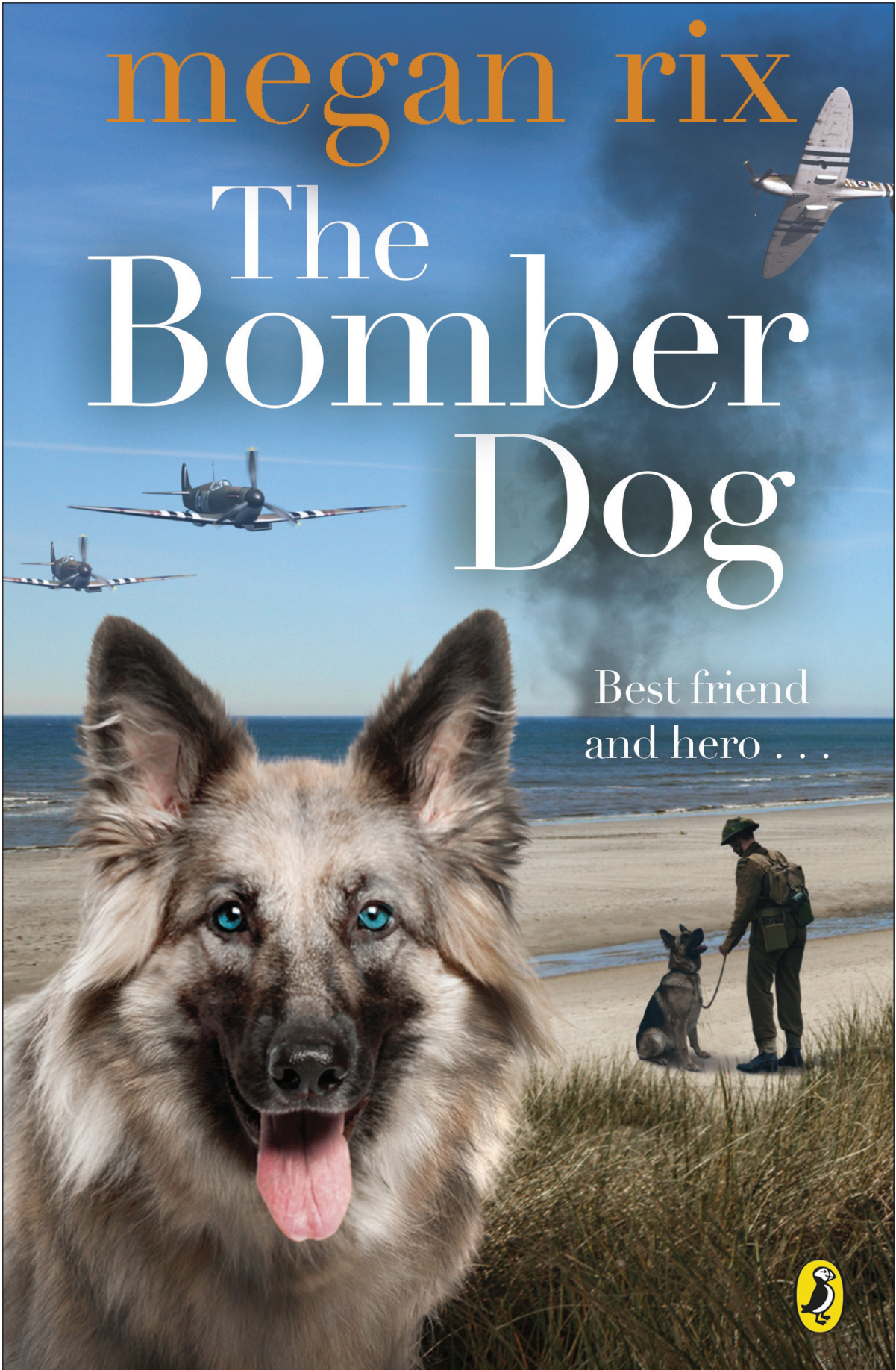


The **Bomber Dog**

by Megan Rix



The Bomber Dog



Introductory notes

by Megan Rix

Megan Rix has written several wonderful books in which cats and dogs are the central characters in the story. The identities and dilemmas of the animals are often more vivid than those of the humans. Rix's writing is never sentimental and tells of the powerful bond between people and animals in an informative, realistic and moving way.

Set at the time of war in Europe, the books represent a good way to study these periods. Rix provides excellent brief historical notes at the ends of the books answering many of the questions that the books provoke.

In this book the prologue gives us a glimpse of occupied France and then the action moves to England where there are many pets who are lost as a result of their houses having been bombed. We follow the fortunes of two of them and the people whose lives they touch.

The activities here are intended to encourage further reading of the books so the quoted texts have largely been chosen from the beginning of the books to avoid spoilers! The recommendation would always be to read the whole book but the resources are designed so that this is not essential. Alternatively they could be used alongside a couple of weeks of chapter reading to the class.

Activities address **National Curriculum Literacy** guidelines as well as the following Key Stage 2 requirements and guidelines for other subjects:

History guidelines:

- Changes within living memory. Where appropriate, these should be used to reveal aspects of change in national life.
- An aspect or theme in British history that extends pupils' chronological knowledge beyond 1066.

Maths guidelines:

- Interpret and present data using bar charts, pictograms and tables.
- Compare durations of events.

Science guidelines:

- Setting up simple practical enquiries, comparative and fair tests.
- Making systematic and careful observations and, where appropriate, taking accurate measurements using standard units.

Below is a list of the activities to help you decide what to use. The extracts are in order from the book but could be used in any order.

1. **Sabine p.3 (comprehension)**
2. **About Dogs p.7 (general knowledge)**
3. **Bombs! p.9 (writing in the first person/letter writing)**
4. **Oh Molly, dearest Molly p.11 (comprehension)**
5. **Different dogs p.14 (data handling)**
6. **Parachute investigation p.17 (design technology)**
7. **Favourite parts of The Bomber Dog p.21 (reflection)**



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1. Sabine

This passage is from the very beginning of the book and the Germans are in charge in France, but the French people do not like it.

Extract from Prologue

Occupied France, 1940

Sabine knew what the soldiers had come for as soon as she saw them marching down the muddy lane to their farmhouse. Her hands shook as she grabbed the nearest of the twelve-week-old German Shepherd puppies and ran out of the wooden back door with it.

Her younger brother, Claude, was outside feeding the chickens.

‘What is it? What’s going on? Where are you taking that puppy?’ he called out.

The German soldiers were almost at the farmhouse. There wasn’t time for Sabine to explain.

‘Tell the soldiers one of the puppies died,’ she said. ‘Do you understand? Tell them he was the smallest and weakest of the litter and he wasn’t strong enough to survive and he died.’

Claude’s blue eyes opened very wide. ‘But that’s not true,’ he said.

‘Just say it!’ Sabine shouted.

The puppy, frightened by the harshness of her voice, wriggled to get away but she clung on to him.

‘You’re not going to kill it, are you?’ Claude said, his eyes filling with tears. ‘You wouldn’t . . . You couldn’t.’

Those tears would help convince the soldiers that what he said was true. The Germans were now so close she could hear their voices as they entered the farmhouse. She heard her mother screaming at them not to take the puppies away. Alsatians, or German Shepherd Wolf Dogs, as they were also known, were highly prized by the Nazis. They were famed for their intelligence, strength and bravery, making them ideal dogs to train up for war duty. Herr Hitler owned two of them.

‘No,’ Sabine told her brother. ‘It’s a lie. Just tell them what I told you.’



The Bomber Dog



1. Sabine (cont...)

by Megan Rix

At least this one will be safe.'

Claude nodded once, dropped his pot of corn on the ground, and ran back to the farmhouse. The chickens clucked with excitement as they rushed to peck at their unexpected feast.

Sabine looked behind her and then ran the other way. It wasn't easy to run with a wriggling, heavy, furry bundle in her arms, but if she could save just one of the pups from becoming part of the war, it would be worth it.

The puppy was still very young and not used to being snatched away from his mother or being squeezed so tightly, but there wasn't time to stop and reassure him.

Sabine ran so hard it felt like her heart was beating almost out of her chest and her breathing came in painful gasps, but she wouldn't stop. Not even when she got a stitch in her side. She couldn't stop. She had to save the puppy.

The British undercover soldiers were boarding the rowing boat hidden by the newly formed French Resistance as she ran up to them.

'Please take this puppy with you. Please save him,' she begged.



German Shepherd Puppy

Credit – Dorling Kindersley / Universal Images Group.

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The Bomber Dog

by Megan Rix



1. Sabine

Name _____ Date _____

In the passage we learn a lot about Sabine. According to the passage, which of the statements are...

True False or Not Enough Information

	Sabine...	True, False or Not Enough Information
1	has a younger brother	
2	is tall	
3	has a dog that has recently had puppies	
4	has an older sister	
5	is strong	
6	is German	
7	loves animals	
8	is wearing a red dress	
9	is scared	
10	is prepared to tell a white lie (ask what this is if you do not know)	
11	reads a lot of books	

For each statement that you have written 'true' beside, copy it below and finish the sentence with because... and quote a phrase or sentence from the text.

We know that Sabine has a...





2. About Dogs

by Megan Rix

The puppy has made friends with an adult dog called Molly.

Extract from Chapter 1, page 11

For the first few weeks, the puppy stayed as close to Molly as he could, never allowing the two of them to get more than a few steps apart. Wherever she went he followed her, not wanting to be left alone again, even for a moment.

Every night they lay close together on the sacking and kept each other warm, listening to the bomber planes as they flew overhead on their way to London and other cities.

As the weeks turned into months, and winter turned into spring and then summer, the bomber planes and the bombs they dropped became so commonplace that they no longer woke Molly or her young friend, curled up together in the shed.

Now one year old, the German Shepherd was no longer the vulnerable puppy he'd once been, but Molly still licked his furry sable head to soothe him when he twitched and cried out in his sleep. He still had the same piercing blue eyes he'd had as a young puppy, but one of his ears now stood straight up, while the other still flopped down. With Molly's care and love he'd grown fast and he was now much larger and stronger than her, but she was still definitely the leader of their two-dog pack.

Their first priority each day was always to find food – and the most delicious food in the world, just waiting for a dog to help himself, was in the pig bins.

Two or more tin dustbins were set on most street corners for people's waste food. These dustbins were collected every week and taken out to farms to feed the pigs. Although the bins were emptied regularly, they still attracted flies, especially in the warm summer weather.

Molly and the German Shepherd didn't mind about the bluebottles that buzzed around the bins. In fact, the young dog sometimes forgot the reason they'd come to the pig bins in his excitement at trying to catch one. He'd jump and snap at the insects as they flew out of the pig bins and buzzed around him, almost taunting him, daring him to try and catch them. He did dare, but however hard he tried, he only occasionally managed to swallow one.



The Bomber Dog

by Megan Rix



2. About Dogs

Name _____ Date _____

From the passage find three ways in which Molly helps the puppy.

- _____
- _____
- _____

Man's relationship with dogs goes back to the stone-age when wolves were first tamed to become part of human society. Now man and dog have developed a bond of dependency that extends into many aspects of human life.

A dog that...	Write the correct dog type here:	
pulls sledges over snow	A huskey dog	greyhound
helps blind or deaf people		guard dog
helps people who are lost on a mountain		huskey dog
moves sheep around a field		sniffer dog
finds hidden drugs or lost people		gun dog
protects people at night		mountain rescue dog
lives in a home		helicopter dog
racers		police dog
collects things that people have shot		guide dog
have webbed feet and is from Newfoundland		pet
helps the police force do its job		sheepdog

Extension activity: Use books and/or the internet to do more research on some of these dogs.



The Bomber Dog

by Megan Rix



3. Bombs!

Extract from Chapter 1

Usually the young dog paid very little attention to the high wailing sound of the air-raid siren. It was such a common noise, one he'd heard since he was born and he, like many other pets, knew instinctively when no bomber planes were headed in their direction and there was nothing to fear.

But tonight was different. Tonight the hackles along his back rose and he sat up and listened to the strange, almost bird-like whistling sound. Tonight he was afraid. He got to his feet but there wasn't time to run before the bomb fell. A deafening roar filled his ears and for a moment the whole world seemed to collapse around him. The force of the blast threw him across the shed, and he lay still as the dusty air swirled about him.

For a moment he was knocked out, but as soon as he came to, he belly-crawled over to Molly who lay unconscious on the ground.

He whined and nuzzled his head against hers but her eyes didn't open. He lay down beside her to keep her warm and listened as outside in the street people called to each other, fire-engine bells rang and ambulances screeched to a halt.

Then he smelt a new smell. The smell of smoke. A spark from the burning houses had fallen on the shed and now it began to smoulder.

The dog whined again and then barked at Molly, but still she didn't stir. He pawed at his friend, instinctively knowing that the smell meant serious danger.

In desperation he barked again and then he took hold of Molly's collar with his teeth and pulled. Although Molly was much smaller than he was it was still almost impossible for him to drag her leaden body across the uneven ground. He lost his grip, whined, then gripped her collar more firmly in his teeth and crouched low so he could pull her with every ounce of strength he had.

The back wall of the shed had been completely blown away in the blast and he dragged Molly out of it and across the ground away from the flames that had now taken hold. Then he lay down beside her in the smoke and ash-filled air, panting and trembling.

Molly was in a bad way; her fur was coated in blood and her breathing was ragged. The anxious young dog licked his friend's face and whimpered.





4. Oh Molly, dearest Molly by Megan Rix

During World War Two there was an organization called NARPAC (National Air Raid Precautions Animals Committee). Dogs which had been registered at NARPAC by their owners wore a tag on their collar that showed that they had a home. Dogs found without tags were collected and many were put down. Molly wears a NARPAC collar and the people who rescued her have contacted her owner.

Extract from Chapter 3

When Kate arrived at the clinic with Molly she found it was as chaotic as usual. There were always far too many animals needing treatment for their injuries. Some of them had been hurt by bomb blasts, but many more had been wounded afterwards by falling debris or had cut their paws on broken glass or fragments of metal. Kate laid Molly down in one of the cubicles for the vet to examine her.

Molly's eyes opened and Kate could see the fear in them.

'It's all right, you're going to be just fine,' she said as she softly stroked the trembling dog.

Molly's eyes closed and she drifted back to sleep.

While Kate waited for the vet she filled in a brief report of what had happened at the site, but she left out the answer to one of the questions. She was supposed to report any dogs that had been spotted that weren't registered with NARPAC, so they could be collected, but Kate couldn't bear the thought that the dog that had stayed by his injured friend's side would be put to sleep without being given a chance, so she left out any mention of him.

'I'm Mrs Williams and I'm looking for my dog, Molly. She's a honey-coloured spaniel and the warden said she was here,' said an anxious voice outside the cubicles. 'Please tell me if she is. Please tell me, have you found my Molly?'

Kate swished back the curtain to find a middle-aged woman wearing a coat over her dressing gown and with house slippers on her feet, wringing her hands as she asked one of the other nurses about her dog.

'Have you found her?' the woman asked, turning to Kate. 'Please





4. Oh Molly, dearest Molly by Megan Rix (cont...)

tell me it's true. I've been so worried about her. I miss her so. The house doesn't feel right without her.' She'd tied a scarf round her head to cover up the rollers in her hair, and knotted it under her chin. As she spoke, she nervously pushed back one of the rollers that had started to work its way free.

'She's in here,' Kate said, beckoning the woman over to the cubicle.

'Oh, Molly, dearest Molly,' Mrs Williams said as tears of worry and relief rolled down her face at the sight of her dog. 'Is she going to be all right?'

'Yes. She's been injured and was knocked unconscious – the vet still needs to see her – but I think she's going to be absolutely fine,' Kate reassured her.

'I blame myself for her getting lost,' Mrs Williams said. 'I should have told them Molly was still inside as soon as I'd been rescued after the house was struck by the bomb, just over a year ago now. But I didn't – not till they'd taken me away on the stretcher and I was lying in the ambulance. I'd been unconscious and wasn't thinking straight. They said they'd see to me first and I wasn't to worry, but I did worry and when they couldn't find her I thought she was . . . must be . . .' She couldn't bring herself to say the word 'dead', but another tear slipped down her face at the memory.

Molly opened her eyes at the sound of the familiar voice and her tail wagged slowly up and down once as if she were saying hello.

'She had a good friend with her when we found her,' Kate said. 'Another dog – an Alsatian – who stayed by her side when she was injured. Without him she may not have survived, but because of him she did. We don't know who he belongs to. I don't suppose there's any chance you'd be interested in giving him a home with you? He and Molly did seem very attached to each other.'

Mrs Williams blew her nose loudly on her handkerchief. 'Oh my goodness, dear, I couldn't possibly take on a dog that size at my age. I wish I could help but Molly is the only dog for me. How soon will she be allowed to come home?' she asked.

'She'll need the vet to check her over before we'll know that,' Kate told her. 'But I don't think it should be very long at all before she can go back home with you.'



The Bomber Dog



4. Oh Molly, dearest Molly by Megan Rix

Name _____ Date _____

Answer the questions with full sentences:

1. Describe the various ways in which the animals have been injured.

2. What should Kate have reported? Why?

3. Describe Molly.

4. Who does Molly belong to? What is the person wearing?

5. Describe the feelings of Molly's owner when she sees her again.

6. Describe Molly's condition.

7. Describe how Molly was lost and when it happened.

8. How does Molly show that she knows her owner?



The Bomber Dog



5. Different Dogs

by Megan Rix

Name _____

Date _____

Fill in the A-Z of dog breeds below, there may be more than one for some letters, and one or two that do not have any (you may need to use reference books or the internet).

A	N
B	O
C	P
D	Q
E	R
F	S
G	T
H	U
I	V
J	W
K	X
L	Y
M	Z



The Bomber Dog



5. Different Dogs

by Megan Rix

Name _____

Date _____

Choose two breeds to do more extensive research on. You are going to make cards for each breed and compare the features. Use the templates below to record your findings.

Description:
Height:
Weight:
Strength:
Speed:
Cuddliness:

Description:
Height:
Weight:
Strength:
Speed:
Cuddliness:

Collect data from your class about what pets they have.

Type of pet	Tally chart

Once data is collected, assemble it and draw a bar chart.





6. Parachute investigation by Megan Rix

We won't spoil the story by giving too much detail about this passage as it is from later in the book when Nathan and Grey (the puppy) are about to do their first parachute jump.

Extract from Chapter 11

'Look at that!' the soldiers said the next morning as Sergeant Harris led them all over to the training field, wearing their parachute gear. In front of them a huge grey barrage balloon, nearly thirty feet long, floated 600 feet up in the sky.

Grey had seen lots of barrage balloons before in Dover. They had been up in the sky ever since he was a puppy and he wasn't the least bit fazed by this one.

'Right, you lot,' Sergeant Harris said. 'We'll be jumping from that balloon today. It isn't as far up as a plane will be and it doesn't move as fast.'

The balloon had a box-like cage beneath it and was attached to a lorry with a winch on the back.

'You three and the dog first,' the sergeant said.

Nathan, Grey and two other soldiers headed over to the balloon and the lorry winch brought it down so they could climb into the cage.

'All right, my lovelies,' said the Women's Auxiliary Air Force officer who was in charge of the balloon, and she winched them up.

Once they were high in the sky, Nathan again pressed his fingernails hard into the palms of his hands to steady himself.

'The first parachute dog floated down from a hot-air balloon in the 1700s,' Nathan told the others, to distract himself from his nerves. But none of them were really paying any attention and they all looked very nervous. Only Grey was blissfully unaware of what was about to happen.

'That's it, Grey, you'll be fine,' Nathan told the dog, who looked at him with trust in his clear blue eyes.

Nathan felt bad because he didn't know if he and Grey were really going to be all right or not. Looking down from 600 feet up only made him feel more queasy. It was such a long way down.

'You first, then I'll send down the dog,' Sergeant Harris said.

Nathan just nodded because he couldn't trust himself to speak.

'Go!'



The Bomber Dog



6. Parachute investigation (cont...) by Megan Rix

As he stepped through the gap into air, Nathan closed his eyes and for a moment he wanted to scream, but then the parachute opened and his descent became much slower as he floated gently down to the ground.

Above him, Grey was floating down too and he could hear the dog barking. It wasn't a frightened-sounding bark, though – it was one of excitement. Grey sounded like he was having the time of his life. And Nathan started to laugh. He laughed and laughed, and with his laughter his terrible fear of heights, that had been a part of his life for so long, disappeared into thin air.

Parachute jumping was exhilarating and it made him feel more alive than he'd ever felt before. He would refuse to let himself ever feel frightened of heights again and he was looking forward to future jumps with his incredible dog.

'Good dog,' Nathan said as he released his own parachute and then ran over to release Grey's. Grey wagged his tail enthusiastically and gave Nathan's face a big lick.



Parachute Troops

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The Bomber Dog



6. Parachute investigation by Megan Rix

Name _____

Date _____

Parachute investigation

Read this passage about a parachute jump, you are going to investigate parachute technology by making mini-parachutes.

Materials:

- A variety of papers, plastics and fabrics
 - 4 pieces of a suitable thread
 - Some figures eg. playmobil or lego
 - A timer
 - Scissors
 - Sellotape
- (enough for two of the same per group)

Decide on two types of material to compare.

Stick samples here:

A  I have chosen this because _____.

B  I have chosen this because _____.

String length: decide on an appropriate length and make sure that it is the same for all the parachutes.

Method:

1. Choose two materials to test and cut out a circle of diameter 30cm.
2. Stick thread to edges of the circles making sure that they are evenly spaced around the circle.
3. Take the end of each piece of string and tie a small knot so that they stay together.
4. Tie on your parachutists.
5. Test your parachutes!



The Bomber Dog



6. Parachute investigation by Megan Rix

Name _____ Date _____

Results:

Height dropped from _____ m

Tests	Material 1	Material 2
Time test 1		
Time test 2		
Time test 3		
Average		

Measuring the speed:

Speed = Distance / Time

What is the average speed of your parachute?

1. _____ 2. _____

Conclusion:

The most effective...

If I did this again I would improve my testing by...



The Bomber Dog

by Megan Rix



7. Favourite parts of The Bomber Dog

Name _____ Date _____

Score these on a scale 1 to 5 (1 being poor and 5 being fantastic!)

	1	2	3	4	5
Finding out about dogs.					
Making the parachute.					
Reading the story.					
Looking forward to reading the rest of the book?					

Draw a picture below of the bit of the project that you enjoyed most and say why you liked it.

