Private Peaceful’ By Michael Morpurgo***

**Thought for the week – Peace**

***(available in the school library if you are interested)***

We were lulled by the blue skies perhaps, or by sheer boredom. Fritz seemed to have gone to sleep on us and as far as we were concerned that suited us fine. We thought we could go to sleep too. The awakening came suddenly. "Gas! Gas!"

The cry goes up and is echoed all along the trench. For a moment we are frozen with panic. We have trained for this time and again, but nonetheless we fumble clumsily, feverishly with our gas masks.

"Fix bayonets!" Hanley's yelling while we're still trying frantically to pull on our gas masks. We grab our rifles and fix bayonets. We're on the firestep looking out into no-man's-land, and we see it rolling towards us, this dreaded killer cloud we have heard so much about but have never seen for ourselves until now. Its deadly tendrils are searching ahead, feeling their way forward in long yellow wisps, scenting me, searching for me. Then finding me out, the gas turns and drifts straight for me. I'm shouting inside my gas mask. "Christ! Christ!" Still the gas comes on, through our wire, swallowing everything in its path.

I hear again in my head the instructor's voice, see him shouting at me through his mask when we went out on our last exercise. "You're panicking in there, Peaceful. A gas mask is like God, son. It'll work bloody miracles for you, but you've got to believe in it." But I don't believe in it! I don't believe in miracles.

The gas is only feet away now. In a moment it will be on me, around me, in me. I crouch down, hiding my face between my knees, hands over my helmet, praying it will float over my head, over the top of the trench, seek out someone else. But it does not. It's all around me. I tell myself I will not breathe, I must not breathe. Through a yellow mist I see the trench filling up with it. It drifts into the dugouts, snaking into every nook and cranny, looking for me. I see men running, staggering, falling. I see Pete shouting out for me. Then he's grabbing me and we run. Half-blinded by my mask I trip and fall, crashing my head against the trench wall, knocking myself half-senseless. My gas mask has come off. I pull it down, but I have breathed in and know already it's too late. My eyes are stinging. My lungs are burning. I am coughing, retching, choking. I don't care where I'm running so long as it is away from the gas. At last I'm in the reserve trench and it is clear of gas. I'm out of it. I wrench off my mask, gasping for good air. Then I am on my hands and knees, vomiting violently. When at last the worst is over I look up through blurred and weeping eyes. A Hun in a gas mask is standing over me, his rifle aimed at my head.

**Thoughts:**

* When all of the evil and destruction is happening around us, can we still feel peace?
* When confrontations and arguments are around us at school, can we still be at peace?

**Thought for the Week: International Day of Peace is on 21st September**

*‘Be selective in your battles. Sometimes peace is better than being right.’*