Black Beauty

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF ANNA SEWELL

Anna Sewell was born the oldest of two children in a devout Quaker family. Her mother, Mary Wright Sewell, was a successful children's book author, and she educated her children at home due to the family's tight finances. The family moved around several times in Sewell's youth, and Sewell finally got to attend school at age 14 when the family moved to Stoke Newington. However, at about this time, Sewell slipped and seriously injured both her ankles—injuries that necessitated a crutch for the rest of her life. This led her to rely heavily on horse-drawn transportation, as walking any distance was impossible for her. In turn, this contributed to Sewell's love of horses and sparked her interest in animal welfare. Beginning in Sewell's mid-twenties, her family moved to southern England, hoping the weather would improve her health. Sewell and her mother left the Society of Friends. After joining the Church of England, Sewell helped her mother edit a number of evangelical children's books. Sewell and her mother were also involved in campaigns for temperance and abolishing slavery. As Sewell got older, her health continued to decline. She sought treatment in continental Europe but eventually became bedridden in a Norwich village called Old Catton. There, with her mother's help, Sewell wrote *Black Beauty*, her only published work, over a period of six years. She sold her novel for meager 40 pounds, and it became an immediate bestseller. Sewell died five months after *Black Beauty* was published, so she never got to see her novel become one of the bestselling English-language children's books of all time (though she didn't write it for children). The house in Old Catton where she wrote *Black Beauty* is now called the Anna Sewell House.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Black Beauty was published nine years before the car was invented in 1886. During the Victorian era, people's only options for transportation were walking, steam trains, or horses—either riding a horse or driving a horse-drawn vehicle of some sort. Because of this, horses were subject to some of the same kind of things that cars are today. *Black Beauty* mentions horse dealers and horse character referrals (much like someone buying a car today would purchase one from a dealer and look at the car's service and accident history before purchasing), as well as the whims of fashion. The notorious bearing rein—which *Black Beauty* helped make unfashionable—can be seen as something analogous to a lift kit or a fancy hood ornament, though one that did significant damage to the horse. Bearing reins, which are known as checkreins today, go from the top of the horse's head and connect to a piece of the harness on the horse's back. It holds the horse's head in an unnaturally high position, and as Black Beauty explains in the novel, it keeps a horse from using their whole body to pull a load (horses can pull most effectively when they can put their head and neck forward and down, which the bearing rein prevents). *Black Beauty* also explores how economic conditions in Victorian England essentially made it necessary to abuse and overwork cab horses, while also hurting cab drivers. In most editions of *Black Beauty* (including the one used in this LitChart), Sewell includes a footnote explaining that during the six years she was writing, the cab licensing system changed for the better. When she began, six-day cab licenses (which disallowed working on Sundays) and seven-day cab licenses were exorbitantly expensive and fares were kept low, meaning that drivers had to overwork their horses in order to make a profit. And until working horses were replaced by cars, working horses in major cities had an average life expectancy of only three years.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Black Beauty is considered the precursor to a genre of literature known as pony books, or books targeted toward young (mostly female) readers that are about horses, ponies, and horse care. Enid Bagnold's classic standalone novel *National Velvet* is often considered a pony book, though many pony books are part of various long-running series, such as Jeanne Betancourt's *Pony Pals* series or Bonnie Bryant's *The Saddle Club*. It was also one of the first animal autobiographies. Today, there are a number of fictional books "written" by all sorts of animals, from the dog narrators of Garth Stein's *The Art of Racing in the Rain* and Jack London's *White Fang* to the various animal narrators in Ceridwen Dovey's short story collection *Only the Animals*. *Black Beauty* was also hugely influential in promoting animal rights and welfare, and it directly inspired Margaret Marshall Saunders's novel *Beautiful Joe*, which is about the welfare of domestic dogs. Some critics have compared *Black Beauty* to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe, one of the most important social problem novels. It concerns the horrors of slavery in the U.S. and is often credited with helping to fuel the abolitionist cause in the 19th century.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Black Beauty
- **When Written:** 1871–1877
- **Where Written:** Old Catton, England
- **When Published:** 1877

- **Literary Period:** Victorian
- **Genre:** Children's Novel, Social Problem Novel
- **Setting:** Mid-19th century England
- **Climax:** Black Beauty is reunited with Joe Green.
- **Antagonist:** Cruelty, fashion, various human characters
- **Point of View:** First Person

EXTRA CREDIT

Modern Horse Jobs. Today, horses are used mostly for recreational purposes, but there are still a handful of jobs for working horses with police forces, ranchers, film productions, and breweries, to name a few. Horses can also be a good way for people to access places where motorized vehicles cannot go, so the forest service and some tourism companies use horses to access remote rural areas. Some horses are even trained to track missing persons or narcotics by following a scent.

Bearing Reins Today. Bearing reins—which are known as checkreins today—still exist in various forms, though they aren't used for the same purpose that they were in the Victorian era. Some people who still drive horses use a rein called a side check or overcheck to keep a horse from lowering its head below the level of the shafts, which ensures a horse's harness doesn't get tangled and cause an accident (a major concern, as driving accidents are far more dangerous than riding accidents). Grass reins are another modern descendent of the bearing rein. They keep ponies ridden by inexperienced riders from grazing on grass.

PLOT SUMMARY

Black Beauty's earliest memories are of living an idyllic life in a meadow with his mother, Duchess, and several other young colts. While the other colts like to play rough, Duchess tells Black Beauty to never kick or bite, even in play—he's a better horse than that, and he should always behave impeccably. At one point in his first years, Black Beauty and his companions witness a foxhunt that passes through their meadow. Two horses and one man die after fumbling a difficult jump, and Duchess and the other adult horse in the field insist that foxhunting is senseless and dangerous.

When Black Beauty turns four, Squire Gordon expresses interest in purchasing him from Farmer Grey. Farmer Grey breaks Black Beauty himself, which means teaching Black Beauty to be ridden and to pull a carriage. Throughout his training, Black Beauty follows his mother's advice and does his best to learn and behave. When he's learned enough, he moves to Birtwick, Squire Gordon's estate. There, he meets a pony named Merrylegs and a chestnut mare named Ginger, who was abused by her previous owners. The horses at Birtwick all know they're extremely lucky to live in their current home, as Squire Gordon doesn't believe in using **bearing reins** on horses. They're proud to be owned by people who advocate for animals' rights and dignity, and they regularly discuss how cruel some people are to animals. Gradually, with the kind treatment, Ginger relaxes and stops biting people. She and Black Beauty become close friends.

Some time after Black Beauty comes to Birtwick, his groom, James Howard, receives an offer to become the coachman at one of Squire Gordon's friend's estates. The coachman at Birtwick, John Manly, spends weeks preparing James. One of James's exercises is to drive the Gordons 50 miles away to a friend's estate. When they stop for the night at a hotel, the barn catches fire, but James is able to save Black Beauty and Ginger from the burning building.

A small boy named Joe Green takes James's place when James leaves. He's inexperienced, but he has a good heart. When Mrs. Gordon falls seriously ill and Black Beauty is selected for the very long run to the doctor, Joe is on his own when Black Beauty returns sweaty and shaking. Because Joe doesn't know how to properly cool Black Beauty down, Black Beauty falls seriously ill. But Black Beauty recovers, and Joe grows confident in his abilities over the next year.

Mrs. Gordon's illness means that the Gordon family must leave for continental Europe. Squire Gordon sells Black Beauty and Ginger to a friend, the Earl of W, where he believes the horses will be treated well. The earl's coachman, York, knows how to care for horses, but he has no choice but to use the bearing rein on Black Beauty and Ginger. Working with the bearing rein tight is painful, and after only a few months, Ginger angrily lashes out. A young man named Lord George begins training Ginger for foxhunting, while Black Beauty continues to pull the carriage. When the earl and Mrs. W leave their estate for several weeks, the young Lady Anne begins riding Black Beauty—something Black Beauty loves, as she's an exceptional rider and very kind. But one day, she insists on riding a nervous mare, Lizzie, and suffers a serious fall when Lizzie runs away with her.

Since York is with the earl and Mrs. W, a groom named Reuben Smith is temporarily in charge of the stables. Smith is known for occasionally drinking and getting in serious trouble while drunk. One night, he gets drunk and ignores that Black Beauty's shoe is loose. He gallops Black Beauty on rough roads, which causes Black Beauty to lose his shoe and gallop through immense pain as his hoof starts to split. Eventually, Black Beauty stumbles onto his knees and throws Smith, killing him. Black Beauty's character is cleared and Smith is ruled to have been at fault, but Black Beauty's knees heal poorly and with bald blemishes. He and Ginger spend a few weeks together healing in a meadow (Sir George strained Ginger's back, and she needs a year of rest). Then, the Earl of W sells Black Beauty.

Black Beauty briefly works as a "job-horse," pulling carriages for

various people—many of whom don't know how to drive a horse well. He witnesses many horses suffer injuries caused by careless driving. Eventually, Mr. Barry, who wants a horse to ride for pleasure, purchases Black Beauty. But the two grooms he hires cheat him and neglect Black Beauty, the first by stealing Black Beauty's food and the second by not cleaning Black Beauty's stall, which results in a painful fungal infection in the horse's hooves. When Black Beauty's hooves are healed, Mr. Barry sells him at a horse fair.

A London cab driver named Jerry purchases Black Beauty and rides him to London. Jerry isn't wealthy, but he's kind and generous, and he believes in treating his horses very well. He owns another horse named Captain, who tells Black Beauty about his youth fighting a war in Crimea. It was all fun and games, he says, until he saw horses and men brutally killed during the fighting. The cab work is extremely difficult for the horses, but Jerry makes it as easy and pleasant as possible. He refuses to work on Sundays, insisting that horses and people are all entitled to a day of rest. Jerry also never pushes his horses too hard, unless there's a compelling reason to do so.

Black Beauty learns, though, that his and Jerry's experience of cab work is not the norm: many cab drivers work for bosses who charge them exorbitant rates to rent a horse and cab each day. Those drivers, such as one named Seedy Sam, work 16-hour days, seven days per week, and drive their rented horses to exhaustion and death just to earn a little money. Seedy Sam dies suddenly of bronchitis brought on by the hard work, something that disturbs all the cab drivers. In the following weeks, Black Beauty encounters Ginger pulling a cab. Her owner is one of the men like who Seedy Sam drove for, and her previous strains and injuries mean that she'll be driven until she drops dead. Ginger has lost all her spark, and she hopes for death so she can stop suffering. Not long after, Black Beauty sees a dead chestnut horse on a cart—he believes and hopes that it's Ginger. Captain is also euthanized after being injured while working; his replacement is a young horse named Hotspur.

Over the holidays, Jerry's cough becomes worse. On New Year's Eve, after waiting in sleet for gentlemen at a card party, he falls dangerously ill with bronchitis. He survives the illness, but his doctor insists he must leave London and never drive a cab again. Another cab driver purchases Hotspur, while Jerry sells Black Beauty to a baker as a carthorse. Carthorses still wear bearing reins—and after a few months, Black Beauty is in too poor a shape to pull. A man named Skinner purchases him; he's the same cab driver who Ginger and Seedy Sam worked for. Black Beauty does his best for several months, but he eventually collapses when his driver overloads him. The farrier convinces Skinner that since Black Beauty is just overworked and not injured or ill, he could rest him for a few months and then put him back to work—or sell him and let someone else take on the expense. Skinner chooses the latter option, and a kind gentleman farmer named Mr. Thoroughgood and his grandson, Willie, purchase Black Beauty.

Black Beauty is allowed to recuperate in a meadow for several months and then, in the spring, Mr. Thoroughgood begins driving Black Beauty in a light chaise. Black Beauty feels young again thanks to the rest and good food, and he does his work to the best of his abilities. In summer, Mr. Thoroughgood presents Black Beauty to a household of ladies who want a safe horse to drive. They agree to take Black Beauty on trial. Their groom, who fetches Black Beauty from Mr. Thoroughgood is initially upset that Mr. Thoroughgood is selling his employers a horse with "blemished" knees. But he comes around when he recognizes Black Beauty, and he tells Black Beauty that he's Joe Green. With Joe to convince them of Black Beauty's safety and good character, the ladies agree to purchase Black Beauty and keep him until he dies.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Black Beauty/The Narrator – Black Beauty is the equine narrator of the novel, which follows him from birth until he's 13 or 14. He's a black horse with a white star on his forehead and a small white sock on one foot. His mother, Duchess, tells Black Beauty that his grandfather was a winning racehorse, and because of his good breeding, it's essential that Black Beauty behave well. Black Beauty takes this advice to heart throughout his life. It's not difficult to do as a colt and a young horse, as Black Beauty is treated well. His first owner, Farmer Grey, gently teaches Black Beauty to be ridden and pull a carriage. His second owner, Squire Gordon, is kind and has a knowledgeable staff. Black Beauty befriends the other horses there, especially Merrylegs and Ginger. Though they sometimes discuss how people abuse horses, Black Beauty doesn't truly believe people are all that terrible. His only bad experience while with Squire Gordon is that once, after galloping very hard, the stable boy Joe Green doesn't properly care for Black Beauty, causing him to fall gravely ill. Everything changes, though, when Mrs. Gordon falls ill and the Gordons move to Europe. Black Beauty and Ginger are sold to the Earl of W, who uses **bearing reins** on his horses—and while Black Beauty maintains his good temper, he stops enjoying his work. He's ultimately sold after Reuben Smith drunkenly gallops Black Beauty over rough ground when Black Beauty is missing a shoe, and Black Beauty falls and severely damages his knees. Over the next several years, Black Beauty works as a job-horse, a cab horse, a carter's horse, and as a pleasure horse—and while some of his owners, like Jerry, are kind and knowledgeable, others abuse or neglect Black Beauty. He witnesses Ginger die of exhaustion performing cab work, and he almost ends up in the same position. But Mr. Thoroughgood purchases Black Beauty and rehabilitates him. Ultimately, Black

Beauty is sold to three ladies whose groom is none other than Joe Green. Black Beauty's story ends with him happy and cared for, with a promise that he'll never be sold.

Ginger – Ginger is Black Beauty's best equine friend. She's a chestnut mare who's sensitive and spirited, and when she was a filly and a young horse, this was interpreted as belligerence and punished. Because she was abused as a young horse and never learned that people can be kind friends, Ginger arrives at Birtwick a few months before Black Beauty as a dangerous, touchy horse who bites and kicks. With John, James, and Squire Gordon's patience and kindness, though, Ginger gradually relaxes, learns to trust people, and becomes happy in her new home. She is, however, self-conscious about the damage her upbringing and training caused (such as making her mouth hard), and she fears what might happen if she's ever sold. Ultimately, Ginger's fears come true when she and Black Beauty are sold to the Earl of W when the Gordons leave the country. Ginger has experience with the **bearing rein** already, and she's not willing to put up with what she sees as dangerous abuse. She tolerates the bearing rein for a while but eventually lashes out and damages harness by kicking and rearing. After this, Lord George begins training Ginger for foxhunting, but he's too heavy and not a good rider. Due to the bearing rein and Lord George's hard and poor riding, her back is strained and she suffers breathing problems. She and Black Beauty are separated for several years after she's put out to rest and heal for a year, but she and Black Beauty reconnect in London when they're both pulling cabs. At this point, Ginger has lost all her spirit; she believes that men are cruel and cannot be beaten. She's thin and exhausted, her joints are swollen, and her owner plans to use her until she dies—and Ginger looks forward to dying, since that will stop her suffering. Soon after this meeting, Black Beauty sees a dead chestnut horse that he believes is Ginger, though he can't confirm the dead horse's identity.

Merrylegs – Merrylegs is a fat gray pony owned by Miss Jessie and Miss Flora at Birtwick. He's wise and old, at 12 years old, and has been at Birtwick for five years when Black Beauty arrives. Black Beauty quickly befriends the pony. Merrylegs makes a point to carefully care for and train his young riders, but he also believes that part of this is teaching visiting boys not to be cruel and abuse horses. So, when the boys beat him with sticks and try to make him gallop, Merrylegs ejects the boys to teach them not to do that. Dumping mean riders gently, though, is as much as Merrylegs is comfortable doing to make his point. Though Ginger suggests she'd kick cruel boys, Merrylegs believes he'd be sold into horrible work if he ever kicked, bit, or was anything but a gentle and reliable horse for children. When his friends discuss how cruel people can be to horses and dogs, Merrylegs doesn't disagree—but he also suggests it's inappropriate to talk about such things when they're so well cared for at Birtwick. Squire Gordon sells Merrylegs to the vicar when he moves to Europe, on the condition that the vicar never sell Merrylegs and that Merrylegs should be humanely shot when he's too old to work. Black Beauty never discovers whether this happened or not.

Squire Gordon – Squire Gordon is Black Beauty's second owner. He's a wealthy country gentleman and local magistrate who lives at Birtwick Park with his wife, Mrs. Gordon, and his two daughters, Miss Jessie and Miss Flora. He doesn't ride much after his son, George Gordon, died during a foxhunting accident. Black Beauty quickly discovers that Squire Gordon is kind, generous, and a skilled and sensible rider. He's extremely concerned with animal welfare, so he doesn't use the **bearing rein** on his own horses and tries to convince his peers and others in the community to not use bearing reins on their horses, either. Squire Gordon also stands up whenever he catches someone abusing a horse or a person—and occasionally, he's the magistrate who tries animal abusers. He also cares deeply about the people who work for him. Though he thinks highly of James Howard and doesn't want to lose such a good employee, he recommends James to his brother-in-law as a coachman. He also offers to help John Manly in any way possible after the Gordons leave the country. Ultimately, when Mrs. Gordon becomes seriously ill, Squire Gordon moves his family to continental Europe. He tries to ensure that his horses will go to people who will care for them—but except in Merrylegs's case, he's unsuccessful.

James Howard – James is the stable boy at Birtwick when Black Beauty arrives there. He's a kind, smart, and generous young man who cares deeply for horses and for standing up for what's right. Like John and Squire Gordon, he steps in when he sees people abusing their horses—and as a boy in school, he boxed another boy's ears for pulling a fly's wings off. Black Beauty, Ginger, and Merrylegs all adore James, so it's difficult for them when James plans to leave to accept a position as a coachman elsewhere. But while he receives training in preparation for the move during his last six weeks at Birtwick, James continues to distinguish himself as a conscientious, kind person. He saves Black Beauty and Ginger from a burning stable, something that another coachman says shows how much the horses trust James—most horses refuse to leave their stables out of fear during fires and floods. After James leaves for his new position, Black Beauty never sees him again.

John Manly – John Manly is Squire Gordon's coachman at Birtwick. He's one of the most morally upstanding people Black Beauty has ever met, and he always gives his horses the best care possible. He doesn't believe in abusing horses by making them wear **bearing reins**, and Merrylegs even suspects that John doesn't approve of blinkers on horses. He's an important mentor to both James and to Joe Green. When James is preparing to leave, John justifies his choice to replace him with young Joe by sharing his own story of the Gordons rescuing him from certain poverty by employing him in their stables and giving his sister needlework. It's important, he insists, to always

help others when one has the opportunity to do so. John and Joe, however, get off to a rough start, as Joe doesn't know how to properly cool down a horse. His unwitting neglect causes Black Beauty to fall seriously ill when Joe improperly cares for Black Beauty on his own one night. In speaking to Joe's father, Tom, John makes the case that ignorance is no excuse for doing something dangerous or harmful to another living being, regardless of one's intentions. When the Gordons move to Europe, John decides to get a job with a horse dealer and break in horses kindly and gently.

Joe Green – Joe Green is 14 years old when John Manly hires him to take James's place at Birtwick. Joe is small for his age, young, and inexperienced, but he's desperate to learn—and even Merrylegs says after a week that he thinks Joe will turn out just fine. Soon after James leaves, though, Joe is tasked with caring for Black Beauty after a long gallop all on his own. Joe doesn't know what to do, so he doesn't properly care for Black Beauty—and Black Beauty falls seriously ill. Joe feels terrible for almost killing Black Beauty, but in the years after this, Joe throws himself into learning everything he can. Black Beauty feels like Joe transforms suddenly into a man one day when Joe tells a carter to stop whipping his horses and is later asked to give evidence in the man's trial. Like his mentor John, Joe believes in standing up for people and animals who cannot stand up for themselves. Black Beauty figures he'll never see Joe again when the Gordons move, as Joe goes to care for Merrylegs at the vicarage. But years later, the two reconnect when Black Beauty is sold to three ladies who employ Joe as their groom. By this point, Joe is an unrecognizable adult, but he's still as kind and good as he was as a boy. He convinces the ladies to keep Black Beauty and call him by his old name.

The Earl of W/Lord W – Lord W is a friend of Squire Gordon who purchases Black Beauty and Ginger when the Gordons move to Europe. He's far more interested in keeping up with current fashions than Squire Gordon is, so he refuses to drive Black Beauty and Ginger into the city since they don't match. He also insists on using **bearing reins** on his horses. However, he is more sensible and compassionate than his wife, Mrs. W, is—he instructs York to work the horses up to a tight bearing rein slowly. He blames York when Ginger protests the bearing rein, injuring herself and Black Beauty and damaging the harness. He also doesn't stop Lord George from riding Ginger and ultimately ruining her. When Reuben Smith injures and scars Black Beauty's knees, Lord W refuses to keep a "blemished" horse on his estate. He sells Black Beauty to be a "job-horse."

Reuben Smith – Reuben Smith is the groom put in charge of Earlshall's stables when Lord W and his family leave with York for several months. He's on his second stint of working for Lord W. The first time, he was fired because he occasionally gets drunk and abuses his wife, animals, and anyone else in the vicinity. But because Smith has some veterinary training and is a good horseperson when he's sober, he's hired back just before Black Beauty and Ginger arrive at Earlshall. Smith does his job well for most of his time in charge—but when he's tasked with taking Blantyre to the train station and then riding Black Beauty home, he gets drunk. Ignoring that Black Beauty's shoe is loose, Smith gallops Black Beauty over rough roads and whips him, even when Black Beauty loses his shoe and his hoof begins to split. Finally, Black Beauty stumbles onto his knees and pitches Smith over his head onto the road. The accident kills Smith. Posthumously, Smith is found to be at fault in the accident.

Jerry Barker – Jerry is the kind cab driver who purchases Black Beauty from Mr. Barry. He lives with his wife Polly and his two children, Harry and Dolly, in London and keeps two horses at a time to pull his cab. Black Beauty adores and respects Jerry from the beginning, as Jerry cares meticulously for his horses and doesn't work them too hard. He refuses to get a seven-day cab license and work Sundays. This is in part because he's a deeply spiritual man and believes that people and animals all have the God-given right to a day of rest, but it's also because he used to work seven days per week and it was detrimental to his health. Working a six-day week is so important to him that he even loses a beloved regular customer for refusing to drive her to church on Sundays so that he himself can attend services. On the cab stand, he's known for being principled and is often ridiculed for it—the other drivers think he's ridiculous for turning down extra money and refusing to whip his horses. However, in situations where he believes a person has a valid reason for needing to get somewhere quickly, Jerry is willing to hurry his horse along and accept extra payment. Drivers also mock him for not drinking; he occasionally tries to convince others to give up alcohol so they can be in control of their own lives, but with limited success. Black Beauty loyally works for Jerry for three years, until Jerry contracts bronchitis and his doctor forbids him from driving cabs. Black Beauty never gets to say goodbye to Jerry.

The Master/Farmer Grey – Farmer Grey is Black Beauty's breeder and first owner. He's a kind and generous man who treats his horses almost like they're his own children. When Squire Gordon expresses interest in purchasing Black Beauty, Farmer Grey insists on breaking Black Beauty himself, when the colt is old enough. Once Black Beauty moves to Birtwick, he discovers that along with Squire Gordon, Farmer Grey has been influential in the local movement to get people to stop using **bearing reins**.

Mrs. Gordon – Mrs. Gordon is Squire Gordon's wife. She's a small woman and an exceptional rider, and she often chooses Black Beauty to ride—a great honor. However, she becomes seriously ill and eventually, her doctor insists she move to a warmer climate. This is why the Gordon family moves to Europe and sells all their horses.

Sir Oliver – Sir Oliver is Squire Gordon's former hunter. He's

old and retired, though he sometimes carries Miss Jessie or Miss Flora. During his conversations with Black Beauty, Ginger, and Merrylegs, Sir Oliver rails against people's cruelty toward horses. He detests "fashion" and what it makes people do to their animals. His own tail is docked (cut off), which he explains was the fashion at the time. The modification, he explains, was totally useless in addition to being immensely painful. He hates **bearing reins** and blinkers, and he believes both are useless.

Samson – Samson worked for his father, Mr. Ryder, and trained Ginger. He was a cruel man who took pride in the fact that no horse could throw him. He used sharp bits on Ginger, punished her for imagined infractions, and made her so confused and angry that she did eventually manage to throw him. He was forbidden from touching Ginger after Mr. Ryder discovered Ginger's bloody sides and mouth.

The Old Ostler – The old ostler works at a hotel where the Gordons and James stop with Black Beauty and Ginger along a journey. He's a quick groom, and he tells James about his experiences as a jockey and as an ostler (a person who cares for horses at inns). Like John, he believes in training horses gently.

Mr. York – York is the coachman at Earlshall in Lord W's employ. He's a good, sensible horseman who cares for his horses, but Black Beauty also sees him as a man who expects to be obeyed. Though the horses suspect that York himself doesn't believe in using **bearing reins**, he doesn't protest when Lord W and Mrs. W insist on using bearing reins. He also follows Mrs. W's order to push Ginger too fast to a very tight rein.

Max – Max is a young black horse that Lord W purchases to match Black Beauty after Ginger throws a fit in the harness. He's always used the **bearing rein**, and he explains that horse doctors and dealers know bearing reins are bad for horses and shorten their lives. But those people, Max insists, also don't care, as they can sell more horses when horses wear out faster.

Lady Anne – Lady Anne lives at Earlshall and begins riding Black Beauty regularly when Lord W and Mrs. W are away. She's a small woman and an excellent rider; Black Beauty hopes to remain her mount forever. He witnesses her suffer a serious fall off of a nervous mare named Lizzie, though, and Reuben Smith ruins Black Beauty's knees before the lady recovers.

Blantyre – Blantyre is Lady Anne's cousin. The two often ride together, and Blantyre enjoys riding a mare named Lizzie. He's a good rider and understands that Lizzie is flighty and not appropriate for a lady riding sidesaddle. But when Lady Anne insists on trying Lizzie, Blantyre allows her to do so. He and Black Beauty pursue Lizzie when she bolts with Lady Anne, and they get Lady Anne medical care when she falls.

Lizzie – Lizzie is a flighty bay mare at Earlshall. The gentlemen love riding her and say good things about her, but Ginger insists she's nervous. One day, Lady Anne insists on riding Lizzie, and Lizzie spooks and runs away with her. Lizzie falls trying to jump a wide ditch, causing Lady Anne to fall.

Lord George – Lord George takes a liking to Ginger after Lord W orders that Ginger not be used as a carriage horse. He begins to train her for foxhunting, despite York's warnings—Lord George is a heavy rider and isn't skilled enough to do the proper training. He eventually ruins Ginger by riding her hard in a steeplechase and straining her back.

Peggy – Peggy is Rory's replacement as Black Beauty's partner when Black Beauty works as a job-horse. She's a pretty mare, but she's not as tall as her peers. This, she explains, means that she can't go as fast, and men whipping her to keep up with a long-legged carriage partner has caused her to develop an annoying and unattractive habit of inserting a canter stride every few steps to keep up. Because of her gentleness, ladies eventually purchase her—they want a safe horse, not a fast one.

Mr. Barry – Mr. Barry purchases Black Beauty on the advice of a friend, who rode and drove Black Beauty several times when Black Beauty was being used as a job-horse. Mr. Barry's doctor has suggested he ride a horse for exercise. He doesn't know much about horses, but he's kind and does the best he can. But although Mr. Barry purchases the best food he can, he's unable to hire honest grooms: Filcher steals Black Beauty's food, while Alfred lazily refuses to clean Black Beauty's stall and insists it's dangerous to clean a horse's stall. Fed up after discovering Black Beauty's nasty fungal hoof infection caused by the dirty stall, Mr. Barry sells Black Beauty at a horse fair.

Alfred Smirk – Alfred is the second groom Mr. Barry hires to care for Black Beauty. He comes highly recommended and is a knowledgeable horseperson. He's always kind and attentive to Black Beauty when Mr. Barry is watching—but Alfred's behavior when he's caring for Black Beauty on his own causes Black Beauty to conclude that he's never met a more conceited man. Alfred never properly grooms Black Beauty or cleans his tack, never exercises Black Beauty, and refuses to thoroughly clean Black Beauty's stall. Indeed, he insists that a deep clean would be a health hazard for Black Beauty. His neglect causes Black Beauty to develop a fungal infection in his hooves from standing in his own waste all day.

Polly Barker – Polly is Jerry's wife and Harry and Dolly's mother. Polly is as sweet and kind as her husband. She helps him care for the horses and prep the cab every morning, and she makes sure the horses and Jerry are fed when they're out working. She always worries for Jerry, though, as he nurses a nasty cough and never fully recovers. To help him, she remains firm in her belief that he should never again work a Sunday. Rest and quality of life, she insists, is far more important than money.

Captain – Captain is Jerry's other cab horse. As a young horse, he was trained to be ridden in the cavalry—he led regiments in Crimea. While he loved his owner and loved the training, he now believes that war itself is horrible. After seeing so many

horses and men die senseless, gruesome deaths, he can only hope that their enemies were truly evil. Captain performs admirably for Jerry until he's hit by a runaway dray and a shaft impales him. He recovers, but only enough to work as a carthorse. Since Jerry believes carting is a cruel death sentence for old horses like Captain, he has Captain shot.

Hotspur – Jerry purchases Hotspur as Captain's replacement. He's only five years old and was a gentleman's horse previously. However, Hotspur is nervous and spirited—and he injured himself when he got scared and bolted, which frightened his former owner and scarred him too much to remain in the gentleman's stable. Initially, Hotspur is offended to be a cab horse. But after only a week, he admits that Jerry's skilled driving makes cab work preferable to carriage work with a **bearing rein**.

Governor Grant – Governor Grant is a respected older cab driver. For the most part, whatever he says, the other drivers agree with or accept as fact. However, he still thinks of Jerry as being a better man than him, since Jerry doesn't drink alcohol. The Governor sometimes stands up for the horses' welfare, but he also can't ignore how many poor drivers feel like the only way to feed their families is to abuse and overwork their horses. When Jerry contracts bronchitis, the Governor helps out his family by driving Hotspur in the afternoons and giving the family half the proceeds. He insists to Harry that it's important to help people whenever possible. He purchases Hotspur when Jerry plans to leave London.

Mr. and Mrs. Briggs – The Briggses are a wealthy couple who employ Jerry's cab regularly—until Mr. Briggs tries unsuccessfully to convince Jerry to work Sundays so he can drive Mrs. Briggs to church. Jerry refuses, and the Briggses refuse to work with him for a few weeks. But Mrs. Briggs eventually hires Jerry again, since his cab is the cleanest and safest.

The Gentleman – The gentleman is a kind older man and an animal lover who occasionally hires Jerry and Black Beauty's cab. He's unique in that he acknowledges and pats horses pulling cabs—most people ignore them. Black Beauty also witnesses the gentleman, who has no apparent connection to John Manly or Squire Gordon, echo those men's insistence that it's essential to stand up for people and animals who cannot advocate for themselves.

Seedy Sam – Seedy Sam is a poor cab driver in London. One day, when he shows up at the stand with a horse that looks ready to drop, the Governor calls Sam out on mistreating the horse—and Sam details exactly why he and other poor drivers like him are essentially forced into abusing their horses. He insists that he's a victim of his boss—who charges an exorbitant amount per day to rent a horse and cab—and of the laws that set fares so low that it requires working 16-hour days seven days per week to make a profit. Sam dies suddenly after falling ill. According to another man, Sam spent his last hours ranting about his boss, Skinner, and about never getting a day of rest.

Jakes – Jakes is Black Beauty's carter when Black Beauty is sold to a baker. Jakes has no choice but to follow his foreman's orders and overload Black Beauty's cart, but he insists on using the **bearing rein** on Black Beauty so the other carters won't laugh at him. After a lady stops Jakes from whipping Black Beauty and shows him how much better Black Beauty can pull uphill without a bearing rein, Jakes begins letting Black Beauty have his head on hills.

Nicholas Skinner – Skinner owns one of the large cab companies in London that rents horses and cabs to drivers for a day rate. He employed Seedy Sam, and it's implied that he owned Ginger. He's a hard, cruel man who believes in working horses as hard as they'll go until they die, and then he sells them to the knackers. Black Beauty spends only a few months in Skinner's stables before he collapses from overwork. The farrier convinces Skinner to rest Black Beauty for two weeks and then sell him at a horse sale.

Mr. Thoroughgood – Mr. Thoroughgood is a gentleman farmer who purchases Black Beauty at a horse fair. He and his grandson, Willie, regularly buy old and abused horses and "make them young again." Since Black Beauty wasn't ruined in his youth and is only exhausted and skinny when Mr. Thoroughgood buys him, Black Beauty is an ideal candidate for rehabilitation. Once Black Beauty is feeling better, Mr. Thoroughgood sells him to Miss Ellen, Miss Blomefield, and Miss Lavinia.

Rob Roy – Rob Roy is a black horse ridden by George Gordon. He falls and is injured during a foxhunt when he and George aren't able to keep their footing after a difficult jump into a brook. He's shot after this due to his injuries. Later, Black Beauty learns that Duchess, his mother, is also Rob Roy's mother.

Filcher – Filcher is the first groom Mr. Barry hires to care for Black Beauty. He's a knowledgeable horseperson, as he used to work as an ostler (a person who cares for horses at inns). But he and his young son steal Black Beauty's corn and oats, and he eventually goes to jail for the crime.

Dolly Barker – Dolly is Polly and Jerry's daughter. She's eight when Jerry purchases Black Beauty. Black Beauty describes her as being like as her mother, only younger: she's neat, kind, and generous like Polly is. She often brings Jerry warm food while he's working, and all the other drivers love and protect her.

Miss Lavinia – Miss Lavinia is one of the three ladies who purchase Black Beauty from Mr. Thoroughgood. She's tall, thin, and sickly, and she's nervous about driving a horse who's fallen before, as she fears a horse will inevitably fall again. Mr. Thoroughgood convinces her that Black Beauty was simply ruined by a careless person and that he's perfectly safe.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Duchess – Duchess is Black Beauty's mother. She's a kind horse who tells Black Beauty to always do his best in his work, as he'll be treated better that way—though she also acknowledges that some people are cruel and foolish. Black Beauty later learns that Duchess is also Rob Roy's mother.

George Gordon – George Gordon is Squire Gordon's son. He dies when Black Beauty is two years old while jumping his horse, Rob Roy, over a foxhunting obstacle that's too difficult for him. He breaks his neck, and Rob Roy is shot, as the horse also suffered injuries.

Justice – Justice is a roan cob owned by Squire Gordon. He's a calm, sensible horse who tries to understand why people do what they do to horses—he explains why people use blinkers on horses, for instance.

Mrs. W – Mrs. W is Lord W's wife. She's an imperious lady who often takes Black Beauty and Ginger out in the carriage in the afternoons. She's extremely fashionable—she wears expensive rustling silks—and she insists on the horses traveling with tight **bearing reins** at all times.

Willie – Willie is Mr. Thoroughgood's grandson; he convinces his grandfather to purchase Black Beauty at a horse fair to "make him young again." When they get Black Beauty home, Willie is put in charge of his care. Willie is kind and loves horses; he often brings Black Beauty treats.

Dick – Dick is a boy who works for Farmer Grey. Farmer Grey fires Dick when he catches him throwing stones at colts to make them run.

Miss Jessie – Miss Jessie is one of Squire Gordon's daughters. She and her sister Miss Flora ride Merrylegs.

Miss Flora – Miss Flora is one of Squire Gordon's daughters. She and her sister Miss Jessie ride Merrylegs.

Mr. Ryder – Mr. Ryder was Ginger's first trainer. He was kind, but he put his cruel son, Samson, in charge of Ginger's training—with horrific results.

The Vicar/Mr. Blomefield – The vicar purchases Merrylegs from Squire Gordon when the Gordons move to Europe.

Tom Green – Tom is Joe Green's father. He occasionally helps his son out at Birtwick.

Rory – Rory is a fellow job-horse whom Black Beauty works with briefly. He's a good-natured horse, but he's sold as a coal horse after suffering a cart accident.

Harry Barker – Harry is Polly and Jerry's son. He's 14 when Jerry purchases Black Beauty. He's a sensible, good-natured boy who helps care for the horses.

The Lady – The lady stops Jakes when she sees him whipping Black Beauty and tries to convince him not to use the **bearing rein**.

Miss Ellen – Miss Ellen is one of the three ladies who purchase Black Beauty from Mr. Thoroughgood. She's the youngest lady and is the first to drive Black Beauty in the chaise. She's a good driver.

Miss Blomefield – Miss Blomefield is one of the three ladies who purchase Black Beauty from Mr. Thoroughgood. Black Beauty describes her as "stately."

Dinah – Dinah is one of Jerry and Polly's neighbors. Jerry agrees to drive her into the country on a Sunday so she can visit her dying mother.

The Woman/Mrs. Fowler – Polly's former employer, Mrs. Fowler, runs into Jerry once at the hospital. Later, after he gets sick, she employs him as her coachman.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

HORSE CARE, ABUSE, AND NEGLECT

Black Beauty, the story of the titular equine protagonist's life in Victorian England, is in many ways a study in what constitutes proper horse care—and the various ways that people can abuse or mistreat horses, accidentally and on purpose. Above all, the novel proposes that the most important thing a person who wants to take good care of a horse needs is knowledge of how to do so. The novel therefore goes into some detail about what constitutes good horse management. Throughout the story, Black Beauty describes various things that go into excellent equine care, including a flat, clean, and airy stable; regular veterinary and hoof care; gentle training by a skilled rider; and a balance of rest with exercise. And his description of the changes in his friend Ginger, who was abused before coming to Birtwick, shows the positive effects of proper horse care: Ginger transforms from a suspicious horse willing to bite or kick anyone she thinks might be a threat into a calm and happy horse who's more than willing to do her work quietly and safely.

But as Black Beauty discovers, the exceptional care he receives at Birtwick is perhaps the exception rather than the norm. At various points, he witnesses overt, purposeful abuse, such as when he sees people whipping their horses and ponies to get them to move, even when the horse in question is being asked to do something it physically cannot do. Other horses are starved and overworked until they drop dead of exhaustion—including, eventually, Ginger. And even when Black Beauty and Ginger live at Earlshall and are well cared for in their stable, the novel still characterizes being forced to pull the

carriage with their heads held up by the **bearing rein** as abuse, as it makes the horses' job harder and damages their bodies. The owners in question, the novel suggests, know the bearing rein is bad for the horses—but they don't care, as they can simply replace the horses when they wear out.

Not all abuse is so obvious, though—indeed, the novel suggests that many instances of abuse or neglect happen because people don't know what they're doing and so make mistakes. Black Beauty, for instance, contracts a nasty fungal infection in his hooves because his owner doesn't know that his stable should be fully cleaned often so he isn't standing in his own waste. Other horses die or suffer injuries when inexperienced riders ask them to do too much or jump fences that are too difficult: Ginger's back is permanently injured when her too-heavy rider forces her to run and jump too far, while Rob Roy and his rider both die after jumping a jump the rider wasn't experienced enough to guide Rob Roy over. These tragedies were caused, the novel says, by "only ignorance"—but ignorance, *Black Beauty* insists, is no excuse when another being's life is on the line. And the only remedy for ignorance, per the novel, is education.

CLASS, TRANSPORTATION, AND VICTORIAN ENGLAND

Black Beauty introduces readers to a very specific period of history: a point in Victorian England when transportation options were limited to steam trains and either riding or driving a horse-drawn vehicle. Horses are animals with thoughts and feelings of their own, per the novel—but they're also the dominant form of transportation in this period, and so are consistently thought of not as living beings, but as something akin to trains that go and go and never get tired. As Black Beauty is sold from owner to owner over the course of the novel, he offers readers insight into how class and wealth influence how people in Victorian England see their equine transportation. As a colt and a young horse, Black Beauty's owners are wealthy and kind. Squire Gordon respects horses and sees them almost as people, with personalities and preferences that he and his staff should make every effort to accommodate. There's no doubt that Squire Gordon's horses are his primary mode of transportation, but because of his wealth and his kindness, he ensures that no one horse is forced to do more work than the horse's body can handle. Additionally, by not using **bearing reins** on his carriage horses, Squire Gordon gives his horses the best chance he can to help them do their jobs as easily and comfortably as possible. And on the off chance that a horse is overworked, his staff cares for the horse carefully and compassionately to restore them to health.

But while Squire Gordon is held up as an ideal, the novel also suggests that Squire Gordon is more likely to treat his horses so well because he can afford to—and not everyone in Victorian England has the privilege to be as kind and compassionate as he is. Indeed, when Black Beauty works pulling a cab in London, his owner, Jerry, does the best he can for Black Beauty and his other horses, Captain and Hotspur. But because Jerry needs his horses to work for many hours a day, six days per week to make a living, he's not able to offer the horses the rest that a wealthy person like Squire Gordon could—rest that could, the novel suggests, improve the horses' health. And Jerry is still far more fortunate than other men who drive cabs, such as Seedy Sam. One day, when Seedy Sam shows up at the cab stand driving a horse who looks ready to drop dead of exhaustion, he explains that he has no choice but to push the horse to the breaking point if he wants to survive and feed his family. He doesn't own his horse—he rents the horse and cab from someone else—and so he has to drive the horse hard to not only pay the day rate for the horse, but to then make a profit for himself on top of that. His class, essentially, means that it's simply not financially feasible for him to treat his horse as anything other than a beast of burden that will go until, inevitably, it dies due to overwork. So while the novel is not at all subtle about trying to convince readers that the horses that keep Victorian England moving deserve care and rest, it also shows that the very laws governing this work (such as those setting exorbitantly high cab licensing rates and others mandating low fares) make people feel they have no choice but to treat horses as expendable.

And while Black Beauty's focus is mostly on his own plight and that of his fellow horses, he also shows how the same class system that condemns horses to overwork also harms the people using the horses to make a living, like Seedy Sam. While the wealthy Squire Gordon has the capital to move his wife, Mrs. Gordon, to continental Europe when she falls gravely ill, Seedy Sam drives until he dies suddenly of bronchitis. He dies in the middle of winter, after spending days driving unprotected in frigid sleet—all because the only way to keep his family housed and fed was to keep working, even as he became progressively sicker. While *Black Beauty* doesn't excuse or justify tragic human or equine deaths like this, it does show how the Victorian class system and the era's dependence on equine transportation resulted in a shockingly high death rate.

GOOD, EVIL, AND POWER

In many respects, the horse Black Beauty's life story of being sold from owner to owner in Victorian England is a morality tale about good and evil. Good people, per the novel, love their neighbors and their animals—and they stand up for the most vulnerable and powerless people and "dumb beasts." So being good, in this sense, is about the *actions* that someone takes to spread good in the world, rather than simply wanting to be good. Some of the human characters Black Beauty thinks are the most morally perfect are those like Squire Gordon and Farmer Grey, who use their wealth and their respected statuses in the community to

speak up and ensure those who abuse horses see consequences for their actions, whether those consequences are being fired from a job or doing jail time. But standing up for kindness, and shutting down cruel behavior, is important to do no matter how seemingly small or insignificant the victim is—James Howard, one of Black Beauty's grooms, recounts a story about boxing the ears of a boy at school whom he caught pulling the wings off of flies. The fact that James wasn't willing to look the other way even when the victim was an annoying pest like a fly, per the novel, situates him as someone who's wholly good.

The novel defines evil, on the other hand, as when a person takes pleasure in cruelty and in causing pain to others. Using this framework, some of the cruelest people in *Black Beauty* are the ones who insist on using **bearing reins** (straps that hold a carriage horse's head unnaturally high) because that's what's currently in fashion, even though they know bearing reins are painful and cause damage to a horse's back, neck, and respiratory system. Indeed, horse and human characters alike say at various points that there's nothing more evil than fashion itself. Fashion, in Black Beauty's experience, doesn't take into account what's healthy, and particularly when fashion mandates things like bearing reins and docking (cutting off) horses or dogs' tails, fashion insists that it's necessary to cause beings that cannot advocate for themselves immense pain and suffering just so they're supposedly more attractive. With this, *Black Beauty* suggests that it's possible to judge a person's relative goodness by how they treat those with less power than they have, and on whether a person prioritizes a powerless being's health, wellness, and comfort over fashion.

DIGNITY AND RELIGION

As the various equine and human characters in *Black Beauty* discuss various forms of cruelty, many suggest much the same thing though in slightly different ways: that all beings, whether they be people, horses, or dogs, deserve to live a dignified life; and that this right is God-given. Black Beauty and his various companions often define dignity in terms of bodily autonomy. For instance, the horse Sir Oliver speaks passionately against the practice of docking (cutting off) horses' tails and dogs' ears and tails, something that he suggests doesn't acknowledge the belief that God created animals with the body parts they need to stay healthy and comfortable. Sir Oliver's tail is docked, and he notes that without a long tail, he's not only less attractive—he also has no way to brush flies off his body, which makes summers nearly intolerable. He also mentions a dog whose young puppies had their ears and tails cut off. Again, Sir Oliver insists that the people who carried out this cruelty weren't respecting that dogs' ear flaps serve a purpose (to protect the inner ear) and were therefore violating what God intended.

When it comes to the novel's human characters, many of those Black Beauty considers good use much the same logic as Sir Oliver—and they suggest that respecting animals' bodies, and by extension respecting what God intended animals should be like, is one way that they can be more virtuous and can be better religious people. Abusing animals, whether on purpose or by accident, is in turn something they link to evil and to the devil. This is why at Birtwick, Squire Gordon and John Manly refuse to use **bearing reins** (reins that hold horses' heads in an unnaturally high position). Horses, Squire Gordon insists, were designed to use their bodies in a certain way—and a device like a bearing rein, that hinders a horse's ability to use their body in that way, is therefore cruel. While these kind people insist that horses have God-given rights to be treated well, have their bodies respected, and to have a balance of exercise and rest, the novel portrays people who violate horses' dignity and bodily autonomy as less virtuous, and as poor practitioners of religion. While the novel suggests that cab drivers like Jerry, who refuses to work on Sunday so he can attend church services, is more virtuous than those like Seedy Sam who work Sundays, it also acknowledges that Seedy Sam is a victim of people who are even less virtuous. Those people are the ones who insist on attending church services far enough away from their homes to necessitate a cab, or those who value their clothes' cleanliness more than they value Seedy Sam's right to have a day of rest. Religion done right, per the novel, means championing the dignity and bodily autonomy of all people and animals—and part of being appropriately religious, the novel suggests, is making sacrifices in one's own life to ensure the comfort and dignity of others.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

BEARING REINS

Bearing reins represent people's cruelty and willingness to selfishly force animals to suffer, all to make themselves look more fashionable. A bearing rein is a piece of a carriage horse's harness that runs from the top of a horse's head to the saddle portion of the harness. It holds the horse's head in an unnaturally high position. As Black Beauty, Squire Gordon, and several other horse and human characters explain, bearing reins are extremely bad for a horse's health. A horse name Max explains that while he doesn't know if wealthy horse owners like the Lord W know how bad the bearing rein is, horse dealers and horse doctors do. They know full well, Max insists, that bearing reins cause horses to wear out faster, but they don't care because this means people must regularly buy new horses to replace those that are too damaged to work anymore. To people like Lord W, Mrs. W, and the carter Jakes,

it's far more important to follow the fashion and crank a horse's head up, as they see their horses as disposable and would rather look fashionable than attend to their horses' comfort and well-being.

Further, the novel shows how bearing reins force a horse to move in a way different than they were designed to. A bearing rein creates strain in a horse's neck, back, and legs; damages a horse's breathing; and deprives a horse of a lot of its pulling power (horses can pull most effectively when they put their heads forward and down). So the bearing rein is, within the logic of the novel, something that violates a horse's bodily autonomy and even goes against what God created horses to look like and do. Bearing reins, in this sense, highlight not just people's cruelty and selfishness, but people's conceited belief that *they*, and not God, should decide what animals look like.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Puffin edition of *Black Beauty* published in 2008.

Chapter 2 Quotes

Not many days after, we heard the church bell tolling for a long time; and looking over the gate we saw a long strange black coach that was covered with black cloth and was drawn by black horses; after that came another and another and another, and all were black, while the bell kept tolling, tolling. They were carrying young Gordon to the churchyard to bury him. He would never ride again. What they did with Rob Roy I never knew; but 'twas all for one little hare.

Related Characters: Black Beauty/The Narrator (speaker), George Gordon, Rob Roy

Related Themes:

Page Number: 9

Explanation and Analysis

A few days before this, Black Beauty, Duchess, and the other horses in the field witnessed a foxhunt pass nearby—and they watched George Gordon and his horse, Rob Roy, die after taking a difficult fence. The sad, resigned tone in this passage highlights that George and Rob Roy's deaths were tragedies—one jumping mistake, and the world has lost a young man beloved by his family and the community, as well as a horse that people describe as upstanding and bold. Ending this passage with "but 'twas all for one little hare" then gives the impression that at least in Black Beauty's opinion, their deaths were senseless. It essentially asks the reader to question whether foxhunting is really worth it when it's a dangerous sport that can so easily end up killing horses and people. The fact that Black Beauty doesn't ever find out what happened to Rob Roy's body also suggests that the horses are expendable when they die. They're not given a formal burial, at least, like George Gordon gets.

Then, more broadly, this passage also gives readers insight into how horses see their world. The black horses are no doubt pulling a hearse with George Gordon's body in it, but Black Beauty doesn't have the specific language to describe that. This clues readers into the fact that the manmade world can be confusing for animals that don't have human speech and life experience. Black Beauty is only two years old in this passage, so his understanding of the world improves over the course of the novel as he ages and gains more experience. But it nevertheless suggests that anyone who works with horses keep in mind that horses don't understand everything humans do—and not to punish them for not understanding.

Chapter 3 Quotes

"But," said she, "there are a great many kinds of men; there are good, thoughtful men like our master, that any horse may be proud to serve; but there are bad, cruel men, who never ought to have a horse or dog to call their own. Besides, there are a great many foolish men, vain, ignorant, and careless, who never trouble themselves to think; these spoil more horses than all, just for want of sense; they don't mean it, but they do it for all that."

Related Characters: Duchess (speaker), Black Beauty/The Narrator, The Master/Farmer Grey

Related Themes:

Page Number: 15

Explanation and Analysis

While Black Beauty is learning to drive as a pair with his mother, Duchess, she warns him that there are good men in the world—but there are also bad and ignorant men. This sets up some of the novel's main ideas about horse care, good, and evil. There are good men, who are men such as Farmer Grey, Squire Gordon, and Jerry Barker. These men are dedicated to giving their horses the best care possible. They're kind, they know what they're doing, and this in turn means that their horses are proud to work for them and do their best—even when the work itself is extremely hard, as the cab work with Jerry is.

Then, there are the purposefully cruel men. Black Beauty experiences relatively few of these, so Ginger's stories offer readers the most insight into what cruel men are like. Cruel men, like Samson, trained Ginger to be afraid of people by using cruel bits and whips on her, and by never giving her a chance to learn that people can be kind and good. This turns Ginger into a touchy and, at times, dangerous horse, as she's learned to bite and kick to protect herself.

Finally, there are ignorant men who simply don't know what they're doing—and as Black Beauty goes on to discover, these men do the most harm. Mr. Barry, for instance, doesn't realize Black Beauty's stall must be properly cleaned out daily and that standing in his own waste causes Black Beauty to contract a fungal infection in his hooves. When Black Beauty works as a job-horse, he learns that careless men don't realize horses can get stones in their hooves, and one such man causes Black Beauty immense pain by not realizing he got a stone caught in his hoof. And while that man doesn't much care for Black Beauty's welfare, the fact that Joe Green causes Black Beauty to fall seriously ill because he doesn't know how to cool Black Beauty down properly after hard work makes an important point: that ignorant men can be flippant and careless just as easily as they can want to do the right thing for their horse. Both cause immense harm, all because they don't know how to properly care for a horse.

Chapter 6 Quotes

❝ Then as soon as we were out of the village, he would give me a few miles at a spanking trot, and then bring me back as fresh as before, only clear of the fidgets, as he called them. Spirited horses, when not enough exercised, are often called skittish, when it is only play; and some grooms will punish them, but our John did not, he knew it was only high spirits.

Related Characters: Black Beauty/The Narrator (speaker), John Manly

Related Themes:

Page Number: 27

Explanation and Analysis

Black Beauty explains how at Birtwick, he doesn't have the time running loose in a field that he was used to as a colt. To keep him fresh and from getting bored (and potentially dangerous) after standing in a stall all day, John takes Black Beauty on trots so he can get some energy out.

In this passage, Black Beauty subtly highlights the difference between experienced horsepeople and their ignorant counterparts, and how they see a fidgety horse differently. In general, horses don't do well when they stand in a stall all day. Being in a stall all the time can be detrimental to a horse's health, can cause them to develop bad habits to keep themselves entertained, and can also cause them to act out when they are finally ridden or driven again—which is what John refers to here as the "fidgets." So part of being a good horseperson, the novel suggests, is recognizing that horses require exercise and making sure they get it. But more than that, Black Beauty makes it clear that a horse who's spent some time in a stall is likely going to come out excitable and hot, but this doesn't mean the horse is misbehaving or even skittish. And it definitely doesn't mean a horse should be punished, as Black Beauty is very direct about the fact that at least in his case, he's not misbehaving—he just has far too much energy to keep all his feet on the ground. Indeed, he suggests it means that a horse has energy they need to work off in a safe, directed way, such as with the several-mile trots that John takes Black Beauty on.

Chapter 7 Quotes

❝ "But when it came to breaking in, that was a bad time for me; several men came to catch me, and when at last they closed me in at one corner of the field, one caught me by the fore-lock, another caught me by the nose, and held it so tight I could hardly draw my breath; then another took my under jaw in his hard hand and wrenched my mouth open, and so by force they got on the halter and the bar into my mouth; then one dragged me along by the halter, another flogging behind, and this was the first experience I had of men's kindness, it was all force; they did not give me a chance to know what they wanted."

Related Characters: Ginger (speaker), Mr. Ryder, Samson, Black Beauty/The Narrator

Related Themes:

Page Number: 30

Explanation and Analysis

Ginger is telling Black Beauty about her first experience with people at the beginning of her breaking-in process. Up to this point she's been in a field with other young horses, and she's already decided she can't trust people because boys throw stones at them.

The language Ginger uses is extremely violent, and it shows how the men capturing her want only to lord their power over her. They pull her hair (when they grab her by the

forelock), restrict her breathing, and force her mouth open—all things that her language implies cause pain and make her more afraid. Black Beauty already described how unpleasant it is for a horse to be taught gently how to take a bit, but Ginger shows that being forced to take a bit in these conditions was downright traumatizing. The bit, in Ginger's first experience, is a way for the men to subjugate and hurt her, not communicate with her. Then, as she describes being dragged and whipped forward, she implies that she didn't yet know how to lead. But rather than teach her, these men scare her and hurt her to make her comply. Again, this reveals their true purpose: frightening her into behaving. Ginger, though, suggests that there was no good way for her to behave, even if she'd wanted to. Because the men don't give her a chance to think things through or figure out what they want, she's essentially always doing what they *don't* want her to do—and they use this as justification to hit her more. So it makes sense that Ginger uses a heavy dose of bitter sarcasm when she mentions "men's kindness" here. Men, in her experience, *aren't* kind. They just want power, and are willing to hurt animals to gain more.

Chapter 10 Quotes

"They healed in time, and they forgot the pain, but the nice soft flap that of course was intended to protect the delicate part of their ears from dust and injury was gone for ever. Why don't they cut their own children's ears into points to make them look sharp? Why don't they cut the end off of their noses to make them look plucky? One would be just as sensible as the other. What right have they to torment and disfigure God's creatures?"

Related Characters: Sir Oliver (speaker), Black Beauty/The Narrator, Ginger, Justice

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 49

Explanation and Analysis

Sir Oliver is telling Black Beauty, Ginger, and Justice about puppies who had their ears and tails cut off for fashion. Docking the puppies' ears and tails, Sir Oliver insists, represents human selfishness and conceit, and ignores how animals' bodies were designed to function. Dogs' ears in particular serve a purpose when they fold over: they protect the inner ear. Without that, these puppies have no way to protect their bodies—so losing their ear flaps might make them look "plucky," but per Sir Oliver, it does nothing for the dogs themselves.

Sir Oliver highlights how pointless docking puppies' ears and tails is by suggesting that people begin modifying their children's bodies in painful ways. This is intended to be shocking. Why, the novel asks, will readers recoil when it's suggested that parents injure their children for fashion, but not when fashion dictates that dogs must suffer immense pain? As far as Sir Oliver is concerned, both are pointless and just cause unnecessary pain. Referring to it as "torment[ing] and disfigure[ing] God's creatures" highlights the novel's insistence that God made animals with the body parts they need to do their respective jobs well—and removing those body parts, as when people remove dogs' ears or a horse's tail, should be seen as something cruel and senseless, not fashionable.

Chapter 11 Quotes

"I must say, Mr Sawyer, that more unmanly, brutal treatment of a little pony it was never my painful lot to witness; and by giving way to such passions you injure your own character as much, nay more, than you injure your horse, and remember, we shall all have to be judged according to our works, whether they be towards man or towards beast."

Related Characters: Squire Gordon (speaker), Black Beauty/The Narrator

Related Themes:

Page Number: 56

Explanation and Analysis

When Squire Gordon encounters a neighbor jerking cruelly on his pony's mouth, he reprimands Mr. Sawyer. Squire Gordon makes the case that by abusing his pony like this, Mr. Sawyer isn't just causing pain to the pony. Rather, he's making himself look terrible—such as to Squire Gordon, who now may be less likely to hire or help Mr. Sawyer after witnessing this. Then, Squire Gordon also crystallizes the novel's insistence that what makes a person good is what they do, not what they think or believe. So Mr. Sawyer will have to answer for his uncharitable actions—and people who stand up for the rights of others, like Squire Gordon does by calling Mr. Sawyer out, is a better person because he says something. This is an idea that the novel expands on as it progresses, as it highlights several people who stand up and say something when they see horses being abused. Those people, within the novel's moral and religious framework, are good and virtuous.

Chapter 13 Quotes

❝ "[…] but what stuck in my mind was this, he said that cruelty was the devil's own trade mark, and if we saw any one who took pleasure in cruelty, we might know who he belonged to, for the devil was a murderer from the beginning, and a tormentor to the end. On the other hand, where we saw people who loved their neighbours, and were kind to man and beast, we might know that was God's mark, for 'God is Love.'"

Related Characters: James Howard (speaker), John Manly, Mrs. W, Seedy Sam

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 66-67

Explanation and Analysis

James is telling John about how, when he was in school, the schoolmaster once lectured the boys on cruelty and evil. What the schoolmaster says about good and evil forms the basis of the novel's religious outlook. People, per the novel, who enjoy being mean to others are bad; those who love others and seek to serve and help people and animals are virtuous and appropriately religious. This offers another lens to look at the bearing rein, as at Black Beauty and Ginger's next home, Mrs. W insists her horses wear bearing reins. It's how she looks fashionable—she likes how the horses look with their heads cranked up, so by James's logic, she's not a good person. She's causing the horses pain and yet she doesn't care. But James's breakdown of good and evil also helps readers see later that the cab drivers like Seedy Sam aren't as bad as someone like Mrs. W. Sam makes it clear that he doesn't whip his horse because he thinks it's fun; rather, he does so because he must in order to earn enough money to survive. So he exists somewhere in the middle, as he's not being cruel for sport, but he's also not being kind to his horse.

Chapter 19 Quotes

❝ "Well, John! thank you, I knew you did not wish to be too hard, and I am glad you see it was only ignorance."

John's voice almost startled me as he answered, "*Only* ignorance! only *ignorance*! how can you talk about *only* ignorance? Don't you know that it is the worst thing in the world, next to wickedness?—and which does the most mischief, heaven only knows. If people can say, 'Oh, I did not know, I did not mean any harm,' they think it is all right. I suppose Martha Mulwash did not mean to kill that baby, when she dosed it with Dalby, and soothing syrups; but she did kill it, and was tried for manslaughter."

Related Characters: Tom Green, John Manly (speaker), Joe Green, Black Beauty/The Narrator

Related Themes:

Page Number: 94-95

Explanation and Analysis

Tom, Joe Green's father, is trying to convince John to be kind to Joe after Joe causes Black Beauty to fall ill. Joe didn't mean to harm Black Beauty; as Joe says, what he did to Black Beauty he only did out of "ignorance." John, though, insists forcefully that ignorance is no excuse for doing harm to another person. Both ignorance and purposeful cruelty, he suggests, do terrible things to people and animals; this is why he insists he can't say which does the most "mischief."

To illustrate his point, John brings up the woman Martha Mulwash and how her ignorance caused her to kill her baby. Dalby likely refers to a home remedy marketed in the Victorian era as Dalby's Carminative; it contained a concentrated dose of opium and was widely administered to babies and children for all sorts of ailments, from fussiness to teething to diarrhea. Soothing syrups usually contained alcohol and morphine, but were also often given to children. The implication is that no knowledgeable parent would administer these "remedies" to their child—and yet, parents like Ms. Mulwash continue to give these remedies to their children, and their children continue to die. John insists (and Tom goes on to agree) that it was right for Ms. Mulwash to suffer the consequences she did—the fact remains that she killed her baby, even if she did so because she didn't know how dangerous the medicine was. The same, John suggests, should go for Joe. He doesn't get let off the hook just because he didn't mean to cause Black Beauty harm. While John doesn't go so far as to suggest that Joe should be jailed or face criminal charges for making Black Beauty ill, he nevertheless remains firm that it'd do Joe a disservice—and would harm society as a whole—if he told Joe that

everything was fine.

Chapter 22 Quotes

"York came round to our heads and shortened the rein himself, one hole, I think; every little makes a difference, be it for better or worse, and that day we had a steep hill to go up. Then I began to understand what I had heard of. Of course I wanted to put my head forward and take the carriage up with a will, as we had been used to; but no, I had to pull with my head up now, and that took all the spirit out of me, and the strain came on my back and legs.

Related Characters: Black Beauty/The Narrator (speaker), Ginger, Mr. York, Mrs. W

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 111

Explanation and Analysis

Black Beauty describes the sensation of pulling the carriage up the hill with a tight bearing rein, a device that Mrs. W (and much of Victorian society) finds fashionable. The bearing rein holds a horse's head in an uncomfortably high position, and as Black Beauty explains here, it keeps them from using their body most effectively to pull a load. Horses pull best, particularly up hills, when they're able to put their heads forward and down—but the bearing rein prevents them from pulling in this position. Unable to use their bodies correctly, horses experience the strain and the pain that Black Beauty describes in this passage.

While Black Beauty spends most of the passage talking about the physical effects of the bearing rein, note that he also insists it takes his "spirit" out of him. This suggests that being forced to work with the bearing rein is making him feel less positive about his life—indeed, he's learning that he can't trust the people who own and care for him to protect him and ensure his health. He no longer enjoys his work, as he's not doing what his body is supposed to do.

Chapter 23 Quotes

"I was at a dealer's once, who was training me and another horse to go as a pair; he was getting our heads up, as he said, a little higher and a little higher every day. A gentleman who was there asked him why he did so; 'Because,' said he, 'people won't buy them unless we do. The London people always want their horses to carry their heads high, and to step high; of course it is very bad for the horses, but then it is good for trade. The horses soon wear up, or get diseased, and they come for another pair.'"

Related Characters: Max (speaker), Black Beauty/The Narrator, Ginger, Mr. York, Mrs. W

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 115-116

Explanation and Analysis

After York refuses to drive Ginger anymore following her breaking a bunch of harness, he replaces her with Max. Max is a young horse with lots of experience with the bearing rein and with horse dealers, so he's able to give Black Beauty new insight into how people think about bearing reins. What Max describes in this passage is essentially that in Victorian England, horses are expendable. It doesn't matter to most people, the horse dealer Max quotes suggests, that the bearing rein is bad for a horse's health and causes them to wear out—rather, this is a good thing, because the horse dealers can make more money selling more horses. This view completely ignores that horses are animals that, the novel insists, deserve dignity, comfort, and compassion just like people do. It reduces them to inanimate objects without thoughts and feelings of their own—and it shows that horses are victims in a much larger system that prioritizes fashion over their wellbeing.

Chapter 27 Quotes

"And so," she said, "here we are—ruined in the prime of our youth and strength—you by a drunkard, and I by a fool; it is very hard."

Related Characters: Ginger (speaker), Black Beauty/The Narrator, Lord George, Reuben Smith

Related Themes:

Page Number: 136

Explanation and Analysis

Ginger has just joined Black Beauty in a field at Earlshall to recover after having her back badly strained; Black Beauty is there because of the fall he took with Reuben Smith that severely damaged Black Beauty's knees and hoof. Ginger takes aim at two types of people the novel insists are particularly bad. People addicted to alcohol, the novel proposes, aren't in control of their actions—and alcohol encourages them to do cruel, senseless things. This was the case when Smith thought it was a fine idea to gallop Black Beauty over sharp cobblestones without a shoe; grooms noted that, sober, Smith would've never thought such behavior was acceptable. Alcohol, per the novel, can make otherwise fine people be cruel and neglectful of their horses. Ginger, on the other hand, was ruined by Lord George, a too-heavy and inexperienced rider who pushed Ginger too hard despite warnings that he was hurting her. This is something the novel characterizes as foolishness and selfishness, as Lord George seemingly didn't know enough—but also thought too highly of himself—to do right by Ginger.

The actions of these two men, Ginger notes, have "ruined" both her and Black Beauty. Saying a horse is "ruined" implies that they can't work, which makes a horse vulnerable in Victorian England, where the whole point of a horse is to work. Ultimately, neither Black Beauty nor Ginger turn out to be ruined entirely, but their respective injuries do mean they're no longer welcome in wealthy people's stables, where they'd be safe and well cared for.

Chapter 28 Quotes

"Well, to be sure!" said my driver, "that is a queer thing! I never knew that horses picked up stones before!"

"Didn't you?" said the farmer, rather contemptuously; "but they do, though, and the best of them will do it, and can't help it sometimes on such roads as these. And if you don't want to lame your horse, you must look sharp and get them out quickly. This foot is very much bruised," he said, setting it down gently and patting me.

Related Characters: Black Beauty/The Narrator

Related Themes:

Page Number: 142

Explanation and Analysis

Black Beauty is now working as a job-horse; he's sharing an anecdote about a careless "loose-rein driver" who didn't realize Black Beauty had picked up a stone in his hoof. As Black Beauty and the farmer explain, picking up stones can be painful and dangerous for horses, as the stones can bruise the bottom of a horse's hoof and even cause cuts in some circumstances. What's most notable about this passage, though, is that Black Beauty's driver had no idea this was the case—or that horses could pick up stones at all. So essentially, this man is out driving horses with absolutely no understanding of how to care for his horse. Black Beauty—or whatever horse the man is driving—is the one who suffers.

Black Beauty also makes it clear that he couldn't tell his driver himself what was going on. He had to wait for the man to notice, and it was just coincidence that the farmer happened to pass and be willing to help Black Beauty by removing the stone. This highlights how powerless Black Beauty is, as he doesn't have speech to communicate with people. But it also suggests that it's essential that people take the farmer's choice to stop and say something as an example—this reinforces the novel's insistence that when a person can, they must stand up for those with less power.

Chapter 34 Quotes

I said, "I have heard people talk about war as if it was a very fine thing."

"Ah!" said he, "I should think they never saw it. No doubt it is very fine when there is no enemy, when it is just exercise and parade, and sham-fight. Yes, it is very fine then; but when thousands of good brave men and horses are killed, or crippled for life, it has a very different look."

"Do you know what they fought about?" said I.

"No," he said, "that is more than a horse can understand, but the enemy must have been awfully wicked people, if it was right to go all that way over the sea on purpose to kill them."

Related Characters: Black Beauty/The Narrator, Captain (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 180

Explanation and Analysis

Captain has just finished telling Black Beauty about his time fighting in the Crimean War, specifically about the Charge of the Light Brigade. Captain describes in detail how horrific war was, something Black Beauty finds interesting, since he's heard war described very differently. But Captain insists that war is only a good thing when it's pretend—but

it's not at all a good thing when it's senselessly taking the lives of horses and people. In this way, the novel frames war much like it frames foxhunting: as something pointless that people continue to engage in, even as it keeps killing and hurting horses and their riders.

Captain also highlights how powerless horses are when it comes to the kind of conflicts that people drag them into. Because he's a horse, he's not privy to the various political happenings that made the Ottoman Empire, Britain, and France go to war with Russia during the Crimean War. Indeed, he doesn't even name the aggressors in the conflict; he only names the place where the fighting took place. However, he presents a perhaps overly rosy view of people's reasoning when he insists that the enemy must've been wicked. There were numerous small causes for the war, some of which are straightforward (such as the conflicts between the Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church), but others that are now considered murky and questionable. And despite this, the Crimean War—and the Charge of the Light Brigade in particular—was extremely bloody.

Chapter 35 Quotes

"Well," said Larry, "*you'll* never be a rich man."

"Most likely not," said Jerry, "but I don't know that I shall be the less happy for that. I have heard the commandments read a great many times, and I never noticed that any of them said, 'Thou shalt be rich'; and there are a good many curious things said in the New Testament about rich men, that I think would make me feel rather queer if I was one of them."

Related Characters: Jerry Barker (speaker), Black Beauty/The Narrator

Related Themes:

Page Number: 187

Explanation and Analysis

While Jerry is chatting with the other men on the stand and defending an earlier choice to turn down extra money for getting a man to the train station faster, he agrees that he's not interested in getting rich. Larry means his comment that Jerry will never be rich as an insult—but Jerry doesn't find this insulting at all. Rather, he shows how religious and how virtuous he is by insisting that "curious" things are said about and happen to wealthy people in the Bible. He's not specific, but wealthy people in the New Testament who try to hide their wealth or do selfish things with it are sometimes punished or threatened with punishment—Jerry seems to want to avoid spiritual punishment that might result from becoming a rich man in life.

However, it's worth noting that compared to some of his peers on the stand, Jerry is relatively well-off. And he's able to use his wealth and his privilege to follow several other of the Bible's main teachings, and in particular, he follows the commandment to take Sunday as a day of rest.

Chapter 36 Quotes

"I read that God made man, and He made horses and all the other beasts, and as soon as He had made them, He made a day of rest, and bade that all should rest one day in seven; and I think, sir, He must have known what was good for them, and I am sure it is good for me; I am stronger and healthier altogether, now that I have a day of rest; the horses are fresh too, and do not wear up nearly so fast."

Related Characters: Jerry Barker (speaker), Mr. and Mrs. Briggs

Related Themes:

Page Number: 190

Explanation and Analysis

When Mr. Briggs approaches Jerry about hiring him to drive his wife to church on Sundays, Jerry refuses, citing that he intends to take his God-given day of rest. Jerry tries to convince Mr. Briggs on multiple fronts that it's a good idea for people to take a day of rest. Jerry is a very spiritual man, and he takes the Bible's teachings very seriously, so to him, it's a no-brainer that God intended that all people have a day to rest and recuperate. And in Jerry's lived experience, he's discovered that giving himself a day to recover every week has improved his health and his outlook.

Jerry also shows how much he cares about his horses when he includes them in the beings who need a day of God-given rest. They too are healthier when they get a chance to rest their bodies, rather than being out seven days per week pounding their hooves and legs on the hard cobblestones. With this, Jerry insists that horses deserve dignity—and rest in particular—just as much as any person does.

"'Tis not for me to lay down plans for other people," said Jerry, "but if they can't walk so far, they can go to what is nearer; and if it should rain they can put on their mackintoshes as they do on a week-day. If a thing is right, it *can* be done, and if it is wrong, it *can be done without*; and a good man will find a way; and that is as true for us cabmen as it is for the church-goers."

Related Characters: Jerry Barker (speaker), Black Beauty/The Narrator

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 194

Explanation and Analysis

Jerry has suggested that the Sunday cabmen strike for a day of rest and let the people who hire cabs on Sundays figure out on their own what to do about losing this transportation option.

As Jerry sees it, the wealthy folks who hire cabs to get to faraway churches on Sundays are, perhaps, not the most morally upstanding people. They selfishly prioritize their own desires to get to specific churches over what Jerry insists at various points is the cabmen's God-given right to a day of rest. Forcing them to figure out what to do when they can no longer deprive other men of what the novel suggests they deserve will, Jerry believes, divide out the wealthy people into two categories: the good people who choose to either get themselves to their preferred churches or attend closer ones, and those who pitch fits about not being able to put themselves first. This is why Jerry says that correct things can be done—he knows that the Sunday drivers' regular customers can come up with some solution to no longer having a cab.

However, Jerry suggests that the cab drivers are at fault too in the current scenario. Saying that it's true for cabmen, too, that correct things can be done and wrong things can be done without suggests that Jerry believes driving on Sundays is wrong—and if cabmen strike for better working conditions and a day of rest, they will be able to go without it. But the implication is also that nobody is going to give the cabmen Sundays off if they don't organize and advocate for a six-day workweek; they must make a fuss first or nothing is going to change.

Chapter 38 Quotes

"Do you know why this world is as bad as it is?"

"No," said the other.

"Then I'll tell you. It is because people think *only* about their own business, and won't trouble themselves to stand up for the oppressed, nor bring the wrong-doer to light. […]"

"My doctrine is this, that if we see cruelty or wrong that we have the power to stop, and do nothing, we make ourselves sharers in the guilt."

Related Characters: The Gentleman (speaker), Jerry Barker, Black Beauty/The Narrator, John Manly

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 204

Explanation and Analysis

One of Jerry's customers, the gentleman, has chastised a drunken carter for abusing his horses and has taken down the cart's address to report it to the authorities. He's explaining to his friend why he's getting involved at all.

The gentleman insists that the world is so terrible because people don't look out for each other. They selfishly think only of themselves, and this makes it far more difficult for "the oppressed" (whether they be human or animal) to succeed and find happiness. With this, the gentleman reframes what John Manly said earlier when he insisted it's selfish to only look out for number one. It's a person's responsibility, both John and the gentleman suggest, to stand up for and help others whenever they can. If they don't, the gentleman insists, they're not the good, upstanding people they thought they were.

In turn, this ties in with the novel's insistence that a person's relative goodness is connected to what a person does, rather than what they think or how they see themselves. According to the novel, it's not enough to believe that people shouldn't whip and abuse their horses, or that bearing reins are bad. Just thinking those thoughts doesn't make a person good. What makes them good is doing good things for other people and animals.

Chapter 39 Quotes

"[…] and I say 'tis a mockery to tell a man that he must not overwork his horse, for when a beast is downright tired, there's nothing but the whip that will keep his legs agoing—you can't help yourself—you must put your wife and children before the horse, the masters must look to that, we can't. I don't ill-use my horse for the sake of it; none of you can say I do. There's wrong lays somewhere—never a day's rest—never a quiet hour with the wife and children."

Related Characters: Seedy Sam (speaker), Jerry Barker, Governor Grant, Black Beauty/The Narrator

Related Themes:

Page Number: 207

Explanation and Analysis

Governor Grant has suggested that Seedy Sam's horse is in poor enough shape to warrant criminal charges against Sam—but Sam is explaining why he's not actually the one Governor Grant should be upset with. Prior to this, Sam laid out how much he has to earn each day to cover the cost of renting the horse, an exorbitant amount.

Sam essentially insists that he's a victim of a much larger system, though he acknowledges that the horse suffers, too. But he proposes that because he has to make so much money for the privilege of renting the horse, he has no choice but to abuse the horse and push it to its limit—even if that means whipping an exhausted horse. The person at fault, as Sam sees it, is his boss, the one who charges him so much to rent the horse. The cruelty, essentially, rolls downhill: the boss is cruel and places ridiculous expectations on Sam, and Sam has to then behave in much the same way to the horse in order to make enough money to feed his family. He doesn't *want* to be whipping and abusing his horse; it's just what he has to do. This redeems Sam's character and his virtue, as the novel stated earlier that true evil occurs when people enjoy being cruel—and Sam is emphatic that that's not what he's doing.

Sam also insists that he needs a day off, and that the fact that he can't have one means he's being abused almost as much as the horse. The novel, on the whole, is adamant that horses and people all deserve a day to rest, recuperate, and attend religious services if they're so inclined; Sam can't do this because he has to work every day to make ends meet. He also doesn't get to spend any time with his family. So Sam makes it clear that while he knows he's doing a bad thing by whipping his horse, targeting him won't solve anything. Rather, if people want to change cab work for the better, they must go after the people above him, the ones who make the job so miserable and difficult.

Chapter 40 Quotes

I said, "You used to stand up for yourself if you were ill-used."

"Ah!" she said, "I did once, but it's no use; men are strongest, and if they are cruel and have no feeling, there is nothing that we can do, but just bear it, bear it on and on to the end. I wish the end was come, I wish I was dead. I have seen dead horses, and I am sure they do not suffer pain. I wish I may drop down dead at my work, and not be sent off to the knacker's."

Related Characters: Black Beauty/The Narrator, Ginger (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 211-12

Explanation and Analysis

Black Beauty has reconnected with Ginger, who's pulling a cab for a cruel driver seven days per week—and will be driven hard until she dies or can't go anymore. She's lost all her spirit, something Black Beauty finds extremely disturbing.

Ginger suggests that the men ruling her life right now are "strongest," and also have no feeling. So while she now believes that men are always strong, she also implies that if men aren't cruel and unfeeling, they can be kind—but this isn't the case for her anymore. With this, she links her loss of spirit to men's cruelty. Against a cruel man, Ginger now believes she's powerless. The only thing she can do is hope to die. And her reason for this—because she believes that dead horses don't feel pain—indicates that she is in pain right now, so much pain that death seems like a better alternative. She also hopes for a dignified burial, which is what she means when she says she doesn't want to be sent off to the knacker's. Knackers process animal carcasses into byproducts, like gelatin and bone meal, and she insists that that fate doesn't honor the fact that she's spent her life in the service of men. The least they can do, she suggests, is honor her body when she's gone.

Chapter 44 Quotes

The drayman was proved to be very drunk, and was fined, and the brewer had to pay damages to our master; but there was no one to pay damages to poor Captain.

Related Characters: Black Beauty/The Narrator (speaker), Jerry Barker, Captain

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 228

Explanation and Analysis

Captain and Jerry were in a collision with a runaway dray driven by a drunk drayman; a piece of one of the vehicles injured Captain so badly that Jerry ultimately ends up euthanizing him. This passage highlights that while there are legal safeguards in place to protect people and property after accidents like this, there's nothing to protect Captain. Since he's a horse, Captain is considered property, not a being in his own right—so though Jerry will no doubt be compensated for Captain and his broken cab, Captain gets nothing out of the bargain.

Horses, this passage shows, are extremely powerless. They're not only in the streets pulling vehicles, where they're at risk of drunken draymen like this one. They're also the victims of most of the damage when accidents happen or when things go wrong. Indeed, though Captain recovers somewhat from this ordeal, Jerry finds that his only options are to sell Captain for carting (which he knows is a death sentence) or to euthanize Captain humanely himself. This is one of many instances in the novel when a horse dies because of an accident caused by a careless person—and every time this happens, the novel insists, it's a tragedy.

Chapter 45 Quotes

❝ Christmas and the New Year are very merry times for some people; but for cabmen and cabmen's horses it is no holiday, though it may be a harvest. There are so many parties, balls, and places of amusement open, that the work is hard and often late. Sometimes driver and horse have to wait for hours in the rain or frost, shivering with cold, whilst the merry people within are dancing away to the music. I wonder if the beautiful ladies ever think of the weary cabman waiting on his box, and his patient beast standing, till his legs get stiff with cold.

Related Characters: Black Beauty/The Narrator (speaker), Jerry Barker

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 233

Explanation and Analysis

As the holiday season rolls around, Black Beauty warns readers that this isn't a happy time for cabmen and their horses. From the outset, this encourages readers to think about class. Some people—such as the wealthy "beautiful ladies"—can enjoy parties, balls, and other entertainment during the season, and only have to walk the brief distance from the cab to the door in inclement weather. Cabmen, on the other hand, have no such luxury: their need to earn a living means that they're required to work these days and work the same hours as the wealthy people spend partying. There's money to earn, which is what Black Beauty means when he says that the season can be a "harvest," but it's nevertheless difficult, dangerous work because of the cold. Black Beauty has noted before that cabmen don't have anywhere to seek shelter, which means that they're standing in the weather until the parties are over—their need for money, and the rich's need for transportation to and from these parties, trumps the driver's need to be warm and indoors. And it's no picnic for the horse, either, as Black Beauty's description of his stiff and cold legs suggests. Worst of all, though, is that Black Beauty suspects that the "beautiful ladies" *don't* ever think of the cabman and his horse. Like so many wealthy and entitled people in the novel, Black Beauty suspects the ladies see cabs and horses as smaller steam engines that go and go and never get tired. Black Beauty makes it abundantly clear that this isn't the case.

Chapter 46 Quotes

❝ "Is it not better," she said, "to lead a good fashion, than to follow a bad one? A great many gentlemen do not use bearing reins now; our carriage horses have not worn them for fifteen years, and work with much less fatigue than those who have them; besides," she added, in a very serious voice, "we have no right to distress any of God's creatures without a very good reason; we call them dumb animals, and so they are, for they cannot tell us how they feel, but they do not suffer less because they have no words."

Related Characters: The Lady (speaker), Jakes, Black Beauty/The Narrator

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 246

Explanation and Analysis

Jakes was whipping Black Beauty—who's wearing a bearing rein and trying to pull a too-heavy load up a hill—when the

lady stopped him, asked him to take the bearing rein off, and walked with them both up the hill. Now, she's lecturing Jakes, as he insists he can't just not use a bearing rein, because he wants to look fashionable.

The lady begins by insisting that fashion, at least when it comes to something like the bearing rein, isn't moral. It's a "bad" fashion, as it causes the horse pain and means they wear out faster (it strains a horse's back, neck, and respiratory system). She suggests the better thing for Jakes to do would be to follow a "good fashion," by which she just means that Jakes should copy the wealthy gentlemen she mentions and stop using the bearing rein. Essentially, she suggests that times are changing and Jakes would be a better person for being on the front end of that change. This, of course, ignores the immense pressure Jakes is under to fit in with the carters, which is why he doesn't feel like he can just ditch the bearing rein.

Then, the lady makes the case that people are immensely powerful. And with great power, essentially, comes great responsibility—especially where "dumb animals" who cannot advocate for themselves are concerned. (Dumb, in this context, simply means that they don't have human intelligence or speech.) And it's exactly because animals can't talk and can't help themselves, the lady suggests, that people—the ones with the power to be kind or cruel—should always choose kindness when they can.

Black Beauty is written from the horse's perspective—so in a way, it offers readers a chance to listen to a horse. It offers a horse some power to encourage readers to be empathetic and understand the kind of strain horses in the Victorian era work under every day. But the real author, of course, is human. So Anna Sewell essentially positions her book as a way for her to speak for horses and promote kindness and gentleness, all by encouraging people to step into a horse's mind and see what his daily life is really like.

Chapter 47 Quotes

❝ "He had a cruel whip with something so sharp at the end that it sometimes drew blood, and he would even whip me under the belly, and flip the lash out at my head. Indignities like these took the heart out of me terribly, but still I did my best and never hung back; for, as poor Ginger said, it was no use; men are the strongest.

Related Characters: Black Beauty/The Narrator (speaker), Nicholas Skinner, Ginger

Related Themes:

Page Number: 249

Explanation and Analysis

Black Beauty is now owned by Nicholas Skinner, a cruel cab owner who rents horses and cabs to men like the driver Black Beauty describes in this passage. Though Black Beauty also describes being overworked and underfed when he describes his time with Skinner, he makes it clear in this passage that what really eats away at his will to live is the cruel way his driver treats him. It's totally unnecessary, he suggests, to use such a painful whip—and to use the whip on such sensitive areas as his belly and his face. This gives Black Beauty no reason to keep going aside from avoiding pain, and throughout the novel, Black Beauty has insisted time and again that kindness will encourage a horse to work much more effectively than a painful whip. The whip also shows Black Beauty that men aren't his friends anymore. They won't protect him; indeed, they'll abuse him and even work him to death if it means they're able to make a living. Ginger died soon after expressing this sentiment to Black Beauty, so echoing it here highlights how close to death Black Beauty is—mostly because of how cruelly he's treated.

Chapter 48 Quotes

❝ There were poor men trying to sell a worn-out beast for two or three pounds, rather than have the greater loss of killing him. Some of them looked as if poverty and hard times had hardened them all over; but there were others that I would have willingly used the last of my strength in serving; poor and shabby, but kind and human, with voices that I could trust.

Related Characters: Black Beauty/The Narrator (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 254

Explanation and Analysis

Black Beauty is at the horse sale where Mr. Thoroughgood is ultimately going to purchase him, observing the most worn-down horses and the poorest human attendees. As he has before, Black Beauty highlights how poverty and desperation can sometimes keep people from doing the most humane things for their animals. The implication here is that it'd perhaps be kinder and more humane for the poor men trying to sell their horses to euthanize them instead. But because the men are so poor, they simply can't afford to do so. The few pounds they might earn from selling their horse is more important, and more essential, than merciful euthanasia.

Then, Black Beauty observes that poverty affects people in different ways. Poverty, he suggests, causes some people to become greedy and cruel, so that they can get as much out of people and animals as they can and earn as much money as possible. These people are, perhaps, not entirely to blame—the class system, and what seems like a lacking social safety net, doesn't help things. But Black Beauty notices that not all poor men at the sale have lost their humanity and their capacity to be kind to beings with even less power. Black Beauty implies that the hard poor men are the sort who will work him until he either dies or winds up back at the sale like the horses he describes who should be put down instead of being sold again, while the "kind and human" men are those who are more likely to take the loss of putting Black Beauty down to save him further suffering.

Chapter 49 Quotes

"You see, ladies," said Mr Thoroughgood, "many first-rate horses have had their knees broken through the carelessness of their drivers, without any fault of their own, and from what I see of this horse, I should say that is his case: but of course I do not wish to influence you."

Related Characters: Mr. Thoroughgood (speaker), Black Beauty/The Narrator, Miss Lavinia, Miss Ellen, Miss Blomefield, Reuben Smith

Related Themes:

Page Number: 260

Explanation and Analysis

When Mr. Thoroughgood presents Black Beauty to three ladies as a safe driving horse, Miss Lavinia objects to Black Beauty's scarred knees—she's afraid he'll fall down again and won't be safe. In his response, Mr. Thoroughgood makes it clear that in his opinion, most horses with scarred knees aren't the ones who deserve blame. Rather, it's careless and ignorant drivers who are the problem. He, of course, has no way of knowing that this is exactly the case with Black Beauty: Reuben Smith damaged Black Beauty's knees when he rode him over sharp cobblestones without one of his shoes, causing Black Beauty to stumble at a gallop. More broadly, this implies that having scars on one's knees caused by falling down is a relatively common blemish for horses in the Victorian era to have—and as Black Beauty discovers, it makes him a less desirable horse when people consider purchasing a new one. He's powerless to advocate for himself and is particularly vulnerable to being purchased by someone who sees an unattractive horse as good for nothing except to be worked to death. Mr. Thoroughgood, for his part, seems unwilling to let that happen to Black Beauty, but other horses in Black Beauty's position, but without Mr. Thoroughgood's protection, would no doubt be worse off.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

The first place the narrator can remember is a big meadow with a clear pond and shady trees. On one side of a hedge is a farmer's field, and the master's house is on the other. As a young colt, the narrator lives on his mother's milk. But once he can eat grass, the narrator's mother—Duchess—begins going to work during the day. The narrator lives with six other, bigger colts in the meadow. They like to play rough, with biting and kicking. But one day, Duchess calls the narrator over and tells him the other colts are carthorses. The narrator is well-bred, and she hopes he'll grow up to be gentle and to never kick or bite. The narrator has never forgotten this advice.

The narrator's description of his early life is idyllic—he has a big field to run around in, fresh water, and shelter from the elements (in the form of the trees). He's innocent, at this point, to the fact that he's living a luxurious life; not all horses in the novel grow up in such ideal circumstances. Then, Duchess introduces the idea that class divisions exist among horses, just as among people. While the carthorses are coded as being working-class, the narrator is upper-class and should therefore behave better than his working-class counterparts.

The horses' master is a kind man and treats his horses like he treats his children. There's a plowboy named Dick, though, who sometimes eats blackberries from a hedge near the colts' field—and then throws rocks at the colts to make them gallop. The colts usually don't mind, though sometimes a stone hits them. But one day, the master catches Dick doing this. He boxes Dick's ears, scolds him, and fires him.

Dick throwing stones at the colts introduces the idea that not all people are as good and moral as the horses' master is. It's fun for Dick to cause the horses pain as he makes them run and entertain him. But the horses' master puts a stop to this. He won't stand for such cruelty and will use his power to stop Dick from ever hurting his horses like this again.

CHAPTER 2

When the narrator is almost two years old, something happens that he's never forgotten. It's early morning in early spring, and the quiet morning is interrupted by the baying of hounds. The colts rush to the top of the field, and Duchess explains that the dogs found a hare. Presently, the dogs swarm into the field next to the narrator's, baying. Many men on horseback gallop after them. The colts in the field wish they were galloping with the riding horses, but soon, the hunt moves down into a lower field. An old horse explains that the hounds have lost the scent of the hare.

The horses are witnessing a foxhunt, which entails riders and hounds chasing foxes or hares through farmland and jumping hedges or fences as necessary. At first, the narrator and the other colts are enchanted—running and jumping like this seems like great fun. But the way the narrator frames this passage (saying it's an event he's never forgotten, and using a sharper word like "interrupted" to describe the end of the quiet morning) creates a feeling of unease, like this is perhaps not as fun as the colts think it is.

Not long after, the dogs start baying again—and the hare rushes past Duchess, the old horse, and the colts, coming through a spot in the hedge that drops into a brook. The dogs follow, and behind them are the horses. Several men leap the hedge and follow the dogs, which catch the hare at the bottom of the field. The colts hear the hare shriek and watch as the horses and men arrive. One of the men whips the dogs and holds the bleeding dead hare up.

The hare's piercing death shriek, the men whipping the dogs, and the description of the bleeding hare contribute to the colts' growing understanding that hunting isn't actually so fun. It's extremely violent—and even those animals involved in the hunt, like the dogs, suffer pain and abuse (whipping) as part of the sport.

The narrator is so shocked by the sight that it takes a minute for him to realize that by the brook where the horses jumped, two horses are down—and one of the riders lies still. Duchess says the man's neck is broken and a colt says it serves the man right. The narrator agrees with the colt, but Duchess says she doesn't understand why men love hunting like this—it kills men and horses and tears up the fields. The horses watch as their master lifts the young man up, and the young man's head flops back. Even the dogs are quiet.

The hare's violent death was shocking, but what's even more shocking for the narrator is noticing who else ends up suffering: two horses and two people. Duchess proposes that men aren't rational, and it doesn't necessarily matter to hunters that they're doing something dangerous that can make life difficult for farmers (a hare and the pursuing dogs, for instance, won't necessarily avoid running through cultivated fields out of politeness).

Later, the narrator learns the dead man is George Gordon, Squire Gordon's only son. People ride in all directions and soon, a farrier arrives to check on the groaning black horse. Someone runs over with a gun—after a bang and a shriek, the horse is dead. This troubles Duchess, who explains the horse's name was Rob Roy. He was good and bold, and after this, she refuses to go to that part of the field. Days later, the colts hear the church bells tolling and watch Gordon's funeral procession. The narrator never learns what happened to Rob Roy's body. It was all for "one little hare."

The fact that Rob Roy is euthanized indicates that he was injured so badly that there was no chance of him healing, something that highlights how dangerous foxhunting can be for horses. And though Duchess is clearly grieving for Rob Roy, noting that nobody knows what happens to Rob Roy's body suggests that horses aren't given the same degree of respect as people are when they die. Finally, noting that Rob Roy, another horse, and a man died for "one little hare" suggests that their deaths were silly—and could've been easily prevented.

CHAPTER 3

As the narrator grows, he becomes a handsome young horse. He's black, with a white foot and a white star. His master won't sell him until he's four, as he believes that just as boys shouldn't work like men, colts shouldn't work like horses until they're adults. When the narrator turns four, Squire Gordon comes to examine him and says that once the narrator has been "broken in," he'll purchase him. The master decides to break the narrator in himself. They begin the next day.

Again, it's a sign of how compassionate the narrator's master is that he wants to give the narrator a chance to grow up before he learns to work like an adult horse (four years old is when horses are considered adults). It's also worth considering the implication that some young horses are forced to work like adults—but the narrator glossing over this implication suggests he's not fully aware yet of how privileged he is.

Breaking in, the narrator explains, is the process of teaching a horse to wear a saddle and bridle and carry people on their backs. Horses also learn to wear a harness and draw a cart or chaise behind them. They learn to never startle, kick, or bite—or indeed, "have any will of his own." Even if a horse is tired or hungry, he must obey his rider's bidding. The narrator's breaking in begins with being fitted for a bit and bridle. The bit is terrible—hard steel that goes in one's mouth, over the tongue and held tight by straps over the head. But since the narrator knows Duchess always wears one, and since the master offers the narrator tasty oats, he gets used to it. The saddle comes next, and soon the master starts riding the narrator around.

That horses should carry people around and pull carriages may seem normal to readers—but the narrator makes it clear that this isn't all fun and games for the horse. Indeed, being broken in essentially means that a horse learns to accept that it's entirely powerless. However, the narrator's master makes this as pleasant of an experience as possible by plying the narrator with treats. Undergoing this training makes the narrator into a useful animal who can provide much-needed transportation at a time when horses are the primary mode of transportation.

It's extremely unpleasant to be fitted with iron shoes. It doesn't hurt, so the narrator stands quietly as the shoes are nailed in—but his feet feel heavy afterward. The master breaks the narrator to the harness next, which means having to learn to wear blinkers. Blinkers make it so horses can only see forward. The worst part of the driving training, though, is the crupper—having his tail poked through a strap that attaches to a small saddle makes the narrator want to kick. Soon, though, the narrator can perform work as well as Duchess. The most advantageous part of the narrator's training, in retrospect, is that he spends a few weeks in a meadow with cows next to a railway. The train is terrifying at first—but soon, the narrator copies the cows and ignores it.

In describing the shoes, blinkers, and crupper, note that the narrator doesn't seem to understand why he must wear these things; they're just unavoidable annoyances. This highlights the narrator's powerless: the reason for anything uncomfortable is never explained to him. However, the narrator nevertheless acknowledges that learning to wear and do all these things does end up being useful—he implies that these things are advantageous, just not the most advantageous parts of his training. Rather, he suggests the most useful part of his training is learning not to fear new things. This makes him a safe horse, as he's less likely to jump in fear.

In the narrator's opinion, what he experienced is the best way to break in a young horse. The master often takes the narrator and Duchess out in the double harness so she can teach him how to drive well. On these drives, Duchess shares that the narrator will be better treated the better he behaves—but she also warns him that not all men are created equal. Some men are kind, while others are cruel. There are other men who are ignorant, vain, and careless. It's these men who spoil horses, just because they have no sense. Hopefully the narrator will end up in good hands, but horses have no control over where they end up. Still, the narrator should always do his best.

Duchess believes that while horses should do the best they can, they're also powerless. They have no control over who their owners are, and whether those owners are kind and compassionate like their current master, or whether they're cruel or ignorant. And interestingly, she suggests that it's the careless and ignorant men who do the most damage, rather than the outright cruel ones. This becomes one of the novel's main points, and it implies that for people who want to treat horses well, the best way to do that is to educate oneself on proper horse care.

CHAPTER 4

In early May, a man comes from Squire Gordon's to take the narrator to the Hall. Squire Gordon's Park is on the edge of Birtwick and is peppered with stands of trees, a few houses, and the main house and gardens. There are several stables. The one where the narrator lives has four stalls and is bright and airy. He's put into the first one, where he doesn't have to be tied and can move as he pleases. (The other stalls are the kind that horses are tied in.) The narrator eats the oats in his manger and then introduces himself to the fat gray pony in the next stall. The pony introduces himself as Merrylegs; he carries the young ladies and pulls a small cart. Merrylegs asks if the narrator bites—he doesn't want to live next to a biter. The narrator says he doesn't bite.

Already, Squire Gordon's estate seems like a great place for the narrator to live: the barns sound pleasant and well-appointed, the narrator's stall in particular. Noting that the oats are waiting for him also suggests that Squire Gordon cares for his horses' comfort and will ensure they're properly fed. And Merrylegs, at least, seems to echo Duchess in his belief that horses that bite and kick aren't as good as those that are perfectly behaved—he doesn't want to live next to a badly behaved horse.

At this, a chestnut mare pops her head over the wall of the stall next to Merrylegs. She spits that the narrator has evicted her from her stall. The narrator apologizes—he didn't mean to turn her out, and he just wants to be peaceful. When the mare is out of the barn later that afternoon, Merrylegs explains that the mare, Ginger, bites. When she inhabited the narrator's stall, she once bit James, the groom, so hard he bled. After that, the ladies, Miss Jessie and Miss Flora, were too afraid to enter the barn past Ginger's stall. Hopefully, Merrylegs says, the girls will come back now—if the narrator is gentle.

Between Ginger's introduction of herself and Merrylegs's explanation, Ginger gives the impression that she's an unpleasant and potentially dangerous horse to be around. At this point, Merrylegs doesn't give any sense of why Ginger is so mean. But notice Merrylegs's tone as he talks about Ginger: he clearly disapproves of her behavior. And especially when he talks about the ladies being afraid to enter the barn, he suggests his loyalty is to his young riders, not to other horses.

The narrator assures Merrylegs he only bites food, and he notes that he has no idea why Ginger likes biting. Merrylegs says she doesn't—it's just a bad habit. She was abused before she came here, and hopefully after some good treatment, she'll come around and stop biting. Merrylegs says he's 12, and he's therefore old and wise. This place, he says, is the best place for a horse. John is an excellent groom and James is extremely kind. It's Ginger's own fault, he insists, that she didn't get to keep her original stall.

Keep in mind that the narrator is still a young, naïve horse at this point. This is why he initially assumes that Ginger is biting for the fun of it. Merrylegs, though, insists there's a deeper reason for Ginger's behavior: she's learned that people are her enemies and she's afraid of them. Still, Merrylegs continues to blame Ginger for her own misfortune, suggesting that he's still not very sympathetic—whatever her reasons for biting.

CHAPTER 5

The coachman at the Hall is named John Manly. The morning after the narrator arrives, John grooms the narrator in the yard so Squire Gordon can inspect him. Squire Gordon asks John to take the narrator out to test his paces. Later, John carefully fits the narrator with a bridle and saddle. They walk, trot, canter, and then gallop. On their way back to the stable, they pass Squire Gordon and Mrs. Gordon walking. John says the narrator is a wonderful horse—sensitive, obedient, and not at all afraid of things if he can get a good look at them first. He clearly hasn't been scared or abused.

Notice that the narrator dwells on the time and attention John gives to grooming him and making sure his saddle and bridle are fitted correctly. This, per the novel, constitutes good horsemanship—and having well-fitted tack means that the narrator can do his best on the ride. However, John also highlights that the narrator's good behavior reflects the care the master took when teaching the narrator to ride—the narrator, unlike Ginger, hasn't been taught that people are his enemies.

The next morning, Squire Gordon takes the narrator out. He's an excellent rider and cares deeply for his mount. When they return to the Hall and ride up to the house, Mrs. Gordon asks how the ride was. Squire Gordon says the horse is wonderful and asks what they should name him. After some deliberation, they decide to name him Black Beauty. Later, John and James laugh; they're pleased Black Beauty wasn't given some ridiculous name. James says he'd happily call the horse Rob Roy, since Black Beauty is so much like Rob Roy. John says that makes sense, since Duchess is the mother of both horses. Black Beauty notes for readers that horses don't usually know much about their families. He realizes that this is why his mother was so distraught after seeing Rob Roy die during the hunt.

Black Beauty seems to have come to the ideal place: his coachman and Squire Gordon are both excellent riders who care for their mounts' wellbeing. This suggests that Black Beauty's life here is going to be happy, and that he's going to be well cared for. Then, Black Beauty learns an interesting and unusual piece of his family history. But hearing more about Rob Roy also makes a sinister point: even good, brave, bold horses—horses like Black Beauty himself—are injured and die because of what men do to them. This reinforces the idea that Black Beauty can follow Duchess's instructions to behave as well as possible, but that's no guarantee he won't die some senseless death like his brother did.

John likes Black Beauty a lot. He grooms the horse often and speaks kindly to him while he does. James Howard, the stable boy, is just as gentle. A few days after Black Beauty's arrival at the Hall, he goes out with Ginger in the carriage. Aside from putting her ears back when Black Beauty is led up to her, she behaves well. She's an honest worker and it turns out that both horses are courageous. They keep step together well, which pleases John. Before long, Ginger and Black Beauty are friends. Merrylegs soon becomes a close friend as well. Black Beauty also gets to know Justice, a roan cob; and Sir Oliver, Squire Gordon's old hunter who's retired unless he's needed to carry one of the young ladies.

Things are looking up for Black Beauty, in part because he's so well cared for at Birtwick and in part because he quickly makes friends with the other horses. Ginger's demeanor already seems to be improving with the kind treatment, which speaks to the power of treating horses kindly and with dignity. Mentioning other horses like Justice and Sir Oliver also highlights that Squire Gordon needs multiple horses for a variety of purposes, as horses are his primary form of transportation.

CHAPTER 6

Black Beauty is happy in his new home; he has all the food he needs and a wonderful stable. But he does miss the liberty he enjoyed as a colt. Now, he has to stand every day in the stable unless someone needs him—and then he has to be steady and quiet. He's not complaining; this is just how it is. But for a young horse used to galloping all over a field whenever he feels like it, it's hard. When Black Beauty gets less exercise than usual, he occasionally scares John by leaping around a bit. John remains patient and takes Black Beauty for brisk trots. Some grooms think spirited horses are skittish and punish them, but John isn't like that.

Not everything is the most ideal at Birtwick, but Black Beauty attributes not having "liberty" (by which he means time running free in a field) to the simple fact of being an adult working horse. However, he also details how John goes to great lengths to make sure Black Beauty and the other horses get the exercise they need, and aren't punished for acting like normal horses. This, he suggests, marks John as an exceptional groom. But this is also a message for readers that spirited horses aren't skittish, they just need exercise.

On some summer Sundays, the horses do get their liberty for a few hours while Squire Gordon and his family are at church. In the paddock or the orchard, they can enjoy the soft grass on their feet, gallop, roll, and nibble the grass. Under the shady chestnut tree, they have time to talk.

While the Gordons take their day of rest and attend church services, the horses get a similar day of rest in the paddock or orchard. Black Beauty characterizes this time as integral to his happy outlook, highlighting the importance of rest to a horse's wellbeing.

CHAPTER 7

One day when Ginger and Black Beauty are alone on a Sunday afternoon, Ginger asks about Black Beauty's upbringing and his breaking in. When he's done telling her, she sighs that she might have a better temper if she'd been brought up like him. Now, though, she doesn't think she'll ever have a good temper. She explains that nobody has ever been kind to her. She was separated from her mother as soon as she was weaned and put with colts who didn't like her. The man who cared for the young horses made sure they had food and shelter, but he wasn't warm. Ginger says boys threw rocks at the young horses, and the horses soon decided people were enemies.

As Ginger tells Black Beauty her life story, she makes the case that her early experiences with people have permanently colored her perception of them: she'll never fully recover and become as good and yielding to a person's will as Black Beauty is. This is sad for Ginger, but it also makes an important point to readers: that people who deal with horses (and young horses especially) have an immense responsibility to start them out right and teach them that people are good and kind. If they fail, they'll harm a horse for life.

Ginger continues that she and her fellow young horses had lots of fun—until it was time for breaking in. Several men came to catch her. They cornered her, held her nose shut, and wrenched her mouth open to put the bit and bridle on her. Then, she says, one dragged her forward while the other man whipped her. She had no opportunity to figure out what they wanted; they forced her to do everything. It was terrible to stand in a stall all day—and without any kindness, it was even worse.

Again, Ginger's story shows the consequences of not approaching a young horse kindly or with respect. Ginger's early training revolved around forcing her to do things and making her afraid of people by causing her pain. Recall that Black Beauty was given the chance to look at things and choose to do what his master wanted. That, the novel suggests, led to his good behavior, while being taught with force and pain has led to Ginger's temper.

Ginger muses that had the older master, Mr. Ryder, trained her, things might've been different. But he put his son Samson in charge, and Samson took pride in the fact that horses couldn't throw him. Ginger says she knew instantly that Samson just wanted to turn her into an "obedient piece of horse-flesh." She stamps her foot angrily before continuing. If she misbehaved, Samson would run her around on a long line until she was exhausted. One morning, after being worked hard, Samson came for her again with a new bit. He jerked on her mouth as soon as he mounted—and the new bit was so painful that Ginger reared and kicked. She says they fought for a while and though Samson made her bleed with his whip and spurs, she eventually threw him off.

That Samson wanted to make Ginger an "obedient piece of horse-flesh" is a telling turn of phrase. He doesn't want her to be a horse, with thoughts and feelings of her own—he wants her to be a beast of burden with no personality and no spark. And he tries to beat out her personality with whips, sharp bits, spurs, and working her to exhaustion. This begins to situate painful training aids like sharp bits and spurs as accoutrements of a poor, abusive horseperson. The fact that Ginger then goes on to throw Samson despite the painful equipment he uses on her also suggests that the painful equipment doesn't work, at least not on a horse as spirited as Ginger.

Continuing, Ginger says she ran to the far side of the field and stood there for hours in the hot sun. Nobody came for her to offer her water or attend to her bleeding flanks. At sundown, Mr. Ryder came out with some oats and noticed her injuries. When he led Ginger back to the barn, she put her ears back at Samson—and Mr. Ryder told Samson that a "bad-tempered man will never make a good-tempered horse." Mr. Ryder cleaned Ginger's sides himself and gave her bran mash, since the hay hurt her bleeding mouth. Once she was healed, Ginger says, another man—a kind one—continued her training.

Note that while nobody comes for Ginger for hours, Ginger also doesn't return to the stable on her own—she hasn't learned that people are there to help her, so it never occurs to her to willingly put herself close to them. Mr. Ryder's insistence that bad-tempered men make bad-tempered horses is another grim warning to any readers hoping to train a horse. It reinforces the novel's insistence that horses won't turn out well if one is cruel to them.

CHAPTER 8

When Black Beauty and Ginger are out in the paddock next, she continues her early life story. She says that a horse dealer bought her to match another chestnut horse. The pair of them were sold to a fashionable gentleman in London. Ginger says that while the dealer trained her to go with the **bearing rein**, her master in London insisted on reining horses in even tighter so they looked more stylish. Black Beauty, she acknowledges, has never worn a bearing rein, so he won't understand—they're terrible. Ginger says she likes to toss her head and hold it high, but it's entirely different when one can't move their head from that upright position. It makes your neck ache and requires two bits. One of Ginger's bits made her tongue bleed, so bloody froth flew from her lips. If she ever got impatient while waiting, the driver whipped her.

As Ginger brings up the horse dealer, it introduces modern readers to the idea that Victorian-era horses were subject to many of the same systems that cars are today—they are, after all, the primary source of transportation. But Ginger also introduces readers to the horrors of the bearing rein, a rein that holds a horse's head uncomfortably high. As Ginger's description of bleeding and feeling constantly sore suggests, the bearing rein is an extremely negative thing. As Ginger sees it, it's a way for people to lord their power over horses by causing them pain and making them look a certain way.

Black Beauty asks if Ginger's master didn't care for his horses' welfare. Ginger says he cared only about looking stylish. She also thinks he didn't know much about horses and left his coachman in charge. The coachman was convinced Ginger had a terrible temper. He insisted that with time, Ginger would get used to it—but he spoke cruelly to her and hit her. If he'd been kind, Ginger says, she would've put up with it. But she was angry that she had to suffer for fashion. The **bearing rein** hurt, and it made it hard to breathe. She says that she became increasingly irritable and started kicking and biting. One day, she says, she threw a fuss and broke a lot of harness, so her master sold her.

Keep in mind that Black Beauty thinks people are pretty great; he's never met a cruel person or suffered abuse, aside from Dick throwing rocks. Ginger's story adds evidence to Duchess's early warning that not all people are kind: some are cruel, and others are ignorant. Ginger suggests that her master was ignorant, since he wasn't educated about the damage a bearing rein does and put someone cruel in charge of the horses. She also makes her biting and kicking habits seem like perfectly reasonable responses to such poor treatment.

Ginger continues that she was sold to another dealer. That man found out what Ginger could bear and drove her without a **bearing rein**, so he sold her to a country gentleman. But when that man got a new groom who was as cruel as Samson, things got bad. This man would hit her in the stall and wanted to scare her, but she was too high-spirited to be afraid. She bit him one day and he refused to come in her stall after that, though she continued to be good for her master. But her master sold her on the groom's advice. Ginger says she went back to the kind dealer, who sold her to Squire Gordon. Ginger now believes that men are her enemies, and she must defend herself. It's different here, she acknowledges, but how long will this last?

This dealer seemed far more concerned with horses' welfare than most other men in Ginger's past. However, one kind person wasn't enough to save Ginger from cruelty in her last home—and again, Ginger was forced to resort to biting and scaring people to protect herself from ill treatment. As Ginger concludes her story, she shows how her trust in people is totally broken. Squire Gordon might be kind, she acknowledges, but she no longer trusts that even someone like him will be able to protect her forever—she'll always be at risk of falling into cruel, abusive hands.

Black Beauty says it'd be awful if Ginger bit James or John. Ginger says she bit James once, but he came to her with a bran mash. She hasn't bitten him since. Black Beauty feels terrible for Ginger—but he's young and innocent, and he figures she's making things sound worse than they were. But as the weeks pass, she becomes gentler and more cheerful. James even remarks one day that she seems to like him. John agrees, and even Squire Gordon notices the change in her. John insists it was a treatment of "Birtwick balls" that did it; this is a joke that patience, gentleness, and affection will cure a vicious horse.

James's behavior after Ginger bites him is a major departure from other men's behavior after Ginger bit them—he seems to realize she's biting out of fear, not meanness. And eventually, James and John's kindness starts to show Ginger that she can trust them and relax. "Horse balls" were Victorian-era horse medicine; most formulations did nothing, but John implies that the most effective medicine a person can give a horse is kindness.

CHAPTER 9

The vicar Mr. Blomefield sometimes brings his children to play with Miss Jessie and Miss Flora. Merrylegs gets a lot of work when the kids visit, as they all take turns riding him. One afternoon, though, James brings Merrylegs back to the stable and scolds him to behave himself. Black Beauty asks what happened, and Merrylegs says the kids didn't know when he or they had had enough—so he threw them off. Shocked, Black Beauty says Merrylegs knows better. Offended, Merrylegs says he'd never hurt Jessie or Flora, or even the tiny children. In fact, he's especially calm for the small nervous ones, and then he goes a bit faster when they're more comfortable.

It's a total shock for Black Beauty to learn that Merrylegs did something mean and inappropriate to the kids riding him—Merrylegs is known around Birtwick as being nice and trustworthy around children. And as Merrylegs defends himself to Black Beauty, he reiterates that he's good and trustworthy—but he's also a teacher. Describing how carefully he works new riders up to going at speed shows that Merrylegs is methodical and takes his responsibilities seriously—implying that throwing kids off may have been intended as a lesson.

Merrylegs says it's the boys that need to be broken in, just like young colts. He explains that the other children had been riding him for several hours when the older boys decided it was their turn. They had a grand time galloping, and Merrylegs gamely put up with the boys using big hazel sticks as riding whips. But he got tired and stopped to drop a hint. Boys, Merrylegs says, think horses are like steam engines and can go forever, without any feelings. So when one of the boys was whipping Merrylegs, Merrylegs just stood up on his hind legs and let the boy slide off. The other boy got on and Merrylegs ejected him, too.

Merrylegs confirms that he was trying to teach the boys a lesson by getting rid of them. Essentially, Merrylegs tried to teach the boys that they can't be cruel and expect horses to go forever. Instead, they must learn to listen to their mounts and take their mounts seriously, stopping when the horse says it's tired and has had enough. Horses, this shows, can be teachers just as much as people can—and hopefully Merrylegs's relatively gentle lesson got through to the boys.

Merrylegs says the boys aren't bad and don't want to be cruel, but they needed to learn. James, Merrylegs believes, was really only upset that the boys were using such big sticks. Ginger quips that she would've kicked the boys. Merrylegs says he's not foolish enough to make Squire Gordon or James ashamed of him. And besides, the adults trust Merrylegs with the kids. He says he heard Squire Gordon telling Mrs. Blomefield that Merrylegs will take care of kids as well as they would, and said he'd never sell the pony. Merrylegs adds that he's been treated well here for five years—that's not worth giving up just because of some cruel boys. If he kicked, he'd be sold, and he'd find himself being worked to death by a butcher.

As far as Merrylegs is concerned, he and James are in agreement that the boys were at fault—but James has a responsibility to his employers to look like he disapproves of Merrylegs's behavior. Horses, in this sense, may have a bit more freedom to express themselves than their human caregivers. But Merrylegs does acknowledge that he walks a fine line when he decides to discipline boys. If he misbehaves too much, he'll be deemed dangerous and untrustworthy—and even Squire Gordon, he suggests, can't be counted on to protect a supposedly dangerous horse from overwork by a new owner.

CHAPTER 10

Ginger and Black Beauty have some racing blood in them, so they aren't the standard tall carriage breed. Because of this, they're used for riding as well—and anyway, Squire Gordon dislikes horses and people that can only do one thing. Black Beauty loves riding, as Mrs. Gordon often chooses him. Squire Gordon rides Ginger, while Miss Flora and Miss Jessie ride Merrylegs and Sir Oliver. Black Beauty believes Mrs. Gordon prefers him because his mouth is still tender and soft. Ginger is envious that Black Beauty gets to carry her and blames her hard mouth on her earlier poor treatment. But Sir Oliver encourages Ginger to be proud that she can carry Squire Gordon.

Keep in mind that in the Victorian era, ladies rode sidesaddle, a position that offers much less security than riding astride. So riding a horse with a soft mouth, like Black Beauty, may seem like the safer option for Mrs. Gordon, since she won't have to worry about not being able to control her horse. The fact that Sir Oliver sometimes carries one of the young ladies shows how essential equine transport is. Recall that Sir Oliver is retired; this suggests that he's never completely retired and must always be ready for light work.

Black Beauty has wondered for a long time how Sir Oliver lost his tail—his is only six inches long, and there's only some hair. One time in the orchard, Black Beauty asks what accident Sir Oliver suffered. Fiercely, Sir Oliver says it was no accident—it was cut off when he was a young horse. It was extremely painful, having his beautiful tail taken was an indignity, and worst of all, now he can't whisk flies off his body. Fortunately, they've stopped doing it now. Ginger asks why they did it, and Sir Oliver spits that it was all for fashion. Every well-bred young horse had their tail cut off when Sir Oliver was young. He suggests it's as if God didn't know what is most beautiful—and the most useful.

Black Beauty's naivete shines through here when he assumes that Sir Oliver must've lost his tail in an accident. It doesn't occur to him that a person would've cut it off on purpose. Then, Sir Oliver introduces the idea that a horse's body is the way it is because God intended it to be that way—and that it's wrong for people to go against what God intended and modify an animal's appearance. God, Sir Oliver suggests, knew what would make a horse look the best and be the most useful, and yet he suggests that people sometimes decide they know better than God.

Ginger suggests it's the same with the **bearing reins**, and Sir Oliver agrees. He says fashion is "one of the wickedest things in the world." He notes that they do the same thing to dogs, cutting their tails off or cutting their ears into sharp points. Sir Oliver tells Ginger and Black Beauty about his dear terrier friend, Skye, who had five puppies in his stall. Just as the puppies' eyes started to open, people took them—and they came back bloody, without ears and missing parts of their tails. They healed, of course, but Sir Oliver notes that they'd go the rest of their lives without the flap of their ear designed to protect their inner ear from injury. Sir Oliver suggests that humans start cutting their children's noses and ears; it's just as absurd. He asks what right people have to "disfigure" animals.

Fashion, Sir Oliver and Ginger suggest, is evil because it doesn't take into account what God intended animals should look like or how they should move. In their understanding, bearing reins and docking horses' and dogs' tails is cruel and serves no purpose—it "disfigures" an animal, and it doesn't even make the animal more beautiful. The story of Skye's puppies being "disfigured" like this seems designed to elicit sympathy from readers, since the victims in this case are small, innocent, sympathetic puppies, animals that are in every way incapable of advocating for themselves.

Black Beauty finds that what Sir Oliver says makes him feel bitter toward men for the first time. Ginger says men are "brutes and blockheads." Just then, Merrylegs wanders up from the apple tree and insists that "blockhead" is a bad word. Ginger says bad words exist to describe bad things, and she tells Merrylegs what Sir Oliver said. Sadly, Merrylegs says he's seen dogs abused like that before—but he doesn't think it's right to speak badly of men here, where the horses have such good care.

Though the horses seem to feel pretty secure at Birtwick, Merrylegs suggests that they're jeopardizing their security by speaking ill of what some men do to their animals. Behaving well, according to Merrylegs, may mean accepting kind treatment when a horse experiences it and turning the other way when bad things happen to other horses. This speaks to the horses' powerlessness.

To change the subject, Black Beauty asks what the purpose of blinkers is. Sir Oliver says they're useless, but Justice explains that in theory, they keep horses from spooking and causing accidents. When Black Beauty asks why ladies' riding horses don't wear blinkers then, Justice says it's the fashion. Supposedly, horses would be so afraid of seeing the cart behind them that they'd run from it—though riding horses see carts all the time and are just fine. He adds that if horses could see everything, they'd be much less afraid of things. With blinkers, they only see parts of things and can't understand them.

Justice is a good-tempered horse who tries to understand people's logic, an important element to this conversation. But also important is that the horses suggest that people aren't actually all that good at coming up with effective safety measures—when one thinks about how horses regularly interact with carts and don't spook, it starts to seem silly to think that a horse would ever be afraid of a cart. Moreover, Justice acknowledges that blinkers can actually make a horse less safe, as the horse is then less able to interpret their environment. People may be in charge, this passage suggests, but this doesn't mean everything they do to horses makes sense.

Sir Oliver says blinkers are actually dangerous. He shares a story of a fatal cart accident that only occurred because the blinkered horses couldn't see a pond. Ginger snaps that men should just order foals to be born with their eyes in the middle of their heads, since humans think they can do better than God. At this, Merrylegs says that he believes John doesn't approve of blinkers. But he suggests they all cheer up and go eat some of the fallen apples.

Ginger is being facetious when she suggests humans insist that foals be born with forward-facing eyes, but she crystallizes one of the novel's big ideas: that people are, perhaps, getting too full of themselves and are essentially trying to play God when they try to change how an animal looks or moves. The horses all suggest that, left to their own devices, they're very good at keeping themselves and people safe—but they're not *always left to their own devices, and everyone suffers for it.*

CHAPTER 11

Black Beauty becomes prouder and happier at Birtwick the longer he lives there. Squire Gordon and Mrs. Gordon are respected and well-loved; they speak out against anyone who mistreats animals or people. Squire Gordon and Farmer Grey have spent 20 years advocating against the use of **bearing reins** on carthorses, and Mrs. Gordon regularly tries to get drivers using bearing reins to see how cruel they are.

Squire and Mrs. Gordon, as well as Farmer Grey, use their power and prestige to advocate for change in their community. This, the novel suggests, is something that marks them as good, because in addition to treating horses well themselves, they also stand up for other horses that are being mistreated.

Once, even Squire Gordon loses it with a man who yanks on his pony's mouth hard enough to make it bleed. The man insists the pony was misbehaving—but Squire Gordon argues otherwise. Another time, Squire Gordon tries to convince a captain to stop using **bearing reins** on a pair of horses—soldiers, he says, can't be expected to do their best if they're forced to hold their heads up, and horses are the same. The captain promises to think about it.

Squire Gordon seems to be advocating for horses' welfare in his upper-class circles (the captain is implied to be wealthy) in addition to among lower-class drivers. This shows that people of all classes mistreat horses; it's not just something that a certain type of person does.

CHAPTER 12

In late autumn, Squire Gordon takes John and Black Beauty on a long business trip. Black Beauty is happy to go—they take a dog-cart, which is light and easy to pull. Things are fine until they reach the toll bridge over the river. The man there says the river is rising quickly, and soon, it'll be dangerous—Black Beauty agrees, since he's already had to slosh through foot-high water in one spot. But they make it over the bridge fine, reach their destination, and aren't ready to leave again until very late in the afternoon.

Black Beauty, as a horse who isn't privy to his owner's inner monologue, doesn't know why he's selected. But note that he's happy to go, and that he isn't overworked. This highlights that Squire Gordon makes an effort to not overwork any one horse, which he can do because he has so many horses to choose from. Also, keep in mind that while Black Beauty agrees that the river is getting dangerous, he has no way of telling Squire Gordon and John that. Instead, he has to rely on the man at the bridge to back him up.

By now, it's windy. As Black Beauty trots through a wood, John remarks that it'd be awful if a branch fell on them—just as a whole oak tree crashes down in front of Black Beauty. Black Beauty is afraid, but he's too well trained to run in fear. Since there's no way to get around the tree and continue on, John suggests they return from whence they came. When they reach the bridge, Black Beauty stops the instant he puts a hoof on the bridge. It's not safe, but he can't tell Squire Gordon that. He stands still, even when Squire Gordon gives him a sharp lash. Just then, a man appears at the other side of the river and shouts that the bridge is broken in the middle, where it's underwater.

The fallen oak tree creates a sense of foreboding—this is a dangerous storm, and the roads aren't as safe as they usually are. So when Black Beauty reaches the bridge and can tell it's not safe, he faces a huge decision. Does he continue to be obedient and cross the bridge despite his misgivings, or misbehave to keep himself and his passengers safe? When the man at the bridge confirms that the bridge is broken, it indicates that Black Beauty did the right thing in refusing to go on.

Squire Gordon and John turn Black Beauty around and they trot along in the dark. Black Beauty can't hear much of the men's conversation, but he can tell that Squire Gordon believes they all would've died if Black Beauty had stepped onto the bridge. He says that God gave men reason, but he gave animals a special way of knowing things which allows them to save men. Finally, the party gets home and Mrs. Gordon runs out to meet the cart. Squire Gordon tells her what happened and that Black Beauty saved them. John gives Black Beauty a good grooming and a bran mash, which Black Beauty appreciates.

Squire Gordon essentially suggests that people should trust animals more often, and that animals will take care of people if given the opportunity. He also implies that God intended men and animals to work together and use their respective skills to be more successful than they could be alone. On the whole, though, what Squire Gordon says essentially insists that horses deserve respect and consideration from their human owners.

CHAPTER 13

One day, John is riding Black Beauty, and they come upon a boy trying to make a pony jump a gate that's too high for it. The pony keeps refusing—and when he does, the boy whips the pony. The boy gets off and whips the pony's head. When the boy gets back on, the pony bucks him into a thorny hedge and runs away. Crying, the boy asks for help. John, though, says the boy is where he belongs after mistreating his pony. John urges Black Beauty on. Talking to himself, John suggests they stop in at the farmer Bushby's to tell him of the boy's behavior.

Black Beauty's narration makes it so that readers see from the outset that the boy is trying to make the pony do something it can't do—and then is cruelly punishing the pony for this supposed crime. When John says the boy got what he deserved when the pony bucks the boy into the thorny hedge, he takes the pony's side. He implies that just as he and Squire Gordon should've trusted Black Beauty about the bridge in the previous chapter, the boy must trust the pony to assess what it can and can't do.

At the farm, Mr. and Mrs. Bushby ask if John has seen their boy, since the pony came back without a rider. John tells them what happened, and Mrs. Bushby exclaims that they must go help their son. But Mr. Bushby says the boy needs to learn a lesson, since this isn't the first time he's mistreated the pony. He thanks John, so John and Black Beauty continue on their way.

Mrs. Bushby doesn't seem to see an issue with her son's behavior. Mr. Bushby, on the other hand, suggests that the boy has a track record of being cruel to the pony—and needs to learn. This offers hope that cruel people like the boy can change their behavior, if they have mentors like Mr. Bushby to help them. However, there's also the implication that people like Mrs. Bushby can sometimes hinder this effort by comforting people who, the novel suggests, don't deserve comfort at all.

At home, John tells James about their afternoon. James laughs—he went to school with the boy, and the boy always thought he was superior because his father is a farmer. James says he and the older boys regularly put the boy in his place for being mean to laborers' sons. But once, James caught the boy pulling wings off of flies and got so angry he shouted at the boy and boxed his ears. The schoolmaster was just as angry as James and lectured all the boys about cruelty. The schoolmaster, James says, insisted that "cruelty was the devil's own trade mark," and he said that anyone who enjoys being cruel belongs to the devil. And on the other hand, "God is Love," so kindness is "God's mark." John agrees and says that religion isn't any good without love.

James adds more backstory to the boy's behavior and insists he has a history of being cruel, not just to the pony, but to even more helpless creatures like flies. Even annoying pests like flies, the novel suggests, don't deserve to experience pain and suffering—and what makes a person good is being willing to stand up for animals and people with little or no power (as James does in this recollection by defending the flies and young laborers' sons). Then, the novel connects this subject back to religion. It insists that a person simply isn't religious or virtuous if they're cruel—and on the other hand, that a person who is generous, kind, and loving is virtuous.

CHAPTER 14

One early December morning, Squire Gordon comes into the barn looking concerned. He asks John if he has any complaints about James, and if James is good and respectful. John says James is exceptional. Squire Gordon asks if he thinks James stops to visit people and leaves the horses unattended when he exercises the horses. Angrily, John says he'd never believe it—nobody is kinder, smarter, or more honest than James. At this, Squire Gordon smiles and James enters the barn. Squire Gordon explains that he fabricated accusations against James's character to get the most truthful information out of John.

As far as John is concerned, someone must be slandering James if what Squire Gordon implies (that other people have complaints about James) is true. And that means that John must do everything in his power to defend his employee's reputation. This highlights both how good of a horseperson James is (if John is so ready to defend him), and how honest and loyal John is to those who work under him.

Squire Gordon says his brother-in-law has asked for help in finding a new groom to work alongside and eventually replace his elderly coachman. He says he doesn't want to let James go, but it'd be good for James. James says he's only 19, but John says that James is already as steady and careful as a man in his 20s—he'd treat the horses well. James agrees to think about it and makes his decision to leave in about six weeks. To help him prepare and gain experience, John has James drive Squire Gordon everywhere, even just on short errands. On Saturdays James drives Black Beauty and Ginger into the city, which requires careful handling—the streets are busy and noisy.

Squire Gordon frames presenting this job to James as a sacrifice on his part, since James is such a wonderful employee at Birtwick. But encouraging James to take the job and then throwing himself into training James for six weeks shows how much Squire Gordon cares about his employees. They're not just the cogs that keep his own estate moving. He understands that they're people, with lives and dreams of their own—and it's his responsibility, as someone with more power, to help them reach their full potential.

CHAPTER 15

Squire Gordon and Mrs. Gordon decide to visit friends that live 46 miles away, and they plan for James to drive them. On the first day, James skillfully drives Black Beauty and Ginger 32 miles. He makes their work as easy as possible by using the drag (brake) going downhill and by letting them rest partway up the hills. At sunset, they reach a hotel where they'll stay for the night. An old ostler (a person who cares for horses at inns) untacks Black Beauty and grooms him faster than Black Beauty has ever been cared for. James is impressed by the man's speed and comments on it.

Black Beauty's happy, thankful tone as he describes James's skillful driving shows how much of a difference it makes to be driven by a person who knows what they're doing. It makes what could be a long and arduous journey into something far more pleasant. Meeting the old ostler at the inn introduces James to another way of working with horses, and gives him yet one more person to admire and look up to (in addition to John).

The old ostler says he's been practicing for 40 years, and besides, he'd rather be quick than slow. He explains that he worked as a jockey in his youth, but he was injured in a fall. Unable to live without horses, he started working at inns. He says he loves working with well-bred, well-behaved horses like Black Beauty. The old ostler says it only takes 20 minutes around a horse to tell what kind of care it gets, and whether it's naturally timid or spirited. Horses, he says, are like kids: you must train them when they're young and then they'll be just fine.

As the old ostler talks, he echoes many things that Squire Gordon, Farmer Grey, and John have said already: that horses need to be started properly in order to grow into good, useful transportation, and that a horse's early experiences with humans will color their behavior for the rest of its life. Again, people have a huge responsibility when it comes to animals with decidedly less power.

James shares that his employer is Squire Gordon, and he and the old ostler discuss George Gordon's death and that Black Beauty is the brother of Rob Roy. Sadly, the old ostler says he knows the jump where George died, and it's only appropriate for very experienced riders to take it. The life of horse and rider are way more important, he says, than foxes. The two men leave the stable.

While Duchess didn't feel she knew enough to say in so many words that foxhunting is a dangerous endeavor, the ostler—a person—comes out and insists that it's not safe for most riders and horses to foxhunt, unless they're very experienced. The death toll of this sport, the ostler suggests, is too high to not take it seriously.

CHAPTER 16

Later that evening, another ostler brings in another horse. A young man with a pipe, presumably the ostler's friend, hangs around to chat, but the ostler asks him to put his pipe down and toss hay down from the hayloft. Soon after, James makes one last check on Black Beauty and Ginger. Hours later, Black Beauty wakes up. He's uncomfortable and can hear Ginger coughing—the barn is filling with smoke, and it's coming from the door to the hayloft. Presently, the second ostler enters the stable, unties the horses, and tries to drag them out of their stalls. Black Beauty refuses to follow; he knows now he was foolish, but at the time, it seems too unsafe to move.

The pipe is merely concerning at first—fire around a flammable stable seems like a bad idea. But later, when it appears as though the pipe resulted in a full-blown fire, the novel shows the full consequence of this man's carelessness. Black Beauty can look back at this event later and say it was silly to not get out immediately. But at the time, he was apparently too scared to move, though his life was indeed in danger, as were the other horses' lives.

The ostler leaves the barn doors open when he leaves, which makes it easier to breathe—but it makes the crackling sound in the hayloft louder. Soon after, people start shouting "Fire!" and James appears. He's his usual cheery self as he puts Black Beauty's bridle on, ties a scarf over Black Beauty's eyes, and leads him out of the barn. He throws Black Beauty's lead at a man and runs back into the stable for Ginger. Black Beauty whinnies—and later, Ginger tells him that his whinny is what convinced her to leave her stall.

The open barn door seems to give the fire a new oxygen source, which causes it to burn hotter and spread faster. James, unlike the strange ostler, is someone Black Beauty trusts. So Black Beauty isn't bothered by the scarf over his eyes, and he knows that wherever James is taking him, it's probably safe. This highlights the positive effects a good, trusting relationship with a horse can have: just as Black Beauty saved Squire Gordon and James at the broken bridge, James can now save Black Beauty and Ginger.

The stable yard is in chaos as people evacuate horses from various stables and pull carriages out of sheds, just in case the fire spreads. Black Beauty watches the stable door for Ginger as Squire Gordon enters the fray, shouting for James. As a crash comes from the stable, James emerges from the smoke with Ginger. James is coughing and can't speak. Squire Gordon ushers James and the horses to the street and across the square to another hotel as the fire engine arrives. Just as Black Beauty and Ginger enter their new stalls, they hear the horses stuck in the burning stable shrieking as they die.

James seems to get Ginger out of the stable in just the nick of time, as the barn begins to collapse. Again, he's able to get her out because she, like Black Beauty, trusts him (and she trusts Black Beauty and follows his whinny, as she noted in the previous passage). And while there's no way to know exactly why the other horses are left in the stable to die (perhaps they wouldn't follow their owners out, or their owners ran out of time to rescue them), the fact remains that they die preventable deaths because of the man with the pipe's carelessness.

In the morning, Black Beauty observes that James looks very proud of himself—Squire Gordon seems proud of him, too. During the day, James returns to the first hotel. When he gets back to the horses, he tells the ostler there that the fire started because a man left his pipe in the hay. He says John's rule of not allowing pipes in stables should be the rule everywhere. The barn, James shares, was demolished, and two horses died.

Black Beauty witnessed the man leave his pipe in the hay, but the people in question are just now finding out about it—highlighting again that horses understand things in different ways than people do in some cases. This experience shows James exactly why John's rule banning pipes in stables is a good one: it prevents preventable pain, suffering, and property damage—and it ensures that horses who can't let themselves out of a burning stable won't be harmed.

CHAPTER 17

The rest of the journey is easy, and Black Beauty and Ginger are happy to be settled in a nice stable. The coachman there is very proud of James when he hears that James was able to lead the horses out of the fire; he notes that for some reason, horses are always unwilling to leave their stalls during fires and floods. The horses must trust James.

As the coachman notes, horses tend not to want to leave their stalls when disaster strikes—a stall is often where a horse feels safe. It requires someone they trust to get them out again, so this illustrates an important safeguard that a person gets when their horse trusts them: they're more likely to be able to save that horse from a fire or a flood.

Once the party returns to Birtwick, John is also thrilled with James's heroism. But when he shares that Joe Green is going to replace James, James is aghast—Joe is just a child. John insists that Joe is a good boy who can learn, and he takes the opportunity to give James some advice. He shares that he was 14, Joe's age, when his parents died and left him to care for his sister, who is disabled. His sister would've gone to the workhouse if Mrs. Gordon hadn't saved them by giving his sister needlework and then employing John in the stables. John says because of his experience, he'll never refuse to help a little boy—it's important to take opportunities to help people when they arise.

John suggests that part of being a good, virtuous person is helping others—and not being too snobby, particularly when it comes to giving youngsters a chance. He doesn't say so outright, but he draws a connection here between Mrs. Gordon helping him when he was young, and Squire Gordon getting James the job with his in-laws. James is young and perhaps less experienced than others who could take the job—but the novel suggests it's the right thing to do to give him the opportunity to excel. The same, the novel suggests, goes for Joe.

James asks if John doesn't believe in the saying to take care of number one. John says he doesn't—he and his sister would be destitute if the Gordons had looked out for themselves, and Black Beauty and Ginger would've died in the fire had James thought only of his own safety. People who believe that saying are selfish. James laughs and thanks John for his mentorship. John promises to help if ever James needs something.

John is extremely direct when he insists that it's selfish to only look out for number one. The world is a better place, he implies, when people look out for each other and help wherever they can—whether they're helping other people or animals. Bringing up that Black Beauty and Ginger owe their lives to James also reinforces that horses are pretty powerless; they depend entirely on their owners to care for them.

The next day, Joe comes to the stables to learn his job before James leaves. He's too short to groom Ginger or Black Beauty, so James uses Merrylegs to teach him. Merrylegs complains about being "mauled about" by Joe, but he eventually says Joe will be just fine with some training. Finally, it's time for James to leave. He forlornly tells John that he's going to miss the familiar faces here; he won't know anyone where he's going. John assures him that he'll make friends soon. Once James leaves, Merrylegs pines for several days. John leads him while he rides Black Beauty so they can gallop and have some fun. Joe's father, Tom, sometimes helps his son, and Joe is eager to learn all he can.

Merrylegs's complaint about being "mauled about" adds some humor to an otherwise very sad departure. The fact that Merrylegs and the other horses are so upset to lose James speaks to the strength of James's relationship with the animals—this is the root of the horses' trust in him. But note that it's made very clear that while Joe is a good kid who wants to try his best, he's not experienced. So he's on the right track to becoming just like John and James—but until he has a few more years of training, he's not a skilled horseperson yet.

CHAPTER 18

A few days after James leaves, Black Beauty wakes with a start to the stable bell ringing. Before he knows it, John has him saddled and they're riding up to the main house. Squire Gordon gives John a note to give to the doctor and tells him to ride for Mrs. Gordon's life. John and Black Beauty gallop through the village and to the tollgate, where John tells the man to leave the gate open for the doctor. They continue on, and Black Beauty feels like he's never run faster. After eight miles, they reach the doctor's house. John wakes the doctor and tells him Mrs. Gordon is ill. The doctor says he has no horse to ride at the moment, so John agrees that the doctor can ride Black Beauty back.

It shows how well Squire Gordon treats his horses and his staff that both Black Beauty and John take this midnight ride so seriously and ride so fast. They're happy to serve him and do this difficult work, galloping miles to help. Things get a bit more difficult for Black Beauty, though, when John allows the doctor to ride him back to Birtwick. Black Beauty is the only available form of transportation—and in this moment, Mrs. Gordon's health matters more than giving Black Beauty a real rest. So even in Squire Gordon's exceptional care, Black Beauty still can't escape that he's transportation, first and foremost.

When the doctor comes out of his house with a whip a minute later, John says he won't need it—Black Beauty will go forever. The doctor is heavier than John and not a great rider, but he does allow Black Beauty to rest and catch his breath at the big hill. They make it back to Birtwick soon, and Joe takes Black Beauty to the stable. Black Beauty is panting and shaking, and he's totally wet. Joe is on his own and he does the best he knows how. He offers Black Beauty icy water and grain, and he rubs Black Beauty's legs and chest. But he doesn't put Black Beauty's warm blanket on—so soon, Black Beauty is sore, trembling, and cold. He knows John is eight miles away, so he lies down and tries to sleep.

The novel attributes Black Beauty's illness to the cold water, but what he suffers from is known today as "tying-up" and is usually caused by a (very painful!) electrolyte imbalance after working too hard. It causes a horse to sweat and its muscles to seize, which Black Beauty describes in this passage. And this happens in part because Joe, though he has good intentions, has no idea that Black Beauty should be covered with a warm blanket and walked until he's cool. So Joe's good intentions don't help Black Beauty; the horse still becomes extremely sick.

Black Beauty moans in pain when John appears at his stall. John covers Black Beauty with warm blankets and gives him some warm gruel, and for days he grouses that Joe is a "stupid boy." By now, it's been several days, and Black Beauty is seriously ill. Squire Gordon comes to visit often and says once that Black Beauty saved Mrs. Gordon's life—had they been any slower in fetching the doctor, she would've died. The men of course don't know that Black Beauty understands them, and that he knew full well what was at stake that night.

As a horse, Black Beauty can't tell Joe what kind of care he needs. Instead, all he can do is wait for John to return and help him—and by then, Black Beauty is very sick. John may have thought he was doing a good thing by helping a boy like Joe Green get this job, but now, he's forced to confront that helping Joe might mean the horses are at risk of being unwittingly neglected, simply because Joe doesn't know how to properly care for the horses on his own.

CHAPTER 19

Black Beauty doesn't know how long he's sick. The horse doctor visits daily and even bleeds Black Beauty once—Black Beauty feels ready to die after that. He has a fever and is sensitive to noise, so John moves Ginger and Merrylegs out of the stable. One night, Tom helps John give Black Beauty medicine. Then they sit in another stall, and Black Beauty hears Tom ask John to please say something nice to Joe: Joe feels terrible and knows this was his fault, but he's not a bad boy. John says he knows Joe is alright, but Black Beauty is a favorite—and it's awful to think he might die like this.

With John back home and in charge, Black Beauty gets the care he needs as his illness worsens. The extent that John goes to get Black Beauty care shows how much he cares for Black Beauty as a fellow being—but it also highlights that Black Beauty is a valuable horse and mode of transportation. John also isn't ready to forgive Joe yet, but it's not entirely clear why. For his part, Joe's guilt suggests that he'll learn from this experience and apply himself going forward so he never makes the same mistake again.

Tom is relieved and says he's glad John realizes Joe's mistake was "only ignorance." Enraged, John says ignorance is the worst thing in the world after wickedness. This is why a woman who dosed her baby with soothing syrups and killed it was tried for manslaughter. He notes that just a few weeks ago, some ladies left Tom's greenhouse door open and killed many of his young plants. Tom says he's still angry, and he doesn't know where to get more plants now that he has to start over. John says that he's sure the ladies didn't mean to cause harm; it was "only ignorance." Black Beauty falls asleep at this point, but later in his life, he thinks often of John's words.

Intentions, John suggests, don't matter when somebody or something gets hurt as a result of one's actions. Just as Joe didn't mean to jeopardize Black Beauty's life, the woman he mentions didn't mean to kill her baby—and yet, harm was done, and both Joe and the woman will suffer consequences. But the only way this gets through to Tom is when John brings up the ladies killing his plants. It seems as though Tom hasn't thought of it this way, or about how it feels when he's the person wronged.

CHAPTER 20

As time passes, Joe Green learns quickly, and John slowly begins to trust him. Since he's small, he seldom gets to ride Black Beauty or Ginger—but one day when John is out with Justice, Squire Gordon asks Joe to take Black Beauty and deliver a note for him. Joe delivers the note, and on the way back, they pass the brickfield. A carter there is whipping his pair of horses, but the cart is overloaded and stuck in mud. Joe calls that the cart's wheels are stuck and the horses aren't at fault, but the man doesn't acknowledge him. Joe then offers to help lighten the cart, but the man is clearly angry and drunk. He tells Joe to mind his own business.

Joe does indeed regain John's trust and good favor, and he seems to be learning a lot. Letting him ride Black Beauty is a sign that Squire Gordon trusts the boy and is willing to let him take a valuable horse out. And on the ride, Joe shows that he's internalized many of his employer's and boss's messages when he asks the carter if he can help. He's been taught that he should say something if he sees an animal being abused, and he feels confident enough now to do so. This, however, doesn't mean the carter is going to listen to him.

Joe gallops Black Beauty to the master brickmaker's house and tells the man about the carter whipping his horses. The brickmaker thanks Joe for letting him know, and then asks if Joe would be willing to give evidence if this goes before a magistrate. Joe agrees and trots Black Beauty home. There, he tells John what happened. John praises Joe for stepping in; it's everyone's business to interfere when they see cruelty happening. Joe seems extremely proud and confident all afternoon.

Joe doesn't just leave it alone when the carter tells him to go away—he takes it to someone he believes will be able to do something. This again speaks to his confidence, and his belief in standing up for animals' rights. It no doubt feels wonderful to Joe to get praise from John—it suggests that Joe has turned a corner and is now someone John admires and thinks highly of.

That evening, a footman takes Joe to Squire Gordon's house to testify; Squire Gordon is a county magistrate. After a while, Joe returns to the stable happily and says that carter will never mistreat a horse again. Later, Black Beauty learns that the man might get a few months in prison due to how obviously abused the horses were. This experience changes Joe for the better. He's suddenly determined and purposeful—like he's suddenly become a man.

Joe's actions have a happy ending: the horses will presumably be freed from their suffering, and the man won't be able to hurt other horses. Learning he can make a difference in the world and stand up for other vulnerable beings, the novel suggests, is what brings about Joe's sudden coming of age.

CHAPTER 21

Black Beauty has lived at Birtwick for three years—but that's about to change. The horses know that Mrs. Gordon is ill, and the doctor visits often. Finally, the doctor says that Mrs. Gordon must move to a warm country for several years. Immediately, Squire Gordon begins dismantling his estate. Miss Jessie and Miss Flora leave first and hug Merrylegs. Then, the horses learn that Squire Gordon is selling Ginger and Black Beauty to the Earl of W, an old friend. Merrylegs will go to the vicar and will never be sold. Joe is going to care for Merrylegs, so Black Beauty figures Merrylegs will be fine. John refuses to take another position right away.

Given how deeply and carefully Squire Gordon cares for his horses, it seems likely that the horses will all be sold to good homes—but Black Beauty's tone suggests this isn't a guarantee (he figures, but doesn't know for sure, that Merrylegs will be fine, for instance). It's also worth noting that being able to dismantle one's estate and move to a warmer climate is a sign of just how wealthy the Gordons are—something to keep in mind as the novel progresses.

On his final night in England, Squire Gordon comes to the stables to give directions and say goodbye to the horses. He and John discuss John's plans: John would like to work for a horse trainer and break in young horses the right way. Squire Gordon says he can't think of a better plan, and he offers to help in any way he can. He then thanks John, but John asks Squire Gordon not to speak—he'd like to hope that the Gordons will one day return to England.

John essentially wants to be able to do for other young horses what Farmer Grey was able to do for Black Beauty. By doing this, John will give many young horses a good start to life—and hopefully he'll be able to create more horses like Black Beauty, rather than frightened and aggressive horses like Ginger.

The next day, Ginger and Black Beauty bring the carriage to the house for the last time. Squire Gordon carries Mrs. Gordon to the carriage, and John drives the horses to the train station. Black Beauty hears Mrs. Gordon tell John goodbye. Joe stands with the horses while John walks the Gordons onto the platform. When the train is gone, John says sadly that they'll never see Mrs. Gordon again.

This is a sad, solemn event as Ginger and Black Beauty take the Gordons to the train station. Suggesting that they'll never see Mrs. Gordon again seems to imply that John believes Mrs. Gordon isn't going to survive to ever return. This is sad for him, of course, but it also means that the horses will never be able to return to their idyllic life with the Gordons.

CHAPTER 22

The next morning, Joe hitches up Merrylegs and says goodbye to Ginger and Black Beauty before driving to the vicarage. John then rides Ginger and leads Black Beauty the 15 miles to Earlshall Park, home of the Earl of W. The coachman, Mr. York, is friendly to John, but he seems like the sort of person who expects to be obeyed. A groom puts Ginger and Black Beauty in pleasant stables and grooms them, and soon after, Mr. York and John enter the stable. Mr. York asks what he should know about the horses, since horses have "their peculiarities" just like people.

Mr. York seems a harder, more serious man than John. But at first glance, he seems to care just as much about horses' welfare. Asking about Black Beauty and Ginger's "peculiarities" suggests that he plans to do what he can to accommodate the horses' preferences, which offers hope that the horses will be happy here. Further, the bright and pleasant stables suggest that at least the horse management aspect of Earlshall Park will be competent and enjoyable.

John says Ginger and Black Beauty are the best pair in the country. Black Beauty is easygoing, but Ginger has been abused and would likely become snappy and upset again if she were treated poorly. She's spirited, and will fight back if she thinks she must. York promises to do his best with the horses. John adds that Black Beauty has never used the **bearing rein**, and he knows the bearing rein and a gag bit spoiled Ginger before she came to Squire Gordon. York says horses here must wear the bearing rein, though he personally thinks they're unnecessary. Mrs. W insists on her horses looking stylish with a bearing rein, though York says he'll always oppose using gag bits. John says goodbye to the horses and then he leaves.

John doesn't have much power here: he can't save Black Beauty and Ginger from the bearing rein. And York insists he doesn't have much power either: he can't stop Mrs. W from insisting on the bearing rein, even if he does think they're a bad idea. There's some hope for the horses' wellbeing, though, when York speaks out against gag bits. Gag bits use leverage to apply extra pressure on the top of a horse's head and in their mouth—it makes them pick their head up and can be really harsh in the wrong hands.

The next day, Lord W comes to inspect Ginger and Black Beauty. He's pleased; Squire Gordon said they're wonderful animals. Since they don't match, though, they'll only pull the carriage in the country. York shares what John said about the horses' tempers, and Lord W instructs York to start slowly with the **bearing rein**. In the afternoon, York harnesses Ginger and Black Beauty and brings them around to the front of the grand house. Soon, Mrs. W comes down the steps. She seems displeased, but gets in the carriage. The bearing rein is a nuisance, but Ginger and Black Beauty bear it.

Already, it's clear that Lord and Mrs. W are very different from the Gordons: they care immensely that their horses match, and it's essential they follow the fashion of the day and use the bearing rein. On this first day of work, it doesn't seem so bad—Black Beauty offers little comment on the bearing rein except to say that it's annoying. Mrs. W's overt displeasure, though, implies that this is just the beginning—and that things will only get worse.

The next afternoon, Mrs. W imperiously tells York to tighten the **bearing rein** on Black Beauty and Ginger. York explains that they must tighten it slowly for safety, but he agrees to tighten it up a bit. Every hole makes a difference, though—and that day, Black Beauty and Ginger have to pull the carriage up a hill. It's much harder without being able to put their heads down. When they're done, Black Beauty's back and legs feel strained. Ginger says she'll behave if this is as bad as it gets—but she won't bear much more. Every day, York shortens the bearing rein. Black Beauty begins dreading the outings and Ginger grows quiet and restless. The worst, though, is yet to come.

York tries to appeal to Mrs. W by insisting that the horses might behave unsafely if they're suddenly constricted by the bearing rein. So the fact that neither he nor Mrs. W seem to care about this suggests that they don't much value safety, and they don't see the horses as individuals who are going to have to get used to a more restrictive way of moving. And Black Beauty's first-person narration shows readers exactly how terrible being restricted like this is. It hurts him, and Ginger's temper is worsening. Ginger's warning also suggests that if her owners aren't going to be kind and understanding of what she's going through, she sees no reason to play along. Put another way, they're losing her loyalty.

CHAPTER 23

One day, Mrs. W comes down the steps and tells York to raise Black Beauty and Ginger's heads; she's tired of humoring them. York tightens Black Beauty's **bearing rein** first. Ginger is already jerking her head when he approaches her—and as soon as he undoes the rein to tighten it, she rears up and throws York and a groom to the ground. She plunges and kicks, kicking a carriage pole and Black Beauty as she loses her footing and falls. York sits on her head while others hurry to unbuckle Black Beauty and cut Ginger's harness.

Ginger's explosive reaction illustrates the safety concern York expressed in the previous chapter. Driving accidents can be far more dangerous than riding accidents, so getting Ginger unhitched and away from the carriage and Black Beauty is extremely important—so she doesn't get tangled or run off with the carriage. So forcing a spirited horse to wear the bearing rein, the novel suggests, isn't just bad for the horse. It also creates a safety hazard when that horse inevitably protests.

A groom turns Black Beauty into his stall with the **bearing rein** still tight—he's so upset, angry, and uncomfortable that he's tempted to kick. Grooms bring Ginger in soon after, and York comes in and releases Black Beauty's bearing rein. He grouses that he knew this would happen, but he can't control Mrs. W if Lord W can't. He attends to Black Beauty's swollen kick wound.

It drives home just how uncomfortable the bearing rein is that even Black Beauty feels ready to kick someone—thus far, he's carefully followed Duchess's advice to behave and be gentle. York again insists that he has no power to advocate for the horses. He likely fears he'd lose his position, which highlights how people's economic concerns affect how much they can stand up for others.

Lord W is very upset when he finds out, but he blames York for listening to Mrs. W instead of him. After this, Ginger never pulls the carriage again. One of Lord W's sons starts training Ginger for foxhunting, while Black Beauty pulls the carriage with a horse named Max. Max is used to the **bearing rein**, though he acknowledges that it's shortening their lives. Black Beauty asks if people know how bad it is for horses. Max says he's not sure about their owners, but dealers and horse doctors know. Once, when someone asked Max's dealer why he was training with a bearing rein, the dealer said London folks won't buy horses if the horses can't use the bearing rein. The dealer said it's bad for the horses—but it's good for business, as the horses wear out faster and people have to replace their horses.

The fact that York gets in trouble for the accident confirms that York would likely lose his job if he spoke out too much against the bearing rein. Pulling with Max, Black Beauty gets more insight into how other people in the Victorian era think about horses and bearing reins—and it's not a rosy picture. Essentially, Max's story suggests that dealers don't have any economic reason to oppose the bearing rein, since they sell more horses if horses wear out faster. The health and dignity of the animal, on the other hand, isn't a compelling enough reason on its own to oppose the bearing rein.

Black Beauty suffers with the **bearing rein** for four months; he can hardly describe the experience. He knows if he'd been there much longer, his health or his temper would've given out. Now, he foams at the mouth thanks to the sharp bit and his unnatural head position. But it's not normal for horses to foam; it means they're uncomfortable. And the bearing rein makes it hurt to breathe. Black Beauty used to know that John and Squire Gordon would protect him. Now, though he suspects York knows how much damage the bearing rein does, York does nothing to help.

Black Beauty's health is starting to suffer, and he's losing trust in the people who care for him. Noting that it's not normal that he foams allows him to teach readers what a horse should look like as it works—potentially arming readers to say something when they see a horse foaming and uncomfortable, as Joe Green did earlier. Fortunately, Black Beauty implies that his time working with the bearing rein is coming to an end—but that is, of course, no guarantee that whatever comes next will be better.

CHAPTER 24

In the spring, Lord W and Mrs. W go to London with York. Black Beauty, Ginger, and some other horses remain behind with the head groom. Lady Anne stays behind; she is an exceptional horsewoman and often rides with her male relatives. She usually rides Black Beauty, while her companions prefer Ginger or a mare named Lizzie—whom the gentlemen love, but whom Ginger insists is nervous. A man named Blantyre likes Lizzie a lot, and one day, Lady Anne insists on riding Lizzie, since Blantyre has said such good things about the mare. Blantyre tries to convince Lady Anne to switch the saddles, but Lady Anne remains unmoved. A footman asks that Lady Anne and Blantyre deliver a message to the doctor, and they then ride out.

At first, it seems like things are looking up for Black Beauty. He describes Lady Anne's riding with the same glowing regard as he described Mrs. Gordon's, which indicates that this is a happy time for him. Keep in mind too that Lady Anne is riding sidesaddle, which means she's safer on a quiet and trustworthy horse like Black Beauty—and will perhaps be much less safe on a "nervous" mare like Lizzie. This seems especially true given how much Mrs. Gordon preferred Black Beauty to Ginger, who wouldn't have hurt her mistress but who was nevertheless less suited for riding sidesaddle.

Things are fine until they get to the doctor's house. There, Blantyre gets off and starts to open the gate for Lady Anne, but she insists that she and Lizzie can wait by the road. Blantyre hangs Black Beauty's rein on the fence and disappears, while Lady Anne relaxes her reins and hums. Moments later, some disorganized carthorses and colts trot out of an open gate, a boy behind them cracking a whip. One colt runs straight into Lizzie, who kicks out and then gallops off with Lady Anne. Black Beauty whinnies for Blantyre, who soon returns. They gallop after Lady Anne, taking directions from various people and navigating difficult terrain. They catch sight of Lizzie and Lady Anne as they approach a wide dyke (ditch)—but instead of stopping, Lizzie jumps it and falls.

Lady Anne reads as an extremely trusting rider as she loosens Lizzie's reins and seems not to pay attention to her surroundings. So she's totally unprepared when Lizzie gets scared and bolts, and she has no chance of gaining control and slowing Lizzie down on her own. This highlights the importance of riding carefully—particularly if readers recall the devastating foxhunt from Chapter Two, it's clear that both Lizzie and Lady Anne are in danger as they gallop wildly over difficult terrain.

Black Beauty and Blantyre jump the ditch carefully and find Lady Anne facedown at the bottom of it. Lizzie has since run off, and two men come to help after seeing Lizzie loose. Blantyre tells one man to take Black Beauty to the doctor and then to the hall for help and a carriage. The man isn't a skilled rider, so Black Beauty tries to gallop gently. They finally reach the hall, and another man takes Ginger to find a Lord George. When Ginger returns, she says she got to Lady Anne just as the doctor did. She isn't dead.

Blantyre is a far more experienced rider (and more secure, since he's riding astride), so leaping over the dyke isn't as difficult for him. This is another instance of good horsemanship. Then, in the flurry of trying to get help for Lady Anne, Black Beauty reminds readers how powerless horses are. He only puts together how things turned out much later, as nobody tells him anything like they would a person.

Lord George has been taking Ginger hunting, which York doesn't approve of—he doesn't have a steady enough hand to train a hunter. Ginger enjoys it, but she also comes back from rides strained and coughing. Two days after the accident, Blantyre comes to the stable to praise Black Beauty, whom he insists should be Lady Anne's horse from here on out. Black Beauty is thrilled.

It seems ominous that Lord George is training Ginger to hunt, despite York's misgivings. For one, this suggests that Lord George is too full of himself to listen to York and do what's best for the horse. The fact that Ginger is strained after these rides also seems concerning—Lord George isn't doing a good job. But for Black Beauty, things seem to be looking up, especially if he can be Lady Anne's horse after this.

CHAPTER 25

The man in charge of the stables while York is away is named Reuben Smith. He's a good man with some veterinary training, and he's well liked—but he loves alcohol. He stays sober for weeks or months, and then has a "bout" and terrorizes his wife and everyone else. Max tells Black Beauty that Smith was fired once, years ago, when he couldn't drive a group home because he was drunk, but he returned just before Ginger and Black Beauty came to Earlshall.

Introducing Smith like this makes it seem like leaving him in charge of the stables is an accident waiting to happen. It's worth noting that Sewell was active in the British temperance movement, so she didn't think drinking was a good idea—which further situates Smith as an antagonist and someone readers (and the horses) shouldn't trust.

In early April, Smith is tasked with driving Blantyre to the train station and riding back on Black Beauty. At the station, Blantyre tells Smith to take care of Lady Anne and to not let silly young people ruin Black Beauty. Smith leaves Black Beauty at an inn and asks the ostler to have him ready at four, but at four, Smith doesn't arrive—and the ostler notices that Black Beauty has a nail loose in his shoe. Smith appears at six and refuses to get the nail fixed. This is unlike him. Smith then disappears for hours. When he returns at nine, he's in a bad temper and curses at the ostler and the landlord.

Black Beauty, as a horse, doesn't see firsthand that Smith is drinking—but that seems to be what's going on when he's late several times and refuses to fix the loose nail. Seeing Smith in such a temper and seeing him express such little regard for Black Beauty's wellbeing (a loose nail can lead to a shoe coming off, which can be dangerous and painful) suggests Blantyre was wrong to worry about "silly young people" ruining Black Beauty. It seems more likely that Smith's drunken carelessness will lead to tragedy than anything else.

Smith gallops Black Beauty away from the inn, whipping him often. It's very dark and the roads have been repaired recently, so the rough cobblestones loosen Black Beauty's shoe. Normally, Smith would think about this and slow down, but he's too drunk to notice. Smith pushes Black Beauty to gallop over a dangerous stretch of road, where the stones are even sharper. By now, Black Beauty has lost his shoe, and his hoof has split down to the quick. He stumbles and falls on his knees, flinging Smith over his head. Once Black Beauty manages to stand, he moves to the side of the road. Smith groans once.

Alcohol doesn't just make Smith careless; it makes him cruel. Black Beauty has never been whipped like this, and there's no indication that he's not doing his best for his rider. Because of his loose and then missing shoe, though, Black Beauty's best isn't what it usually is—but he has no way to make Smith stop abusing him and tell him that he's in excruciating pain due to his splitting hoof. Then, disaster strikes: Black Beauty is an animal, not a machine, and he finally gives out.

For hours, Black Beauty stands, listening for anyone coming. But it's not a busy road and nobody comes. It's a lovely night, though, and it reminds Black Beauty of his nights spent lying beside Duchess.

Black Beauty escapes from his pain by remembering his happy early years with his mother. But there's no real way to get around that he's been cruelly abused—and that Smith's abuse has injured Black Beauty and Smith himself.

CHAPTER 26

At about midnight, Black Beauty hears a horse coming. He realizes it's Ginger and whinnies. She's pulling the dog-cart with two men in it. The men stop and inspect Smith: he's dead. One man is shocked; he didn't think Black Beauty could do such a thing. But when the other man tries to lead Black Beauty forward, he realizes that Black Beauty's hoof is split. They deduce that Smith was drinking; sober, he'd never try to ride a horse without a shoe over these cobblestones.

Note that the men initially blame Black Beauty for the accident, implying that Black Beauty purposefully threw Smith. But the truth is inarguable: Smith was drunk and not thinking, and his carelessness resulted in his own death and serious injury to Black Beauty. This reinforces one of the novel's main points about horse care and neglect: Smith certainly didn't intend to hurt Black Beauty, but his carelessness led him to do so anyway.

The men heave Smith's body into the dog-cart and one man drives Ginger toward Earlshall. The other man, a groom, binds a handkerchief around Black Beauty's hoof. The three-mile walk home is excruciating. At the stable, a groom bandages Black Beauty's knees and the next day, a farrier says the joint is probably fine—but the skin will always be blemished. It takes a long time for Black Beauty's knees to heal. He develops proud flesh (raised, unattractive scarring), which the farrier burns out with caustic. Finally, the farrier applies a blistering fluid to take the hair off. Black Beauty doesn't know why, but he assumes they did their best.

Once again, Black Beauty, as a powerless animal, has no way to advocate for himself. He couldn't prevent the accident, and he can't give advice on choosing different veterinary care that might help his knees heal better. His scarred, hairless knees essentially become a symbol of his abuse: because of Smith's carelessness, Black Beauty will forever bear these marks. He can't escape them, though they weren't his fault.

Since no one was there to see Smith's death, there's an inquest. Several people at the inn give evidence that Smith was drunk when he left. People find Black Beauty's shoe, so soon, Black Beauty's name is cleared. Smith's wife is inconsolable and curses alcohol.

The inquest seems to intend to discover if perhaps Black Beauty was at fault—and had it gone the other way, it could seriously damage Black Beauty's prospects (few prospective buyers would want a horse who killed someone). But again, Black Beauty is just lucky that the evidence is easy to find—and that it's obvious he didn't throw Smith on purpose.

CHAPTER 27

Once Black Beauty's knees are healed, he's put in a small meadow for a few months. He's lonely all by himself—but one day, Ginger is turned in with him. They're happy to see each other, but Ginger shares that she's not here for Black Beauty's benefit: hard riding has ruined her, and they hope rest will help. Lord George is a careless rider, and he took Ginger in a steeplechase even though a groom said Ginger's back was strained. Ginger came in in the top three, but she couldn't breathe, and her back is even worse now. She laments that both she and Black Beauty have been ruined in their prime by "a drunkard" and a "fool." The horses happily spend time together in the meadow until Lord W returns.

The fact that both Ginger and Black Beauty end up in this field after being "ruined" highlights that Squire Gordon's good intentions couldn't save his beloved horses. They're powerless to care for or defend themselves against abuse and mistreatment. It's worth considering that at this point in time, when horses are the primary mode of transportation, being "ruined" (that is, unable to work) is a dangerous place to be in. If a horse can't work, after all, it's useless—and its life may be at risk.

Lord W and York come to the meadow one day. Lord W is very annoyed; he says he's lost a lot of money, and he ruined Squire Gordon's favorite horses. Ginger, he says, will have a year of rest, but Black Beauty isn't fit to be here with his knees. They must sell him. York says he knows a man in Bath who owns livery stables and would happily take a good, if unsightly, horse. The men leave, and Ginger laments that she's going to lose her only friend.

Fortunately for Black Beauty, at least, Ginger's use of "ruined" seems to be somewhat exaggerated; he can work, just not for someone as wealthy as Lord W. This again shows how Lord W is willing to prioritize his own desire to look fashionable over the wellbeing of the horse. And once Black Beauty leaves, he'll no longer have Lord W's protection against further abuse or neglect.

A week later, a groom comes to the field, halters Black Beauty, and leads him away. Black Beauty travels by train to the livery stable in Bath. There, the stables aren't as pleasant as he's used to: the stalls are on a slope and horses are tied in their stalls, so he can never get any rest on flat ground. But Black Beauty believes his new master does the best he can to care for his horses.

Things are getting progressively worse for Black Beauty, and now he begins to introduce readers to what bad stable management looks like. He begins by describing the sloping stables, which makes work hard since he can't get proper rest. This also highlights the importance of rest to a horse's wellbeing.

CHAPTER 28

Up to this point, Black Beauty's drivers have all known how to drive. But since Black Beauty is quiet, gentle, and dependable, his master often rents him out to inexperienced drivers. Black Beauty suffers through "tight-rein drivers," who insist on holding the reins very tight to "hold[] a horse up"—as though horses can't hold themselves up. For a horse like Black Beauty, who has a soft and sensitive mouth, it's "tormenting" and "stupid." He also has to deal with "loose-rein drivers," who keep no tension on the reins and therefore have no control if their horse spooks or if something else happens. Driving a horse like this also teaches a horse bad habits, which must be trained or beaten out later.

In addition to the less-than-ideal stables, Black Beauty also must now put up with incompetent drivers—and this, he makes clear, is maddening. The people who believe they must hold the horse up themselves by holding tight to the reins, Black Beauty implies, essentially refuse to trust that horses are designed to stay upright and move on their own—they don't believe a horse is competent. The loose-rein drivers, on the other hand, get into dangerous situations like Lady Anne did, since they're not paying attention.

The loose-rein drivers are generally careless; they tend to pay attention to anything but their horses. Once, Black Beauty goes out with a gentleman who has his wife and children with him. The man takes no notice as Black Beauty gets a stone caught in his shoe. Any good driver would notice something was wrong immediately, but this man pays no attention as the stone wedges itself tighter into Black Beauty's hoof and begins to hurt. The man only notices Black Beauty limping after a half mile—and then he exclaims that the livery sent him out with a lame horse. A passing farmer stops and asks to inspect Black Beauty; he removes the stone and tells the incredulous man that horses can indeed get stones stuck in their hooves, and that the stones are dangerous. For a "job-horse," treatment like this is normal.

This anecdote illustrates just how careless loose-rein drivers can be. The gentleman's first thought, upon noticing that Black Beauty is limping, is to blame the stable—a sign he hasn't paid any attention to Black Beauty the entire drive. Then, the gentleman shows how ignorant he is when it comes to horses and horse care. It takes the generosity and concern of a farmer to get the stone out of Black Beauty's shoe—again, Black Beauty is powerless to help himself and can only hope that people like this will advocate for him—and the gentleman has no idea that such a thing is even possible. Given what tragedies have already occurred in the novel when people have been careless, this creates a sense of foreboding.

CHAPTER 29

Black Beauty also suffers at the hands of people who drive using the "steam-engine style." These people believe horses are like small steam engines and can go forever, no matter how heavy the load is or how difficult the roads are. They never get out to help the horse going uphill—they paid to ride, and so the horse will keep going. These drivers are exhausting; Black Beauty would rather go twice as far with a good driver. They also seldom put the drag (brake) on going downhill, which causes accidents; and they sometimes forget to take the drag off at the bottom. Instead of starting off slowly, they also head off at full speed—and pull their horses up way too fast.

The steam-engine drivers essentially refuse to acknowledge that horses are living, feeling beings who, like people, get tired. These people essentially are extremely entitled, in addition to possibly being uneducated about horses. In describing them, Black Beauty again highlights how powerless horses are: he can't tell these drivers to engage or disengage the drag, and he can't tell them that he really needs them to get out and walk to give him a break. As a horse, he's at their mercy.

Once, Black Beauty is out pulling with Rory; they have their own driver who's considerate and gentle. But as they reach a sharp turn with a hedge that means they can't see around it, Black Beauty hears a horse coming at them quickly—and the oncoming horse and gig run right into Rory. The shaft goes right through Rory's chest, though it doesn't kill him. He's eventually sold to cart coal, which is one of the most difficult and horrific jobs for horses.

Black Beauty implies that the oncoming driver is a steam-engine type—and Rory's injury shows how dangerous that type of driving is. Moreover, Rory is ruined in much the same way Black Beauty was, and this means he's sold further down the class ladder—into one of the worst jobs for horses. Horses, this shows, are some of the worst victims of poor driving and of the accidents poor driving causes.

After this, Black Beauty begins pulling the carriage with a mare named Peggy. She's lovely and sweet, but anxious. The first time they go out together, Black Beauty notices that Peggy has an odd pace. She trots a few paces and then throws in a canter stride, which is very unpleasant for Black Beauty. When they get home, Peggy explains that she knows her paces are bad—but her legs are so short that she can't keep up. Her first home was with a kind clergyman who didn't care that she's not very fast, but her second master whipped her and encouraged her odd gait. Eventually, Peggy is sold to two ladies who want a gentle horse, not a fast one.

Peggy's story shows how her second owner was far more interested in getting what he wanted out of her (speed) than in letting Peggy do what she does best, and work at her own pace. He didn't respect what Peggy's body can do, and so Peggy's natural gaits—which sound slow, but otherwise fine—are destroyed. However, Peggy's happy ending offers some hope that not all is lost for Black Beauty, or indeed, the other horses in the novel whom Black Beauty meets. Kind, respectful owners are out there, but they're perhaps rarer than one might like to think.

Peggy's replacement is a young horse with a bad habit of spooking. He tells Black Beauty that he's always been timid, and his first master used to whip him when he'd turn his head to see things while wearing blinkers. That just made him more afraid. Once, the horse says, someone told his master not to do that, as whipping a scared horse just scares them more. But he can never figure out what's scary and what's not if he can't look at things.

This nameless horse's story adds credence to what Sir Oliver said about blinkers earlier in the novel: that they're dangerous and don't actually help horses be less afraid. The horse's master also doesn't seem to realize that this horse is naturally inclined to be nervous and afraid of things. In this way, the owner doesn't respect the horse he has—instead, he tries to whip the horse into becoming the horse he wants.

Occasionally, Black Beauty does experience good driving. Once, he takes the light gig to a house where a gentleman checks the fit of the harness and asks the ostler to remove Black Beauty's curb bit (a harsher bit that uses leverage). The man's skillful driving makes Black Beauty happy and proud. Eventually, this gentleman convinces Black Beauty's master to sell him to a friend, Mr. Barry.

The change in Black Beauty when he's driven by this kind gentleman is pronounced. It shows how important being a good horseperson is—and what a positive effect it has on the horse. And hopefully, having a new life with Mr. Barry will save Black Beauty from the dangers and indignities of being a job-horse.

CHAPTER 30

Mr. Barry is a businessman in Bath, whose doctor wants him to ride horses for exercise. He boards Black Beauty at a stable and hires a man named Filcher as a groom. Mr. Barry doesn't know much about horses, but he's kind and orders large amounts of the best horse food. Filcher knows his business; he used to be an ostler. But soon, Black Beauty finds he's not getting enough oats. He has no way to tell Mr. Barry why he's no longer energetic. This goes on for two months, until Mr. Barry rides Black Beauty to visit a friend who's knowledgeable about horses. When he asks about Black Beauty's poor condition, Mr. Barry says Filcher insists horses are just weak in the autumn. The friend says that's nonsense and suggests that someone "wicked" is "rob[bing] a dumb beast" of his oats.

Mr. Barry is inexperienced when it comes to horses, but he has good intentions—a combination that, by this point, the novel has encouraged readers to be suspicious of. And sure enough, Mr. Barry's lack of knowledge means that he doesn't realize Black Beauty isn't getting enough to eat until Black Beauty is thin and weak. Then, the gentleman drives home how powerless Black Beauty is by referring to him as a "dumb beast." In this context, this just means that Black Beauty doesn't have human speech and can't advocate for himself, and it highlights how powerless he is.

Black Beauty resents being called a "dumb beast," but he knows where the oats are going: Filcher's son always visits with his father in the morning, and he takes oats with him. A week after the visit to Mr. Barry's friend, the police enter the stable with the boy and ask to see where Mr. Filcher keeps his rabbits' food. The frightened boy shows them Black Beauty's feed bin. Filcher is imprisoned, though the boy isn't found guilty.

Filcher's situation is complex. He reads as somewhat poor if he's having to steal to feed his rabbits—but by the novel's logic, he's also not a good person since he's stealing from a powerless horse. So this offers another angle to look at how wealth and virtue intersect, and how being poor can cause a person to do things considered cruel.

CHAPTER 31

Black Beauty's next groom is a man named Alfred Smirk. He's civil and kind to Black Beauty—at least when Mr. Barry is watching. Though he's never outright cruel, he never properly grooms Black Beauty, cleans his feet, or cleans the tack. People think he's wonderful, but Black Beauty considers him the laziest and most conceited man he's ever met.

Again, Black Beauty is totally powerless—Alfred seems amazing to other people, and Black Beauty has no way to tell them that he's actually terrible at his job. This suggests that the only way people are going to find out about Alfred is if something happens to Black Beauty—or he could go on neglecting horses forever, if he doesn't get caught.

Black Beauty would be reasonably comfortable if Alfred would only clean his stall out. The vapors irritate Black Beauty's eyes, and even Mr. Barry comments on it once. Alfred insists that it's dangerous to fully clean a horse's stall, as they might slip in or get sick from the cold water. Mr. Barry then asks Alfred to have the drains checked. The bricklayer finds nothing wrong—and the stench in Black Beauty's stall gets worse.

Not being properly groomed or having clean tack is one thing, but Black Beauty insists that living in his own filth is something else entirely. Alfred seems to know exactly what he's doing here—and he's abusing Mr. Barry's trust and ignorance to get out of doing the unpleasant job of cleaning Black Beauty's stall.

Standing on wet straw makes Black Beauty's feet painful. Mr. Barry observes that Black Beauty has started stumbling, and Alfred says he's noticed the same when he exercises Black Beauty. He never exercises Black Beauty; Black Beauty is just stuck in a stall eating high-energy feed if Mr. Barry is too busy to ride. This makes Black Beauty feel terrible—but rather than exercise him or change his feed, Alfred just administers horrible and ineffective medicine.

Finally, Alfred's neglect starts to take a toll on Black Beauty's feet and general health. Feeding a horse to match their workload is extremely important—but Alfred isn't doing that. Whether this is out of ignorance or willful neglect is unclear, but the result remains the same. Black Beauty is suffering, and again, he has no way to tell anyone what's going on or who's at fault.

Finally, Black Beauty's feet are so tender that he trips twice while carrying Mr. Barry. Mr. Barry stops at a farrier to see what's wrong. The farrier instantly diagnoses Black Beauty with a bad case of thrush, which occurs when horses are standing in foul stables. The farrier treats Black Beauty's hooves the next day and orders Black Beauty's bedding to be completely removed every day. He also explains how to feed Black Beauty properly. Black Beauty is soon better, but Mr. Barry is fed up with deceitful grooms—so Mr. Barry sells him.

As the farrier explains, thrush is a fungal infection that happens when a horse's feet never dry out—as when they're standing in their own urine and excrement all day. So this is a moment where both Mr. Barry and readers can learn a new horse care tip. And while Black Beauty recovers from the thrush, his future is once again uncertain. He has no control over where he's going, after all.

CHAPTER 32

Horse fairs are certainly amusing—if one has nothing to lose. They're filled with young horses, strings of ponies, and cart horses. Many horses there are like Black Beauty: well-bred horses who have "fallen into the middle class" for some reason. In the background, though, there are always broken horses with swollen knees, visible ribs, and sores on their backs. Many people selling horses lie as they try to make sales.

Black Beauty implies that the people who attend horse fairs aren't the ones with something to lose—it's the horses, particularly the broken ones, with a lot to lose. Noting that he's "fallen into the middle class" reinforces that Black Beauty's story is taking readers on a journey from high class to low as he passes from owner to owner.

Black Beauty is tied near several other horses who are still in good condition. Most men reject him because of his knees. Those who are interested inspect his mouth, eyes, and legs, and then watch him trot. Some are rough; others are kind. One man who inspects Black Beauty is particularly kind. He's small, gentle, and cheery, and he doesn't smell of alcohol or tobacco. Black Beauty's seller rejects the man's 23-pound offer and walks away. A hard-faced man offers the same a bit later—but the kind man returns and purchases Black Beauty for 24 pounds and change. After a quick meal of oats, the man saddles Black Beauty and they ride for London.

The inspection is meant to gauge how old Black Beauty is (by looking at his teeth), his general health, and his soundness (by inspecting his legs and watching him move). At the same time, though, Black Beauty is inspecting his prospective buyers—though he can't control who buys him. So it seems like luck that a kind man purchases Black Beauty. From the outset, this man seems to take the horse's needs and health into consideration—he realizes Black Beauty needs a snack and some energy before they can continue on their way.

The main thoroughfare into London seems to go on forever, but Black Beauty finally reaches the city. His owner, Jerry, greets a man he calls Governor when they pass a cab stand. Then, Jerry turns Black Beauty onto a narrow side street and stops in front of one of the sad-looking houses. When he whistles, a woman, a girl, and a boy run out to meet the new horse. The girl, Dolly, pats Black Beauty's shoulder—it feels wonderful. Polly, the woman, fetches a bran mash.

Jerry and his family might be poorer than those who have owned Black Beauty before, but they seem just as kind and comfortable around horses as the Gordons were. And their being working-class also doesn't seem to hinder their willingness or ability to feed Black Beauty well, since he frames the bran mash as an expensive treat.

CHAPTER 33

Black Beauty has never met such a lovely family. Jerry and Polly are tidy and kind, their son Harry is very sensible, and Dolly is just like her mother. Jerry has his own cab and keeps his own two horses, Black Beauty and Captain. Captain is old now, but he's well-bred—he once was a warhorse and led the regiment in Crimea.

Black Beauty's narration shows that Jerry is at perhaps the upper end of the working class, since he can afford his own cab and the cost of keeping two horses. Captain, like Black Beauty, seems to have "fallen into the middle class" after a youth spent with upper-class owners, suggesting this is a common fate for horses.

The next morning, Polly and Dolly come out to offer Black Beauty apples and bread. It makes Black Beauty feel like his old self to be treated so kindly. Polly and Jerry decide on a new name for Black Beauty, and Jerry takes Captain out for a morning's work. At midday, Jerry returns and carefully fits Black Beauty's harness—which has no **bearing rein**, and only a gentle snaffle bit. They then drive to the cab stand they passed the night before. Black Beauty pulls into line with all the other cabs and horses, which are nibbling hay while their drivers chat and read papers. The men gather as soon as Jerry pulls up and suggest that Black Beauty is too good-looking—there must be something wrong with him. When the Governor inspects Black Beauty and says he's a good horse, the other drivers accept his judgment.

Again, Black Beauty shows how far kindness goes: simply being offered a small treat makes him feel secure, safe, and loyal to his new owners. He learns how good of a horseperson Jerry is when Jerry takes so much time fitting Black Beauty's harness. This means that Black Beauty will have the best chance to be able to do his work comfortably and well—and not using a bearing rein helps in this regard, too. On the cab stand, Black Beauty's good breeding seems obvious to the other cabmen. As far as they're concerned, this means Black Beauty must have an injury or ailment more serious than just having scarred knees—and it also suggests they don't trust wealthy people to sell their horses with an honest assessment of a horse's outlook.

Black Beauty's first week as a cab horse is difficult. He's not used to the bustle and noise of London, but he soon learns he can trust Jerry, and he gets used to it. Jerry treats his horses as well as he treats himself, and he seldom uses the whip. His stalls are on a slope, but Black Beauty and Captain can be in them untied, which helps. Jerry is generous with food and fresh water, and he doesn't work on Sundays. Getting two nights and a day's rest every week is the only thing that keeps Black Beauty going. During this time, he gets to know Captain.

Black Beauty implies that he settles into London so quickly because he learns that he can trust Jerry and trust that he'll be cared for. While Jerry, like the livery stable, has stalls on an incline, Jerry does what Black Beauty says is the preferable thing: turn the horses loose so they can rest however is most comfortable for them. Further, Black Beauty also highlights the importance of rest, particularly when a horse is working as hard as cab horses do.

CHAPTER 34

Captain was broken in and trained to be an army horse. He tells Black Beauty that he loved the training, and he loved his rider, an officer in the cavalry. Being shipped to Crimea in a ship was terrible, and life there was very difficult. The soldiers did all they could to keep their horses comfortable. When Black Beauty asks if the fighting was terrible, Captain says he always wanted to hear the trumpet—that meant they could happily rush forward. Captain and his rider rode into battle many times, and he saw many horses die gruesome deaths. But his master was encouraging, so Captain was never afraid.

The way that Captain frames his account suggests that he sees his younger self as naïve and innocent to the horrors of the world, just as Black Beauty, in his younger years, was innocent to how terrible the bearing rein can be. Captain also reinforces that the way a person treats their horse can make a huge difference: he thought war was just fine because he had his master to care for and comfort him.

Captain pauses before telling Black Beauty about the one day he *was* terrified. It was autumn, and the men got the word to ride out. He and his master were in the front, waiting for the signal to charge, and Captain's master stroked his neck. Lots of things happened that Captain says he can't explain, but then came the final charge. The gunfire was heavier than usual, and a cannonball blew Captain's master right off Captain's back. Captain wanted to stop and protect his master from being trampled, but he couldn't.

Given that Captain was in Crimea, it's most likely that Captain and his master rode in the Charge of the Light Brigade—an 1854 military failure during the Crimean War between Russia and allied French and British forces. Captain's bravado disappears as soon as his master dies—then, he's just another scared, wild horse on the battlefield.

Many horses died that day or were wounded. Captain says that army farriers shot all the seriously injured horses; only about one in four returned. He was lucky to make it home from the war. When Black Beauty says he's heard people talk about war like it's great, Captain says it's fun when it's pretend—but it's awful when so many men and horses die. Black Beauty asks what the fight was about. Captain doesn't know, but he believes the enemy must have been evil, if it was okay to travel so far to kill them.

Having experienced war firsthand, Captain can say with certainty that war isn't great—it kills men and horses, just like foxhunting does, but on a much larger scale. And it's interesting that Black Beauty and Captain begin to discuss whether the war was worthwhile. The Charge of the Light Brigade is noteworthy for the fact that it was devastating in terms of casualties and equine deaths—and in the grand scheme of the Crimean War, it accomplished next to nothing.

CHAPTER 35

Jerry is the best man Black Beauty has ever known. He's as just and moral as John Manly, and he regularly makes up little songs. One he sings often is about him, Polly, Harry, and Dolly helping each other—which they do every morning as they all prepare the cab and horses for a day of work. Nothing makes Jerry angrier than late people who want a cab horse to go fast because they were idle. Once, two young men tell Jerry to hurry and get them to the station in time for the one o'clock train for a shilling extra. Jerry refuses. However, Jerry isn't opposed to hurrying if it's for a good reason.

Describing how Jerry is able to rally his family to help bolsters Black Beauty's assessment of Jerry as a good man. He's not only good to his horses; he's also kind and loving to his wife and children. While he's working, he also prioritizes his horse's wellbeing over money—something Black Beauty seems to find extremely noble. But this also highlights Jerry's privilege, as he seemingly doesn't feel the need to push his horses hard for a bit extra.

Once, a young man slips on an orange peel near Jerry, and Jerry is the first to run and help the man into a nearby shop. A few minutes later, the young man asks Jerry to take him to the station quickly, for an extra fare—his fall made him late, but he can't miss the train. Jerry agrees and tells Black Beauty that they can move fast. It's the middle of the day, and the streets are full of all sorts of vehicles going at all speeds in all directions. Navigating the traffic is a difficult art, but Black Beauty trusts Jerry, so they cut through and reach the station with eight minutes to spare. The young man tries to pay Jerry an extra half-crown, but Jerry refuses it.

The young men in the previous passage were just lollygagging, so Jerry didn't think it was worth it to try to help them. This man, on the other hand, is held up through no fault of his own and is both apologetic and generous, so Jerry has no issue hurrying. In a way, he's embodying what John Manly said about wanting to always help someone if he can. It's also worth noting that hurrying every so often probably isn't going to do much harm to Black Beauty or Captain.

Back at the cab stand, the other drivers mock Jerry for compromising his principles for an extra fare. Jerry shares that he turned down an extra half-crown; he was just happy to see the man get to the station in time. One driver quips that Jerry will never be rich, but Jerry says the New Testament says lots of "curious things" about rich men, so he doesn't want to be one. Governor Grant says Jerry would deserve his wealth if he was rich, but the other driver will die poor no matter what since he spends so much money on whips. The driver insists his horse won't go without a whip, and he's been unlucky. Governor Gray says Lady Luck prefers men with common sense and good hearts.

There are several wealthy people identified in the New Testament, some of whom use their money to support Jesus and Christianity—and others who are greedy and are punished for their greed. Moreover, the New Testament suggests that wealth can be a moral liability if someone only thinks of themselves and refuses to be generous. The implication here is that Jerry deserves his extra money, as he did something virtuous and Christian by helping the deserving young man get to the station on time. The other driver in this exchange, though, isn't virtuous: he's cruel to his horse, and so Governor Grant insists he doesn't deserve any extra money he might bring in.

CHAPTER 36

One morning as Jerry is hitching Black Beauty to the cab, a Mr. Briggs enters the yard and asks if he could arrange for Jerry to begin driving Mrs. Briggs to church on Sundays. Jerry informs Mr. Briggs that he only has a six days' license and can't legally work on Sundays. Mr. Briggs says it'd be easy to update the license, and he'd make the extra cost worth Jerry's while. Jerry explains to Mr. Briggs why he won't do it: he once had a seven days' license and it was terrible for his health, and he prefers to attend church himself and see his family on Sundays. Besides, he says, God made a day of rest on purpose and surely knew it would benefit all people and animals. Mr. Briggs walks away, annoyed.

Jerry has several reasons for not working on Sundays: he's a religious man, for one, but he also recognizes that having a day to rest and recharge is essential if he wants to stay healthy and happy. He also tells Mr. Briggs that it's not just people who benefit from a day off; the cab horses also need time to rest up. This is another way that the novel illustrates its vision of a dignified life. It's one where people and animals get the rest they need—but it's also one where people have enough money to tell the Mr. Briggses of the world that they won't work an extra day for a bit more money.

Jerry calls Polly out of the house and tells her about Mr. Briggs's proposal. He says the Briggses have been wonderful customers and asks what they should do. Polly says she wouldn't have Jerry work Sundays for a sovereign extra a week—money can be tight now, but she doesn't want to go back to working Sundays. Jerry says he told Mr. Briggs as much. For the next three weeks, Mrs. Briggs doesn't hire Jerry, which makes work much more difficult.

When Polly echoes exactly what Jerry said without having heard Jerry and Mr. Briggs's conversation, it highlights how close and aligned Polly and Jerry are in their beliefs. It's more important to them to be principled and look out for their health and wellbeing than it is to earn a bit more money—though again, this shows that the family has some amount of privilege.

The men at the cab stand say Jerry was a fool to turn down Mr. Briggs, but several take his side. One driver says God and England give men and animals the right to a day of rest—and they should take those days. Another driver, who isn't religious, says he'll make money when he can, since religious folks seem just as terrible as everyone else. Jerry argues that people who do bad things aren't religious, no matter how much they attend church. The argument continues: one man says if religion was any good, people wouldn't have to work on Sundays—and drivers only work Sundays because of the churchgoers. Jerry points out that if the Sunday drivers went on strike, they'd soon have the day off. The churchgoers can either go to a closer church or walk.

During the Victorian Era, the "Act for Preventing Abuses and Profanations on the Lord's Day, Called Sunday" forbade many types of paid work and even leisure activities on Sundays—but clearly not cab work. This starts to illustrate how laws like this might have good intentions (to give everyone a day to rest and attend religious services, if they're so inclined). However, in practice, they benefit wealthy religious folks most of all, the ones who can afford to take a cab to church every week. Jerry expresses subtle pro-labor sentiments when he suggests the Sunday drivers strike for their day off. He also echoes what John Manly said earlier in the novel about religious folks needing to act virtuous and put others' wellbeing above their own desires, if they want to consider themselves properly religious.

CHAPTER 37

Several weeks later, Polly comes running out as soon as Jerry and Black Beauty get home with news: Mrs. Briggs wants Jerry to take her out tomorrow, since none of the other cabs are good and clean enough. Jerry laughs. After this, Jerry drives Mrs. Briggs often, but never on Sundays.

The novel links Jerry's clean, safe cab to his virtue—implying then that the available Sunday cab drivers aren't as virtuous, since their cabs aren't so clean.

Once, though, Black Beauty and Jerry do work a Sunday. Polly approaches Jerry on Sunday morning and says that Dinah, a neighbor with an infant, needs to travel 10 miles into the country to see her dying mother. Jerry is concerned for the horses' welfare, but Polly says she'd like to help others as she'd want others to help them. Jerry borrows a light trap (a smaller, lighter cart) from a neighbor, and he, Black Beauty, and Dinah set off midmorning. It's May, and the weather is lovely and fresh.

While the Briggses read as wealthy, Dinah doesn't. So agreeing to drive her on a Sunday is essentially an act of charity that Jerry performs, which Polly (and the novel's logic on the whole) suggests is acceptable for him to do. Jerry does recognize, though, that there's a cost to do thing this: Black Beauty is going to be tired after a 20-mile round trip. By borrowing the trap, he can ease Black Beauty's burden.

Finally, Jerry, Dinah, and Black Beauty reach a farmhouse. Rather than put Black Beauty in a cowshed, Jerry asks to turn him out in the meadow with some cows. Black Beauty happily rolls in the grass, gallops, nibbles the grass, and naps. Jerry seems just as happy as he reads from a small book and picks flowers. They come home slowly and when they arrive, Jerry tells Polly he attended a service in the meadow—the birds were singing hymns.

The trip to the country seems restorative for both Black Beauty and for Jerry. They both get a few hours to enjoy themselves in the meadow, and Jerry's book is presumably a Bible—so he's not ignoring that Christianity insists Sunday is a day of rest and religious reflection.

CHAPTER 38

Winter comes early this year with weeks on end of snow, sleet, rain, and wind. Dry cold is easy enough to deal with, as drivers put warm blankets on their standing horses. But the blankets get soaked instantly in wet weather. Some men have waterproof covers for their horses or for themselves. But the worst thing is that while horses only work half days, the men work full days without shelter. The worst for the horses are the slick streets, as it takes extra energy to try not to slip. Many men drink in taverns while they wait for passengers, but not Jerry. He occasionally visits a coffeeshop, and Dolly regularly brings him hot meals when he's waiting on the stand.

Black Beauty's description of working in winter suggests cab work this time of year is brutal. It requires the men and the horses to sacrifice their comfort and potentially their health just so they can earn a bit of money. But Black Beauty also implies that while it's exhausting, difficult work, it still needs to be done—he and the other horses pulling cabs keep Victorian England moving, and people don't stop moving because it's cold and rainy. Staying home isn't an option.

One day, as Jerry is eating his soup and chatting with Dolly, a gentleman approaches quickly and hails Jerry. Jerry starts to give his soup back to Dolly, but the gentleman says he can wait until Jerry is done. Jerry tells Dolly the man is a "real gentleman." After this, Jerry often drives the gentleman, who seems to be a real animal lover. He's one of the only people who even acknowledges the horse pulling the cab.

The gentleman puts his comfort aside so that Jerry can eat, something the novel suggests makes this gentleman particularly good and virtuous. This characterization becomes even more obvious when the gentleman acknowledges Black Beauty. The fact that most people don't acknowledge cab horses suggests that to many people, horses are like steam trains: they're machines that go, not animals with thoughts and feelings of their own.

One day, when the gentleman and one of his friends take Jerry's cab, they stop so the friend can run an errand. Jerry and the gentleman watch a carter leave his horses unattended—and the horses walk off. The carter returns when they've only gone a few steps, and he beats the horses' heads with a whip and reins. The gentleman threatens to take the carter to court and takes down the name and address on the cart as it moves away. When his friend returns, the friend teases the gentleman for getting involved in other people's business. But the gentleman says the world is so bad because people think only of themselves and never stand up for people or animals who are being abused and oppressed. He says a person is guilty if they see cruelty or evil happening and don't try to stop it.

The gentleman continues to distinguish himself as a virtuous, kind person. And though there's no implication that this gentleman is at all connected to John Manly, he echoes almost word for word John's earlier insistence that it's selfish for people to only look out for number one. Similarly, he believes that it's essential to advocate for those who are powerless, such as the carter's horses who perhaps didn't know they were supposed to stay standing until told otherwise. This also further justifies Jerry's choice to, for instance, drive Dinah into the country: he was helping out someone with much less than he has.

CHAPTER 39

Black Beauty is treated well for a cab horse. Jerry owns him and knows it's in his best interest to treat Black Beauty well. But many horses belong to big cab companies, who rent the horses to drivers for a day rate. Those drivers have to make enough money to pay for the use of the horse before they can make money for themselves, and those horses have a terrible time of it. This is a regular topic of conversation on the cab stand, and the Governor often speaks up if he sees a horse in particularly rough shape.

Now, the novel starts to explore how class and privilege influence how and if cab drivers (working-class people) can afford to be kind to their horses. Black Beauty acknowledges that Jerry is privileged, as he essentially works for himself and pockets all the money he earns (aside from the money he pays for his yearly cab license). Not all drivers are so lucky, though—and the worst victims of this system, Black Beauty implies, are the horses.

One day, a driver named Seedy Sam pulls up to the cab stand driving a horse that looks completely beat. The Governor suggests Seedy Sam belongs at the police station, but Seedy Sam says in a desperate tone that the police should go after the cab companies who charge such high rates for the horses, or after the people who set fares so low. He has to earn 18 shillings per day to pay his boss, and all drivers know that's a lot to earn. He has six kids, only one of which works, and he himself works 16-hour days and hasn't had a day off in months.

The Governor's implication is that Seedy Sam's horse is in such poor shape that Seedy Sam should have to suffer criminal consequences. But Seedy Sam insists that while he's not great to his horse, he essentially can't afford to treat his horse well. He makes it clear that 18 shillings is an exorbitant amount of money—and presumably, he barely makes enough working 100-plus-hour weeks to feed his family.

Seedy Sam says the drivers who have good bosses, or who own their horses, can do the right thing—but he can't. It's absurd to tell men to not overwork the horse. The horses are exhausted, the whip is the only thing that works, and men have to put their wives and children's wellbeing before that of the horse. Seedy Sam says he feels like an old man at 45. Gentlemen accuse cab drivers of overcharging, but he wishes they knew what it's like to work 16 hours per day in terrible weather for weeks on end. Black Beauty has never seen Jerry look sadder, and the Governor acknowledges that this is hard work. He doesn't know how to fix things, but he suggests Seedy Sam give his horse a kind word.

Again, Seedy Sam proposes that this is a matter of class and privilege. He simply can't afford, he insists, to not overwork his horse—not when his wife and children's wellbeing depends on overworking that horse. He also suggests that the wealthy people who make laws governing cab work (such as those setting the licensing fees and setting the low fares), who are presumably wealthy, have no idea what cab work is actually like. Essentially, he insists that what's missing in this system is empathy, understanding, and protections for society's most vulnerable.

A few mornings after, a new man drives up in Seedy Sam's cab and says Sam is ill with a fever. The next morning, the same man is back—and he shares that Sam died early this morning, raving about his boss, Skinner, and how he never had a Sunday to rest. Governor says soberly that this is a warning for all the drivers.

Seedy Sam's sudden death is chilling—the Governor infers that Seedy Sam worked himself to death because he felt he had no choice but to do so. Something, the novel implies, needs to change about cab work—and when the Governor insists this is a warning for the drivers, it's possible to interpret this as a call to stand up for their rights to a day off and try to improve things for others.

CHAPTER 40

One afternoon, a shabby cab drawn by a chestnut horse pulls up beside Black Beauty. The mare is in terrible shape. She seems familiar—and then Ginger and Black Beauty recognize each other. Ginger was once beautiful, but now her neck is thin, her legs are swollen, and she's clearly suffering and ill. Ginger explains that after a year in a meadow at Earlshall, a gentleman bought her. Her back strain returned after a long gallop, and she was then sold multiple times—and her situation got worse every time. Now, she says, a man who rents out cabs and horses owns her. That man believes Ginger is worth nothing, so the only thing to do with her is put her in a cheap cab and use her up. Her driver owes her owner lots of money every day, and there's no rest on Sundays.

Ginger never confirms, but it's implied that she's owned either by Skinner, Seedy Sam's former boss; or by another man who's just like Skinner. Now, readers get a look at exactly what a life working for Skinner is like for a horse: Ginger is in poor health, but nobody cares about helping her because they can work her until she dies. And while Ginger is now subject to purposeful cruelty and neglect, she insists that she landed here because long ago, Lord George, who didn't know what he was doing, permanently strained her back.

Black Beauty notes that once, Ginger defended herself when people were cruel to her. Ginger says that now, it's no use trying. Men are strong and cruel; all she can do is bear it until she dies, hopefully soon. Black Beauty is disturbed. Ginger and her driver head out moments later, but not long after, a cart carrying a dead chestnut horse passes the cab stand. The horse's tongue is dripping blood, its eyes are lifeless, and it has a white stripe on its forehead. Black Beauty can't confirm that it's Ginger, but he hopes it's her so her suffering is over.

It's disturbing for Black Beauty to realize that Ginger's spark is totally gone. Being abused and treated like she's nothing has made it clear to her that the only thing worth hoping for is death—because all she wants is to stop suffering. Again, Ginger ends up in this position because she experienced years of ignorance and neglect, and this damaged her ability to be a fully functional horse and provide transportation.

CHAPTER 41

Much of the suffering horses experience in London could be avoided with some common sense. Horses, Black Beauty notes, don't mind hard work if they're treated well—and he does believe that some horses with poor owners are happier than he was at Earlshall. Once, he sees a gray pony like Merrylegs trying to pull a heavy cart while a boy whips him. Merrylegs was never supposed to be sold, so it's probably not him—but this pony could've had just as happy of a life as Merrylegs until he ended up in his current position.

What Black Beauty essentially proposes is that kindness from people is what's most important to a horse's health and wellbeing. So though he was cared for well in his stable at Earlshall, York's unwillingness to oppose the bearing rein led to Black Beauty being unhappy. And while it's impossible to tell if this gray pony is Merrylegs or not, Black Beauty's anxiety about the possibility highlights how vulnerable horses are to people's whims.

Butchers' horses often go extremely fast, and Black Beauty learns why one day when he and Jerry wait near a butcher's shop. A young boy drives a heaving and exhausted horse up quickly and stops, just as the butcher comes out of the shop. The butcher scolds the boy for driving the horse so hard. The boy, though, argues that he's only doing as he's told. The butcher tells him to hurry, and then all the customers order meat that they need in an hour or less, so he has no choice. If gentlemen would order ahead, the boy says, he wouldn't have to run the horse so hard. The butcher agrees—but nobody cares about butchers, or their horses. He tells the boy to deliver orders on foot for the rest of the day.

Just like Seedy Sam, the butcher's boy makes it clear that both he and the horse are victims in a society that prioritizes the whims of the wealthy over the wellbeing of the poor. The boy implies that in order to keep his job (and to keep the customers ordering from this butcher), he has no choice but to work the horse so hard. The butcher doesn't have much more power than the boy does, but he does have the power to advocate for the horse and insist that the boy allow the horse the afternoon to rest.

Black Beauty does see some boys who treat their ponies very well. One boy sells greens and potatoes out of a cart drawn by a plucky old pony who clearly loves his master; the affection is mutual. Another old coal seller plods alongside his horse as they make their rounds, and the horse knows every stop and stops on his own.

These two horse-human pairs prove Black Beauty's point that kindness and doing one's best for a horse can make a horse's difficult life bearable. This also shows that kindness isn't just for wealthy or better-off gentlemen. The people Black Beauty describes seem extremely poor, and yet they care for their horses affectionately to the best of their abilities.

CHAPTER 42

When Jerry and Black Beauty get home one afternoon, Polly rushes up and says a man wants to hire Jerry's cab ahead of the election (put posters on it) and wants to know what Jerry's vote will be. Jerry says he won't work for the man; he has no interest in driving drunk voters, and he won't vote for the man anyway. On the morning before the election, Dolly and Harry enter the yard. Dolly is sobbing and dirty—boys threw dirt on her and called her a "little blue ragamuffin." Harry says he defended his sister against the "orange blackguards." After sending Dolly inside, Jerry tells Harry to stand up for Dolly—but he won't tolerate political talk in his house. Most people, he says, don't even know what politics is for. Elections are serious things, not excuses to shout and abuse people who don't vote the same.

This chapter may be a bit confusing to modern readers unfamiliar with Victorian election practices, but the gist of it is that Jerry applies the same kind of thinking to politics as he does to other aspects of his life. Just as he sees Sundays as a solemn day of rest, he believes voting is something serious that should allow a person to express their deeply held beliefs—ones that, ideally, support people who need extra help. The orange and blue that Dolly and Harry mention are the colors of the political parties; they're essentially engaging in political fights. "Blackguarding," meanwhile, refers to taunting the opposition—which is why Jerry insists that elections aren't about making up an excuse to torment others.

CHAPTER 43

Jerry and Black Beauty are kept very busy on election day. After a busy morning, Jerry gives Black Beauty a quick snack and eats a meat pie. They watch cabs rushing around—and see two women knocked down. Moments later, a young woman with a heavy child looks around like she's lost and approaches Jerry to ask for directions to St. Thomas's hospital. She's from the country, she explains, and needs to get her son to the hospital since he still can't walk. Jerry insists the woman can't make it the three miles on her own; he'll take her. The woman refuses since she doesn't have the money, but Jerry insists and the woman bursts into tears.

From a cab driver's perspective, election day is disorganized and disgraceful, with people getting hurt and others ignoring those who need help. Helping this woman and her child is a way for Jerry to do what he believes nobody else is doing (and should be doing): help a person in need. Note that Jerry is also inconveniencing himself to help her; he puts her wellbeing above his own. Again, though, this demonstrates Jerry's privilege, as he can afford to make this run for free.

Just as Jerry moves to open the cab door for the woman, two voters run up and shout for the cab. Jerry says it's engaged, but they push right past the woman and climb into the cab. Jerry argues with the men, but they refuse to move—so Jerry turns away and tells the woman the men will soon leave when they see he won't serve them. The trip to the hospital is quick, and after seeing the young woman inside, Jerry pats Black Beauty's neck. The porter at the hospital calls Jerry back just as Jerry is starting to leave, and a woman Jerry recognizes gets in the cab.

When he can, Jerry tries to teach other, less virtuous men to be polite and look out for other people. It's unclear if he gets through to these two, but his dedication to helping the woman and turning down their money establishes him as a virtuous, principled character. These two men are also characterized as extremely selfish, since they express no concern at all for the woman and her child.

Jerry and Black Beauty get the woman to the station with time to spare, so Jerry and the woman stand and talk for a while. The woman was Polly's mistress, and she asks how Jerry's health is since he drives during the winter. Jerry insists he's fine, but the woman says that if he ever wants to give up the cab and find work as a driver or groom, she'll help. She gives him five shillings each for Dolly and Harry.

The woman seems to imply that Jerry might not be in perfect health—or at least, his current good health is in jeopardy since he works through the winter. She also shows that she's kind and generous, for no other reason than to be so: like John Manly, she sees it as her duty to help others when she can.

CHAPTER 44

Black Beauty and Captain have become great friends by now. But one day, as Jerry and Captain are coming home, a brewer's dray is going the opposite direction. The drayman is beating his horses and loses control—and they run a girl over and crash into Jerry's cab. A broken shaft runs through Captain's side, and nobody knows how Jerry escapes. The drayman is eventually found drunk and pays damages to Jerry, but nobody pays damages to Captain. Jerry can't work for a few days while the cab is repaired and when he returns to the stand, he tells the Governor that Captain won't work again. He might be able to cart, but that's a death sentence.

Finally, the dangers of the London streets cause pain and suffering in Jerry's home—and alcohol is again the culprit, which aligns alcohol with bad, careless behavior. Suffering this accident is a huge blow to Jerry, since he's not only going to lose one of his horses—he also loses days of work and has to pay to fix the cab. Noting that nobody pays damages to Captain highlights the novel's insistence that horses are some of the most vulnerable in this society. He's not a being who can collect damages—he just suffers.

Jerry spits that he'd like to abolish alcohol so drunkards stop hurting innocent people and animals. The Governor admits that he drinks and Jerry is making him feel bad, but Jerry suggests he quit. Jerry explains that he used to drink, though never to excess. It took a few weeks to break the habit, but with Polly's help and his book—and by telling himself that he'd break Polly's heart if he drank again—he quit. Alcohol doesn't control him anymore.

Jerry links sobriety to virtuousness, family, and religion when he describes quitting by reading his book (presumably, a Bible) and thinking of his wife. He also insists that being able to live without alcohol is the only way for a person to fully be in control of their lives. Alcohol, this implies, makes decisions for people—such as Smith's decision years earlier to ride Black Beauty too hard and break his knees (recall how the men who found Black Beauty noted that Smith would never choose to do that sober).

Captain heals well, and the farrier suggests that Captain might sell for a few pounds. But Jerry refuses to sell Captain into misery. He decides to shoot him to end his suffering instead, which he does one day while Harry takes Black Beauty to the forge for new shoes. Soon after, Jerry purchases a spirited gentleman's horse who scarred too much after an injury. The horse's name is Hotspur; he's only five and very friendly. He's restless at first, but soon settles. Hotspur initially thinks it's an insult to work as a cab horse—but he later confesses to Black Beauty that Jerry's fine driving makes the work much less degrading than having to drive with the **bearing rein**.

When it comes to Captain, the novel suggests that Jerry does the humane thing by putting him out of his misery before he's worked to death as a carthorse. Death is what Ginger longed for when she was in a similar position to Captain's—but her owners weren't willing to relieve her suffering before it became extreme. Hotspur, like Black Beauty, came from a wealthy home that prioritizes unblemished horses over everything else. But he eventually comes around to agree with Black Beauty that kindness and good driving is far preferable to having wealthy but cruel owners.

CHAPTER 45

Many people enjoy Christmas and the New Year, but not cabmen and their horses. It can be a lucrative time to work with all the parties, but waiting for hours in the freezing rain for a party to end can take its toll. Black Beauty performs most of the evening work during the week between the holidays. Jerry has a cough, and Polly always waits up for him to come home with a worried look. On New Year's Eve, Jerry and Black Beauty take two men to the West End and are told to return at 11, though they say the party might go late. Jerry returns on time, waits for an hour, and tries to warm himself in the driving sleet. The passengers return at 1:15 and are annoyed to be charged for the waiting time. Black Beauty is so cold he can barely make it home.

Again, Black Beauty encourages readers to realize that not everyone can celebrate holidays warm and snug at home, if their job requires that they work those days. It's Jerry's working-class job that requires him to be out in the sleet, putting his health and Black Beauty's safety in danger. The men's general behavior, and specifically their annoyance at being charged for the wait time, show how entitled they are. They seem to want special treatment because they're wealthy, which in turn implies that they don't think Jerry really earned the extra cash.

When Jerry and Black Beauty get home, Jerry can hardly speak and is coughing. Polly attends to Black Beauty that night—and the next morning, only Harry comes to the stables midmorning. The boy seems grim. Later, Black Beauty learns that Jerry is very ill. On the third day of Jerry's illness, the Governor visits the stables while Harry is there. Harry explains that Jerry has bronchitis and will either die or start to improve tonight, according to the doctor. The doctor also insists that Jerry would've died already had he been a drinker. The Governor sadly tells Harry that if good men get special treatment, Jerry will certainly pull through. He promises to stop in the next morning.

After what happened to Seedy Sam, Jerry's illness is extremely concerning. And while this passage suggests that Jerry's virtue is a help (since the novel links his not drinking to his virtue), it can't actually save him. The Governor essentially wants Harry to understand that good men should receive better treatment because they're good and virtuous. But in practice, he acknowledges, this doesn't happen—something the novel made clear when Jerry and Captain suffered the collision with the dray.

In the morning, Harry tells the Governor that Jerry is better. The Governor is thrilled. He says that Black Beauty will be fine with a week or two of rest, but Hotspur will quickly become dangerous without exercise. He suggests that if Polly is interested, he could take Hotspur out in the afternoons and give Polly half the earnings. At noon, the Governor returns and takes Hotspur out, and this continues for a week. The Governor regularly tells Harry he's happy to do a nice thing for Jerry.

The Governor seems to repackage what John Manly believed about horses' energy: that they need exercise in order to be safe citizens. Black Beauty is now at an age where he doesn't have young horse energy, but Hotspur needs the work or he'll hurt someone. The Governor sounds like John Manly again when he says he's happy to do this favor for Jerry—like John, he wants to help those in need whenever he has the opportunity.

Jerry gets better, but his doctor says he can't drive a cab again. Dolly and Harry are very interested in what their father is going to do now. One day, while Harry is grooming Hotspur, he and Dolly learn that the woman Jerry met last summer, Mrs. Fowler, has hired Jerry to be her coachman in the country. The family decides to leave as soon as Jerry is well enough to travel, so the horses and cab must be sold quickly. Black Beauty is resigned to his fate; he's not young anymore, and three years as a cab horse has left its mark. The Governor purchases Hotspur, but Black Beauty doesn't find out where he's going until after the children come out to say goodbye. He never gets to say goodbye to Jerry.

Black Beauty introduces a lot of nuance in this passage. He's acknowledged in the past that getting Sundays to rest has helped his health, as has Jerry's exceptional care—but he also can't ignore that the cab work is harming his body. Then, he also recognizes that Jerry's kindness can't ensure that he goes somewhere pleasant, and being older and less healthy makes him a less desirable horse anyway. In this way, Black Beauty shows how he's becoming increasingly vulnerable as he ages and wears out.

CHAPTER 46

An acquaintance of Jerry's, a corn dealer and baker, purchases Black Beauty. The food is good, and the baker himself is a good man—but the foreman and Black Beauty's carter, Jakes, regularly overload Black Beauty's cart. Jakes also uses the **bearing rein**, so Black Beauty feels weak and sore after only a few months. One day, as he tries to pull a heavy load up a hill, Jakes whips Black Beauty. Black Beauty is doing his best, and he's emotionally as well as physically hurt.

Just like at Earlshall, Black Beauty is cared for just fine in his stable, but the work itself is unbearable. He suggests that the damage done by the cab work is now compounding as he's forced to pull loads that are too heavy without the use of his neck. And he again reminds readers how important kindness is: he implies that he'd be way more willing to work if Jakes was sympathetic and kind, rather than whipping him.

Finally, a lady stops and asks Jakes to let Black Beauty rest. He says the heavy load isn't his fault, but the lady says Black Beauty could do more without the **bearing rein**. Jakes obliges her and takes the bearing rein off. Black Beauty shakes his neck and then pulls the load the rest of the way up the hill. The lady pats him along the way and at the top, she asks if Jakes is going to stop using the bearing rein. Jakes acknowledges that not using it helped, but he can't go without or the carters will laugh at him. Very seriously, the lady suggests Jakes set his own fashion. Her horses haven't worn bearing reins in years—and anyway, people have no right to torment "God's creatures." The animals can't advocate for themselves, but they don't suffer less because they can't speak.

The lady demonstrates and then synthesizes many of the novel's big ideas about what makes a person good or evil. First, she stops to advocate for Black Beauty; her actions make her a good person, not what she thinks or whether she attends church services. Then, in her speech to Jakes, she echoes Sir Oliver that fashion is evil because it doesn't take into account what's comfortable for animals; it's about people's selfishness. Finally, she insists that one can measure a person's goodness by how they treat those who are most vulnerable—such as animals who can't advocate for themselves, and yet still feel pain.

After this, Jakes does take down the **bearing rein** going up hills, and he doesn't hike Black Beauty's head as high as he once did. But the loads remain too heavy, and Black Beauty can't keep up. In addition, Black Beauty suffers from a poorly lit stable—it's nearly dark, and it would've eventually caused him to go partially blind (and then made him dangerous) had he not been sold again, this time to a large cab owner.

Jakes may take the lady's speech to heart, but it's not enough when he still has to follow the foreman's directions to overload the carts. Essentially, he's limited in what he can do to help Black Beauty if he wants to keep his job. Things seem to take an ominous turn for the worse when Black Beauty shares that his next home is with a cab owner—that kind of situation killed Ginger and Seedy Sam.

CHAPTER 47

Black Beauty's new master is harsh and cruel. His name is Nicholas Skinner, and Black Beauty believes he's the same Skinner Seedy Sam drove for. In Skinner's stable, Black Beauty finally learns how miserable it is to be a cab horse. Skinner is awful to his men, who are in turn awful to the horses. The horses work on Sundays, and sometimes, large groups of men hire a cab for the day to go 15 miles into the country. This hard work without rest makes Black Beauty feverish and exhausted. His driver is cruel too, and has something sharp at the end of his whip—and he whips Black Beauty on the head and belly. Black Beauty doesn't fight back. Ginger was right: "men are the strongest." Black Beauty wants to die.

Readers may recall that the Governor once told Seedy Sam he belonged at the police station based on how abused his horse looked, and now readers learn exactly how the horse came to look that way. Black Beauty suggests that the cruelty rolls downhill: Skinner is cruel to his men, which gives the men seemingly little choice but to be cruel to the horses—remember the men have a lot of money to make just for the privilege of renting the horse and cab. The too-hard work combined with the overt cruelty makes Black Beauty decide that it'd be better to die than to keep going—a sharp indictment of Skinner's abuse and neglect.

Black Beauty's wish to die almost comes true one day when his driver picks up a family of four and their luggage at the train station. The boy and his mother get in the cab, but the little girl tells her father that Black Beauty looks too weak to carry them and all their luggage. The driver insists Black Beauty is fine—even when the porter suggests the man engage a second cab for the luggage. The girl begs her father to reconsider, but he scolds her and tells her to get in the cab.

Already, readers know something bad is going to happen: the implication is that the little girl is right that Black Beauty is too weak to tow everyone and everything. Though the porter tries to do what he can to help, Black Beauty has no one else to help and advocate for him. Both the little girl and the porter have minimal power to change anything.

Black Beauty hasn't had food or rest since morning, but he does his best. At Ludgate Hill, though, the load is just too much—and his feet slip out from under him. He hits the ground hard and struggles to breathe. Black Beauty figures he'll die as he listens to angry voices and the little girl saying it's her family's fault that Black Beauty fell. People release Black Beauty from the cab and after a while, Black Beauty feels himself coming back. A kind man convinces Black Beauty to stand and settles him in a nearby stable with a mash.

Black Beauty's fall is, the novel suggests, the direct result of months of abuse and neglect, and years of not enough rest. Now, it seems possible he'll pay the price with his life; if he can't continue pulling people around, he's useless as transportation. But though these people are unnamed, Black Beauty still finds that there are kind people everywhere who are ready to help an animal in need just because they can.

Black Beauty returns to Skinner's stables in the evening. The farrier who examines him says Black Beauty is just overworked and would recover after six months of rest in a meadow, but Skinner snaps that he can't do that—he works horses until they give out and then sells them for whatever he can get. Since Black Beauty's breathing is still fine, the farrier suggests that Skinner rest Black Beauty until a horse sale in two weeks. Unwillingly, Skinner tells the stable man to feed Black Beauty well. Two weeks of delicious food and rest makes Black Beauty think he'd like to keep living. When he's led to the sale, he keeps his head up and hopes for the best.

Skinner seems to imply that he can't just put Black Beauty back in a cab since he'd probably just fall again. So in his situation, Black Beauty is useless. The farrier, though, emerges as an advocate for kindness when he suggests resting and feeding Black Beauty in preparation for the sale. Horse sales, remember, aren't great places for horses, since horses have no control over where they're going. But it's a sign of how helpful the food and rest is that Black Beauty is nevertheless able to keep his spirits up as he heads for the sale.

CHAPTER 48

At the sale, Black Beauty stands with the old, broken horses—some that should be shot instead of sold. The buyers and sellers look just as downtrodden as the horses; they're poor people who would rather sell a horse for a few pounds than lose money killing it. But several men seem kind and Black Beauty would happily serve them, though none want to buy him. A gentleman farmer with a young boy finally approach, and the man tells his grandson, Willie, that Black Beauty has seen better days. The farmer says Black Beauty is clearly a well-bred horse. Black Beauty leans into the man's gentle hand, and Willie asks if they could buy him and make him young again—he doesn't seem so old.

When Black Beauty says some of the horses here should be shot instead of sold, it shows clearly that he (and the novel) believe this is the humane thing to do. But again, people's class and desperation sometimes keeps them from doing the right thing, as with the men who would lose money if they shot their horse. The farmer and Willie, on the other hand, seem better off (if the farmer is a gentleman *farmer). This offers hope that they might have the capital to be able to help a horse like Black Beauty, who needs the time to do nothing but recover for a while.*

Black Beauty's seller, a man from Skinner's stable, interjects that Black Beauty has simply been overworked and will supposedly recover with six months of rest. The seller says Black Beauty is a pleasant animal, and he suggests the farmer could buy Black Beauty now for five pounds and sell him next spring for 20. The farmer inspects Black Beauty's swollen legs, declares that he's only 13 or 14 after a teeth inspection, and watches Black Beauty trot. He buys Black Beauty for five pounds and turns him out in a meadow when they get home.

To his credit, the seller seems to be way more interested in horses' welfare than his boss is—but still, it's impossible to ignore that he frames Black Beauty as an investment opportunity for the farmer. They all realize Black Beauty is useful only as far as he can work, and the farmer seems to decide that with rest, Black Beauty will be able to work again.

The farmer, Mr. Thoroughgood, feeds Black Beauty well and puts Willie in charge of his care. Willie is kind and often visits with treats. Mr. Thoroughgood regularly inspects Black Beauty's legs, which gradually improve. Black Beauty's entire condition improves; he wasn't overworked as a young horse, so he has a better chance. In the spring, Mr. Thoroughgood tries Black Beauty in the phaeton (a light cart) and Black Beauty performs the work easily and happily. Willie is thrilled. Mr. Thoroughgood says they can start looking around for a buyer.

Black Beauty's legs are in such bad shape because trotting in shoes on a hard surface like cobblestones causes a horse's legs and hooves to endure immense force with each step—which, over time, can lead to swelling and lameness. Again, it's Mr. Thoroughgood's wealth that gives him the wherewithal to rehab Black Beauty like this and return Black Beauty to working condition.

CHAPTER 49

One summer day, the groom cleans Black Beauty and tacks him up with more care and attention than usual. Willie seems anxious and excited as he and Mr. Thoroughgood get in the cart and drive Black Beauty to a low house a mile out of the village. Mr. Thoroughgood goes inside for a minute and returns with three ladies. The younger lady, Miss Ellen, likes Black Beauty, but the taller, ill-looking lady says she's always nervous driving a horse who's fallen before. Mr. Thoroughgood says that many horses fall because their drivers are careless; that's what happened to Black Beauty. He offers to let the ladies take him on trial. Miss Blomefield agrees.

Readers know Black Beauty is reliable and isn't going to fall because he's weak or wants to. But his knees—a record of having fallen before—continue to make it hard for him to win people over. And though Mr. Thoroughgood doesn't know how Black Beauty's knees were damaged, he's right that they scarred because of a careless man who caused a terrible accident. This suggests that Black Beauty isn't the only horse who suffers like this: Mr. Thoroughgood seems to have seen this sort of thing before.

The next morning, a young man comes to fetch Black Beauty. The man looks pleased—until he sees Black Beauty's "blemished" knees. Mr. Thoroughgood says Black Beauty is a good and safe horse, and this is just a trial after all. The man leads Black Beauty to his new home. The following morning, the groom returns to brush Black Beauty and remarks that the star on this horse's face is just like Black Beauty's. The man finds the scar on Black Beauty's neck where he was bled when he was ill—and then finds a tiny white spot in the middle of Black Beauty's back, which John Manly called "Beauty's threepenny bit." Thrilled, the man—Joe Green—asks Black Beauty if he remembers him.

Initially, Joe does as the sick lady did and judges Black Beauty based on his appearance—blemished knees, this shows, are a big deal and can be a huge mark against a horse. But Joe learns he was wrong to judge when he discovers that the horse is Black Beauty. Discovering Black Beauty in this state, where he's clearly been neglected in the past, impresses upon Joe how little control horses have over what happens to them. Black Beauty's good breeding, and having started life at Squire Gordon's, wasn't enough to save him from abuse and suffering.

Black Beauty doesn't remember Joe Green; Joe is a man now with a beard. But Joe clearly remembers Black Beauty, so Black Beauty puts his nose up to Joe's face. Joe grouses that he wants to know who destroyed Black Beauty's knees, and who has abused him. In the afternoon, Joe puts Black Beauty in a low Park chair (a low carriage) and takes him to the ladies' door. Miss Ellen drives Black Beauty with Joe riding along, and she's a good driver. On the drive, Joe tells her about Black Beauty's history. When they return from the drive, Miss Ellen says she'll write to Mrs. Gordon and tell her that they've found Black Beauty. It takes another week before Miss Lavinia is confident enough to drive Black Beauty, and after he proves himself safe, the ladies decide for sure to keep him.

Now that Joe recognizes Black Beauty, he stops judging the horse for his scars—and starts judging whoever caused Black Beauty to scar in the first place. This again shows how powerless animals are to advocate for themselves, as it's only luck that Black Beauty and Joe find each other and that Joe then stops doubting Black Beauty. The note that Miss Ellen is a good driver suggests that she's also a good person—the novel generally connects considerate driving with kind and considerate people. Once the ladies decide to trust and keep Black Beauty, his future seems secure at last.

Black Beauty has been with the ladies a year now, and he goes by Black Beauty again. Joe is a wonderful, kind groom, and the easy work and good care has revived Black Beauty's spirits. Mr. Thoroughgood recently told Joe that with such good care, Black Beauty will last until he's 20. Willie still visits, and the ladies have promised to never sell Black Beauty. With this, Black Beauty is ready to end his story. He's home and happy now—sometimes, just when he wakes up, he feels like he's still in the apple orchard at Birtwick with his friends.

Though Black Beauty doesn't go into specifics, he and Mr. Thoroughgood imply that Joe has become an exceptional horseperson in the years since he and Black Beauty parted. Now, he knows exactly how to care for a horse and preserve a horse's health into old age—which shows that anyone can, like Joe, transform from being ignorant into being competent and knowledgeable. Black Beauty is poised to live the rest of his life happy, with dignity, doing work that he loves for people he respects.

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