



The Horse and His Boy

Study Guide

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For the novel by
C. S. Lewis



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Synopsis

The boy Shasta lives as a virtual slave with his fisherman father until the fateful night that a nobleman and his magnificent horse seek shelter with them. When Shasta overhears the nobleman offer to buy him, and his “father’s” explanation that he found Shasta by the shore one night, Shasta decides he has heard, and endured, enough. But when he hides in the barn to plan his escape, and the beautiful warhorse speaks to him, his life changes forever.

Bree, the horse, and Shasta determine to flee their slavery together, heading north to Narnia and freedom. Along the way, they are joined by Hwin, another Narnian horse, and her rider, Aravis, who is fleeing an arranged marriage. As they travel through Tashbaan, Shasta is mistaken for Prince Corin of Archenland and he meets and learns to love a group of the Narnian royalty. Meanwhile, the vengeful Calormen prince Rabadash, insulted by the refusal of Queen Susan of Narnia to marry him, determines to destroy Archenland and invade Narnia to capture Queen Susan and *make* her his bride.

Shasta and Aravis discover his plan and decide they must warn Archenland of the invasion plan. The two horses and two children ride north across the desert to “Narnia and the North,” encountering difficult and dangerous situations, through which they come to realize that they are being guided by none other than Aslan himself. The surprise that awaits Shasta at the end of his journey, when he arrives in Archenland and meets King Lune, is more than Shasta every imagined.

Chapters 1–2

Vocabulary:

A *synonym* is a word that has the same meaning as another word. Following each vocabulary word below are three definitions. Underline the synonym for the given word.

- | | | | |
|------------------------|------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. indigence: | wealth | poverty | good fortune |
| 2. wheedling: | promising | persuading | giving |
| 3. scourge: | whip | wound | illness |
| 4. manifestly: | mapped | journal | obviously |
| 5. destitute: | crowded | filthy | empty/abandoned |
| 6. loquacity: | silence | talkativeness | flattery |
| 7. inestimable: | priceless | worthless | tasteless |
| 8. absurd: | foundation | ridiculous | certain |
| 9. jargon: | dialect | saddle | vibration |
| 10. copse: | dead body | lush grasses | group of trees |
| 11. glens: | mountains | hills | narrow valleys |
| 12. melancholy: | gloomy | happy | lost |

Questions:

1. What is daily life like for Shasta while he lives with Arsheesh?
2. Why is Shasta interested in the lands to the north?

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at last he realized that there was no smell of fish in it. For of course, neither in the cottage nor among the nets, had he ever been away from that smell in his life. And this new air was so delicious, and all his old life seemed so far away, that he forgot for a moment about his bruises and his aching muscles. . . .

8. *Foreshadowing* is a technique authors use to prepare us for a change or coming event in the book or the lives of the characters. It creates a sense of warning or expectancy. Read the following quotations from the book and explain what the author might be foreshadowing.
 - a. And now apparently he was no relation to Arsheesh at all. . . . “Why, I might be anyone!” he thought. “I might be the son of a Tarkaan myself—or the son of the Tisroc (may he live forever)—or of a god.”
 - b. “I’ve been longing to go to the North all my life.” “Of course you have,” said the Horse. “That’s because of the blood that’s in you. I’m sure you’re true Northern stock.”
9. *Sayings*—phrases used to describe any current or habitual expression of wisdom or truth—are common in literature and life. *Proverbs* are sayings that are well known, based on truth, and use a metaphorical word picture to prove their point. An *adage* is a time-honored proverb that is widely used. A *maxim* offers a rule for behavior. An *aphorism* is a saying that is more profound, such as the warning of Solomon, “Better is a living dog than a dead lion.” This saying actually means it is better to be alive and “worthless” or common than it is to be dead and “important.” Look at the following sayings that Arsheesh quoted to Shasta and explain what they actually mean:
 - a. “Application to business is the root of prosperity, but those who ask questions that do not concern them are steering the ship of folly toward the rock of indigence.”

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- b. “Natural affection is stronger than soup and offspring more precious than carbuncles.” (Look up the *old* definition of *carbuncle*.)
- c. “He who attempts to deceive the judicious is already baring his own back for the scourge.”
- d. “Swords can be kept off with shields but the Eye of Wisdom pierces through every defense.”

Think of one saying or proverb you are familiar with and write it here and explain its meaning.

- 10. How does the lion direct Shasta and Aravis and both horses to where they need to go to meet? Why do you think Aslan forces them together?

Dig Deeper:

- 11. Before putting on his saddle, Bree decides to have a roll in the grass. He then begins to wonder if this is a thing he should be doing. About what is Bree worried? Read Proverbs 11:2, 16:18; Romans 12:16; Phillipians 2:3; James 1:9. What can we learn from these verses about our attitude and actions?
- 12. At the beginning of Chapter 1, Shasta has to do all the mending and washing of the nets and the cooking and the cleaning, and we are told how Arsheesh would

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at times come home in a bad temper, find fault with Shasta and perhaps beat him. Read Psalm 37:8–9; Proverbs 14:17; Ecclesiastes 7:9; Matthew 5:22; Ephesians 4:26–27; James 1:19–20. What do these verses say about the kind of anger Arsheesh exhibits?

13. We are told late in Chapter 1 that Shasta's life is little better than slavery, yet he works hard at all his chores and actually feels uneasy that he doesn't feel any love toward Arsheesh. Read 1 Corinthians 10:31–33, Colossians 3:17–23, and 1 Thessalonians 5:15–18. What do these verses teach us about making the best of any circumstances? In what ways is Shasta doing this?

Optional Activity:

Arsheesh beat Shasta whenever he was not in a good mood. Bree warned Shasta that he would be better off dead than a slave in the house of the Tarkaan. In the culture and setting of *The Horse and his Boy*, owners and guardians had complete control over a person's life, and Shasta had few options to get away from Arsheesh's abuse. Such abuse is not acceptable in today's culture, nor according to scripture. Using some of the verses we have looked at in this section and others (such as Exodus 22:22–24; Leviticus 19:18; Proverbs 14:31; Matthew 22:36–40; etc.), discuss what our response should be when we see someone being abused or learn about such abuse. You may wish to have a pastor, administrator, or other civic leader or official speak to the class about how to handle and report abuse.

As an alternative, students may interview pastors, civic leaders, or someone who works with abused adults or children and prepare a report for class. This may be in the form of written or oral reports or as a news story. Students may work singly or in teams.

Make certain all activities are handled with care and respect.

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8. Edmund fears they will become prisoners, and the prince will take Susan as an unwilling bride or slave. He also fears that they will all be killed trying to protect Susan until the end.

9. “To hear is to obey,” shows the deep level of obedience and servitude in Calormene by the lower class toward the ruling class. The rulers are not to be questioned in any way. “The sun appeared dark” implies good and light being gone and all becoming dark and depressed. Repeating “Narnia and the North” stresses the intense excitement and happiness Narnia excites in their hearts at the thought of returning home.

10. C. S. Lewis reveals that this is the same faun, Tumnus, from the first novel in the series, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. The time period is some years after the first book. Peter, Susan, Lucy, and Edmund have been kings and queens for some years now.

11. Aravis’s plot of deception to avoid her arranged marriage: a. Her pretended delight: After crying for a whole day, Aravis washes her face and pretends to relish the fact that she is promised in marriage so that people will not suspect her of plotting to escape. b. The lie to her father: Calling him “the delight of my eyes,” she begs for permission to go to the woods for three days to offer sacrifices to Zardeenah. She has no intention of going there. c. Involvement of the secretary: She convinces the secretary to write the letter to her father. d. Involvement of the maid: The maid is to accompany her to the woods; Aravis drugs her so that she will oversleep, and then Aravis leaves in the middle of the night. e. The author and contents of the letter: Aravis’s letter is supposedly written from Ahoshta to her father; it states that Ahoshta has run into her in the woods, fallen madly in love with her, offered the appropriate sacrifices, and has taken her as his wife immediately. The letter also says that Ahoshta has taken Aravis to his home. All of this is to take away suspicion and give her time to get as far away as possible before they discover her escape and start looking for her.

Dig Deeper:

12. First intervention: Hwin speaks to Aravis, telling her not to take her life. Aravis thinks her fear of death has disordered her reasoning ability and that she was suffering from delusions hearing her horse talk. She feels shamed over having feared death. Second intervention: Hwin places her head between Aravis and the dagger, and rebukes her as a mother would rebuke her child. Then she discusses with Aravis what life could be like for her in Narnia if she would live. She reminds Aravis of other possibilities. Aravis becomes hopeful and rejoices that she did not kill herself.

13. In general, we should look to God and see what He desires and provides for us. Our hope and help is the Lord. He has unfailing love for us even when we fail. He has plans for each of us, good plans when we call on Him. He will give us rest when we ask and follow Him. God works for our good. No one can imagine what God has prepared for us in heaven when we love Him. God is faithful when we are tempted. He will give us a way out of our difficulties, but we must look for that way out. He gives us strength to do what we need to do. Answers will vary. We should have hope in God and all He plans that is good for us.

Chapters 6–8

Vocabulary:

1. pushed, elbowed, and shoved. 2. crumbling, decaying. 3. stern, harsh, merciless. 4. a long, narrow groove or track cut in the ground, usually by a plow. 5. permanent, lasting, eternal. 6. easily seen, visible. 7. evil, disgusting, foul. 8. peaceful, tranquil, serene. 9. full of strong feeling, eager, ardent, passionate. 10. reliable, free from error, perfect.

Questions:

1. Answers may vary. The Tombs are the burial grounds of royalty and Shasta is frightened by the possibility of ghouls. He is startled by the blowing of the horns to close the city gates, frightened about being shut out for the night without his friends, by piercing cries in the desert, and by thinking the cat is a lion who is going to kill him. He also fears his friends will either not arrive or that they have already left without him.

2. Shasta plans to cross the desert by himself. He has never read any books, so has no knowledge of the desert and does not know the dangers. He is prevented from leaving by the arrival of the two horses.

3. The girls are on their way through the palace to the water’s edge when suddenly people began to approach them. They flee into an empty room and hide behind a sofa. Shortly thereafter, the Tisroc, the Prince, and Ahoshta entered the room to converse and plan.

4. The Prince encourages his father, the Tisroc to wage all-out warfare on Narnia and the northern lands. The Prince plans to ride across the desert at night with 200 horsemen, capture unprepared Anvard (the King’s fortress at Archenland) before they awake, head for Narnia, wait for the ship, *Splendor Hyaline*, to arrive, and capture Queen Susan by force and