

READ ALOUD DAY





2 Black Beauty

READING

Horses have been domesticated and trained by humans since ancient times. Read this story about a horse named Black Beauty, in his own words, to understand why horses are loved and valued so much.



saddle: a leather seat for a rider on a horse

bridle: a set of straps that is put around a horse's head and used for controlling it

trot: the movement of a horse taking quick small steps

Squire: a man of high social status who owns most of the land in a country area

spur: a spiked wheel that is worn on a rider's heel and used for urging a horse forward

galloped: (of a horse) ran at the fastest pace, with all the feet off the ground together in each stride

One night, I had eaten my hay and was laid down in my straw fast asleep, when I was suddenly awake by the stable bell ringing very loud. I heard the door of John's house open, and his feet running up to the Hall.

'Wake up, Beauty, you must go well now, if ever you did,' and almost before I could think, he had got the **saddle** on my back and the **bridle** on my head and then took me at a quick **trot** up to the Hall door. The **Squire** stood there with a lamp in his hand.

'Now John,' he said, 'ride for your life, that is, for your mistress's life. There is not a moment to lose! Give this note to Dr White; give your horse a rest at the inn, and be back as soon as you can.'

John said, 'Yes, sir,' and was on my back in a minute.

There was before us a long piece of level road by the river side; John said to me, 'Now Beauty, do your best,' and so I did. I wanted no whip nor **spur**, and for two miles I **galloped** as fast as I could lay my feet to the ground. I don't believe that my old grandfather who won the race at Newmarket could have gone faster.

The church clock struck three as we drew up at Doctor White's door. John rung the bell twice, and then knocked at the door like thunder.

A window was thrown up, and Doctor White, in his nightcap, put his head out and said, 'What do you want?'

'Mrs Gordon is very ill, sir; master wants you to go at once. He thinks she will die if you cannot get there. Here is a note.'

'Wait,' he said, 'I will come.'

He shut the window and was soon at the door. 'The worst of it is,' he said, 'that my horse has been out all day and is quite done up; my son has just been sent for and he has taken the other. What is to be done? Can I have your horse?'

'He has come at a gallop nearly all the way, sir, and I was to give him a rest here; but I think my master would not be against it if you think fit, sir.'



'All right,' he said, 'I will soon be ready.' John stood by me and stroked my neck, I was very hot.

I will not tell about our way back; the Doctor was a heavier man than John, and not so good a rider; however, I did my very best.

Joe was at the lodge gate, my master was at the Hall door, for he had heard us coming. He spoke not a word; the Doctor went into the house with him, and Joe led me to the stable.

I was glad to get home, my legs shook under me, and I could only stand and **pant**. I had not a dry hair on my body, the water ran down my legs, and I steamed all over—Joe used to say, like a pot on the fire. Poor Joe! He was young and small, and as yet, he knew very little, and his father, who would have helped him, had been sent to the next village; but I am sure he did the very best he knew. He rubbed my legs and my chest, but he did not put my warm cloth on me; he thought I was so hot I should not like it, then he gave me a pailful of water to drink; it was cold and very good, and I drank it all; then he



 
pant: to breathe with short, quick breaths





loins: the part of the body on both sides of the spine between the ribs and the hip bones

sore: the feeling of pain in a part of one's body

inflammation: a physical condition in which a part of the body becomes swollen, hot, and often painful

gave me some hay and some corn, and thinking he had done all right, he went away. Soon I began to shake and tremble, and turned deadly cold, my legs ached, and my **loins** ached, and my chest ached, and I felt **sore** all over.

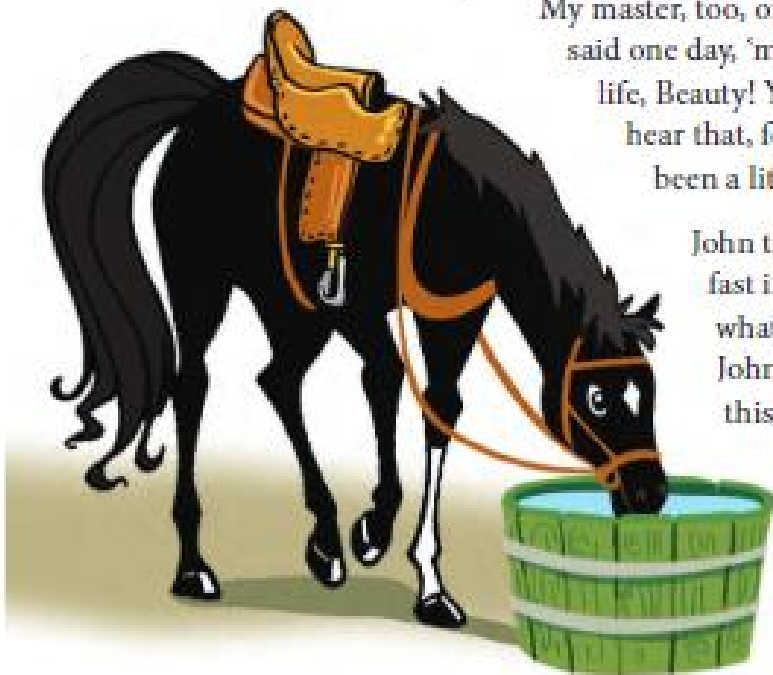
John seemed to be very much put out. I heard him say to himself, over and over again, 'Stupid boy! Stupid boy! No cloth put on, and I dare say the water was cold too. Boys are no good,' but Joe was a good boy after all.

I was now very ill; a strong **inflammation** had attacked my lungs, and I could not draw my breath without pain. John nursed me night and day. He would get up two or three times in the night to come to me.

My master, too, often came to see me. 'My poor Beauty,' he said one day, 'my good horse, you saved your mistress's life, Beauty! Yes, you saved her life.' I was very glad to hear that, for it seems the Doctor had said if we had been a little longer it would have been too late.

John told my master he never saw a horse go so fast in his life, it seemed as if the horse knew what was the matter. Of course I did, though John thought not; at least I knew as much as this, that John and I must go at the top of our speed, and that it was for the sake of the mistress.

(An abridged extract from Anna Sewell's Black Beauty)



SUMMARY

Black Beauty is the name of the horse who narrates the story. He talks about when John takes him to fetch Dr White as his mistress, Mrs Gordon, is very ill. Black Beauty races along, eager to help her. The doctor's own horses are unavailable, so John lets the doctor ride Black Beauty back home. Black Beauty runs at full speed again and is exhausted by the time they get home. The new boy, Joe, is the only one available at the stable. Not knowing how to care for a horse, Joe does his best, but his actions are wrong, and Black Beauty falls sick as a result. John is angry with Joe and takes over Black Beauty's care. Later, the squire visits to thank Black Beauty for saving his wife's life.