

# SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

---

This sample is an excerpt - an appetiser, if you will - from a full Samuel French title.

This sample is just for you to try out, and it can't be used for performance, downloaded, printed or distributed in any way.

Take it for a whirl and see if it tickles your fancy!

**For more information about licensing this or other shows, or to browse thousands more plays and theatre books to buy please visit our website.**

[www.samuelfrench.co.uk](http://www.samuelfrench.co.uk)  
or, in the US [www.samuelfrench.com](http://www.samuelfrench.com)

# Private Peaceful

BY MICHAEL MORPURGO  
ADAPTED BY SIMON READE

**A PLAY FOR AN ENSEMBLE**



[WWW.SAMUELFRENCH.CO.UK](http://WWW.SAMUELFRENCH.CO.UK)  
[WWW.SAMUELFRENCH.COM](http://WWW.SAMUELFRENCH.COM)

Copyright © 2015 Simon Reade and Michael Morpurgo  
All Rights Reserved

*PRIVATE PEACEFUL* is fully protected under the copyright laws of the British Commonwealth, including Canada, the United States of America, and all other countries of the Copyright Union. All rights, including professional and amateur stage productions, recitation, lecturing, public reading, motion picture, radio broadcasting, television and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved.

ISBN 978-0-573-11095-5

[www.samueLFrench-london.co.uk](http://www.samueLFrench-london.co.uk) [www.samueLFrench.com](http://www.samueLFrench.com)

**FOR AMATEUR PRODUCTION ENQUIRIES**

**UNITED KINGDOM AND WORLD  
EXCLUDING NORTH AMERICA**

[plays@SamuelFrench-London.co.uk](mailto:plays@SamuelFrench-London.co.uk)

020 7255 4302/01

**UNITED STATES AND CANADA**

[info@SamuelFrench.com](mailto:info@SamuelFrench.com)

1-866-598-8449

Each title is subject to availability from Samuel French,  
depending upon country of performance.

**CAUTION:** Professional and amateur producers are hereby warned that *PRIVATE PEACEFUL* is subject to a licensing fee. Publication of this play does not imply availability for performance. Both amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised to apply to the appropriate agent before starting rehearsals, advertising, or booking a theatre. A licensing fee must be paid whether the title is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged.

The professional rights in this play are controlled by Berlin Associates, 7 Tyers Gate, London SE1 3HX.

No one shall make any changes in this title for the purpose of production. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means, now known or yet to be invented, including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, videotaping, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher. No one shall upload this title, or part of this title, to any social media websites.

The right of Simon Reade and Michael Morpurgo to be identified as author of this work has been asserted in accordance with Section 77 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

For Guy de Beaujeu

## **CHARACTERS**

### **DEVON:**

**TOMMO** – Thomas Peaceful

**CHARLIE** – his older brother

**BIG JOE** – their older brother

**JAMES PEACEFUL** – their father

**MOTHER** – their mother

**GRANDMA WOLF** – Mother's aunt

**MR MUNNINGS** – the school master

**MISS MCALLISTER** – Tommo's school teacher

**MOLLY** – Charlie and Tommo's friend

**NIPPER** – a Biggun at school, later on the Front Line

**PETER** – a Biggun at school, later on the Front Line

**LES** – a Tiddler at school, son of a rat catcher, later on the Front Line

**JIMMY PARSONS** – Charlie's and Tommo's school enemy, later on the Front Line

**COLONEL** – squire of Iddesleigh

**DOCTOR**

**PILOT**

**SERGEANT MAJOR**

**TOOTHLESS OLD LADY**

**RECRUITING SERGEANT**

**TIDDLERS**

**BIGGUNS**

**HATHERLEIGH MARKET CROWD**

**WAR:**

**ARMY CHAPLAIN**

**SERGEANT 'HORRIBLE' HANLEY**

**BRIGADIER**

**WOUNDED SOLDIER**

**ORDERLY**

**CAPTAIN WILKES**

**ESTAMINET OWNER**

**ANNA – Estaminet owner's daughter**

**INJURED GERMAN SOLDIER**

**LIEUTENANT BUCKLAND**

**GERMAN SOLDIER IN GAS MASK**

**HAIG**

**GUARD – to Charlie**

**OFFICER – firing squad**

**SOLDIERS – from both sides**

**ESTAMINET STAFF**

## **AUTHOR'S NOTE**

From five past ten on the night of June 24th 1916, to six o'clock on the morning of the 25th, Tommo looks back on his life as a young boy growing up in rural Devon and on his more recent experiences fighting in the trenches in Flanders.

Scenes are given separate numbers for ease of rehearsing and should not necessarily be observed for moments of scene change. The Tommo scenes in Flanders, in the time-ticking-away present, can snap into the following scene in the past without pause – and follow on without hesitation from the preceding scenes set in the past. No set is required and only the bare minimum of props should be used, if at all. It may be that one single versatile item is useful for everything, such as Tommo's bed. Inventiveness, imagination and what is conjured in our mind's eye is what is essential to the story-telling.

*Simon Reade*

Thanks to Paul Hart and Rose Reade



# ACT I

## Scene One

*Flanders. World War I.*

**TOMMO** *is by a bed.*

**TOMMO** Five past ten. I have the whole night ahead of me.  
I shan't sleep it away. I won't dream it away.

I want to try to remember everything, just as it was,  
just as it happened. I've had nearly eighteen years  
of yesterdays and tomorrows, and tonight I must  
remember as many of them as I can.

Tonight, more than any other night of my life, I want  
to feel alive.

## Scene Two

*Iddesleigh, Devon.*

**CHARLIE** *is leading TOMMO by the hand up the lane to school. TOMMO feels uncomfortable in his collar and boots – his laces are undone. He's dragging his feet.*

**CHARLIE** Come on, Tommo! School's not that bad, honest. (*teasing*) Mr Munnings may have a raging temper, and I wouldn't get on the wrong side of him when his hands start twitching for his cane, and make sure you keep out of Jimmy Parsons' way... but it's not all bad!

**TOMMO** Big Joe doesn't have to go to school and I don't think that's fair at all!

**CHARLIE** Big Joe is Big Joe.

**TOMMO** (*protesting*) He's much older than me. He's even older than you, and he's never been to school. He's allowed to stay at home, sitting up in his tree singing *Oranges and Lemons* all day long. Big Joe is always happy, always laughing. I wish I could be happy like him. I wish I could be at home like him. I don't want to go, Charlie. I don't want to go to school!

**TOMMO** *stamps his foot and stops – CHARLIE stops too.*

**CHARLIE** Piggyback? (**TOMMO** *hops up onto CHARLIE's back and clings on tight, trying not to weep or whimper*) First day's the worst, Tommo. It's not so bad. Honest.

**TOMMO** Whenever you say 'honest', Charlie, I know it's not true.

*School. The school bell rings – CHARLIE and TOMMO have arrived – two silent rows of children line up – TOMMO with the TIDDLERS; CHARLIE with the BIGGUNS. CHARLIE winks at TOMMO; TOMMO*

*blinks back. Then MR MUNNINGS appears, cracking his knuckles.*

**MR MUNNINGS** (*pointing right at TOMMO*) Aha! (*everyone turns to look at TOMMO*) A new boy, a new boy to add to my trials and tribulations. Name, boy?

**TOMMO** Tommo, Sir. Thomas Peaceful.

**MR MUNNINGS** Was not one Peaceful enough? What have I done to deserve another one? First a Charlie Peaceful, and now a Thomas Peaceful. Understand this Thomas Peaceful, that here I am your lord and master. You do what I say when I say it. You do not cheat, you do not lie, you do not blaspheme. You do not come to school in bare feet. And your hands will be clean. These are my commandments. Do I make myself clear?

**TOMMO** (*whispering*) Yes sir.

**TOMMO** *and the TIDDLERS file past MR MUNNINGS and the BIGGUNS, their hands behind their backs – CHARLIE smiles at TOMMO – MISS MCALLISTER greets TOMMO.*

**MISS MCALLISTER** (*Scots, smiling*) Thomas, you will be sitting there, next to Molly. And your laces are undone. (*The TIDDLERS titter – TOMMO hangs his head in shame as he takes his place, tearful*) Crying won't do your laces up, you know.

**TOMMO** I can't, Miss.

**MISS MCALLISTER** Can't is not a word we use in my class, Thomas Peaceful. We shall just have to teach you how to tie your bootlaces. That's what we're all here for, Thomas, to learn. You show him, Molly. Molly's the oldest in my class, Thomas, and my best pupil. She'll help you.

**MISS MCALLISTER** *calls the register as MOLLY kneels in front of TOMMO and ties his bootlaces – he almost*

*reaches out and touches her hair. As she finishes, MOLLY looks up at him and smiles.*

**TOMMO** (*to MOLLY*) At home we don't wear boots, except for church. Father always wore his great hobnail boots – the boots he died in.

## Scene Three

*Forest.*

**FATHER** (to **TOMMO**) Off you go. Enjoy yourself.

**FATHER** starts chopping away at a tree trunk (mimed), grunting and groaning at every stroke. **TOMMO** looks up into the branches above.

**TOMMO** stands and stares upwards. There is the sound of the tree falling – like a roar of thunder.

Tommo! Tommo! Run, Tommo!

**TOMMO** is rooted to the spot but **FATHER** pushes him out of the way just in time – **TOMMO** looks back to his father, who has fallen like a felled tree. He's on his back, his head turned away from **TOMMO**, finger pointing at him, the soles of his hobnail boots prominent, his eyes open but unseeing.

**TOMMO** (shaking his **FATHER**) Father! Father!

But **FATHER** doesn't stir.

**Scene Four**

*St James's Church, Iddesleigh.*

*Hymn music tells us we're in church (so we need no actual pews, no pulpits etc).*

**MOTHER, BIG JOE, CHARLIE** and **TOMMO** *sitting at the front – GRANDMA WOLF, in her black bonnet, sitting beside them, scowling at them.*

**TOMMO** *is distracted – his eyes flitting back and forth, from front to back, side to side.*

**TOMMO** (*whispering to BIG JOE*) Look, Joe: a swallow. It's Father trying to escape. He told us in his next life he'd like to be a bird, so he could fly free wherever he wanted...

*The COLONEL gets up into the pulpit.*

**COLONEL** (*hand clutching his jacket lapel*) James Peaceful was a good man, one of the best workers I have ever known, the salt of the earth, always cheerful as he went about his work. The Peaceful family has been employed by my family, for five generations. In all his thirty years as forester on my estate James Peaceful was never once late for work. He was a credit to his family and his village.

*The COLONEL drones on.*

**CHARLIE** (*whispering to MOTHER*) He's just like Father said: a silly old fart! A mad old duffer!

**MOTHER** (*whispering, stifling a laugh*) Charlie! We're in church. It's the Colonel who pays the wages and owns the roof over our heads. So you all show him respect. (*consoling BIG JOE*) Father's not really in his coffin, Big

Joe – he's up in heaven (*pointing upwards*) up there.  
He's happy, happy as the birds.

**TOMMO** *looks upwards in the same direction as BIG  
JOE to*

**BIG JOE** Swallow!

**TOMMO** (*to himself*) He was trying to save me... if only I  
had run, he wouldn't now be lying dead... all I can  
think is that I have killed my own father.

**Scene Five**

*Flanders. TOMMO by the bed.*

**TOMMO** Twenty to Eleven.

I don't want to eat. Stew, potatoes. I usually like stew, but I've no appetite for it. I've been nibbling at this biscuit, but I don't want it. Not now.

Big Joe ate more than all the rest of us put together – potato pie, cheese and pickle, stew and dumplings, bread and butter pudding – whatever Mother cooked, he'd stuff it in and scoff it down. Anything Charlie and I didn't like we'd shuffle onto his plate when Mother wasn't looking.

Mother told us, when we were older, that Big Joe nearly died just after he was born.

*Hospital.*

**DOCTOR** Your son nearly died, Mrs Peaceful – it is Mrs, isn't it? – Meningitis: brain damage. He probably won't live long; even if he does, he'll be of no use to anyone.

*Bed.*

**TOMMO** It was Big Joe who got me into my first fight.

# WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

---

Please visit our website to buy the full script, apply for a license to perform this show (if it's available), or to explore hundreds of similar titles.

[www.samuelfrench.co.uk](http://www.samuelfrench.co.uk)

or, in the US [www.samuelfrench.com](http://www.samuelfrench.com)

To be the first to know about new books, licensing releases, and enjoy other theatre-related larks, do follow us on our spangley social media channels.



**Samuel French London**



**SamuelFrenchLtd**