Talking points and activities for the novel
(Page references are for the Collins edition)

**FIVE PAST TEN**
After reading chapter one, work in pairs to identify specific techniques used by the writer to gain the reader’s interest e.g. present tense for immediacy; short sentences (like a child); different word techniques, similes etc.; use of bird imagery (crow, robin, swallow, lark, blackbird); dramatic death of father and Tommo’s sense of guilt. Look for some of these techniques as you read further into the novel (especially the bird imagery).

Pupils discuss memories of first day at secondary school. Write about the experience in the present tense. Pupils could do a short passage in the past tense and then convert it. What difference does it make to the feel of the writing?

**TWENTY TO ELEVEN**
Charlie stands up for Big Joe when he is victimised. This incident is important to Charlie’s action later in the play. Does the school have an anti-bullying policy? If so look at it and discuss whether it’s good enough!

**NEARLY QUARTER PAST ELEVEN**
Grandma Wolf often punished the children by smacking them. Discuss what punishments parents use today. Are parents too indulgent these days? If so, how far has this led to an increase in poor attitudes, selfishness and anti-social behaviour?

*or*
Debate whether smacking should ever be allowed. Part of this task could be to create a chart or survey, recording different views.

**TWENTY-FOUR MINUTES PAST TWELVE**
Charlie’s relationship with Molly is revealed. Tommo is upset. Why do you think he is affected so much? Write a diary entry for Tommo in which he expresses his feelings.

**NEARLY FIVE TO ONE**
Big Joe goes missing. Why are the villagers so affected by his disappearance? What do you think Big Joe’s role in the novel is?

**TWENTY EIGHT MINUTES PAST ONE**
Molly is pregnant. Imagine you are Grandma Wolf. Write the letter you send to the Peaceful family. Look at pages 91-92 for guidance.
In Private Peaceful, on page 93 there is a description of the soldiers who have signed up. Discuss what it tells us about people’s expectations, hopes, and attitudes towards the war and the soldiers.

Look at recruitment posters for the First World War: ‘Your Country Needs You’ in particular. What message does it give? Why is it effective?

Read ‘The Soldier’ by Rupert Brooke. Discuss the glorious image of war that was presented to the public. How might this contrast with the realities of war?

Look at modern army recruitment material from today. Visit army and other armed forces websites. Can you spot any similarities or differences? What persuasive strategies do they use?

**Fifteen Minutes Past Two**
Charlie is punished for defending Tommo on page 118. What does this incident reveal about Charlie?

**A Minute Past Three**
List the discomforts of daily life in the trenches. Rank them in the order you would most hate to experience. What are the most common dislikes or fears?

Charlie rescues Captain Wilkes. What does this add to our understanding of his character?

**Nearly Four O’ Clock**
Read ‘Dulce et Decorum est’ by Wilfred Owen. Look at the obvious influence of the poem on the chapter. Discuss the impact of the poem and its message.

**Five to Five**
Sergeant Hanley orders the troop to make a pointless charge. Charlie disobeys a direct order. Do you agree with his decision? Write the report Sergeant Hanley sent to his superiors in which he charges Charlie with insubordination.

**One Minute to Six**
Look at the structure of the novel. At what point do you realise which brother is to be executed?

What is the significance of the watch given to Charlie by Captain Wilkes now? (Look at titles of the chapters.)
Watch the final episode of *Blackadder Goes Forth*. Analyse the imagery of the final scene and its message.

**Additional Tasks**

Choose a passage from any chapter and ask the pupils to work in pairs to write ten comprehension questions. The total marks should be 25. They will also need to create a mark scheme to go with it. They should use different types of questions: everything from one word ‘locate the answer’ style questions to questions that need a more demanding answer requiring more analysis. Pupils should allocate marks accordingly.

Ask the pupils to work in pairs on a *Private Peaceful* CD. They should list twelve songs they would put on the CD and explain why each is appropriate, drawing specific reference from the novel’s themes, characters, plot etc.

It is sixteen years since Charlie was executed. Charlie’s son wants to know about his father and what happened. Script a conversation between the child and either his uncle Tommo or his mother Molly.

Tommo has been asked to participate in a television documentary about survivors of the war. Devise five questions an interviewer might ask Tommo. Write Tommo’s answers in detail.

Create a timeline from FIVE PAST TEN to ONE MINUTE TO SIX showing the memories that Tommo recalls.

Essay: Referring to three specific incidents in the novel, explore the significance of the character of Charlie as shown by his actions and treatment of other people.

Write a book review of *Private Peaceful* for a local teenage magazine.

Write a letter to Michael Morpurgo telling him your views on his novel.

Research Michael Morpurgo and present a one-sided fact sheet about him.

Investigate the role of underage soldiers during the war.

Draw a map of the key geographical places mentioned.