

## Things to Think About: *Black Beauty*

Page numbers refer to the Signet edition of *Black Beauty*.

What is the effect of having the horse be the main narrative voice, as well as the protagonist?

How is the term “master” used throughout the book? Is it always the same? What is the difference between a good master and a bad master? How significant is it?

The term “master” carries overtones of human slavery, as well as less extreme human social relations. Is Sewell suggesting a comparison between the condition of animals like horses and human slaves? Human workers? What is Black Beauty’s attitude toward being broken in as a colt, and toward the various kinds of work he subsequently performs?

Class is an important dimension of many of the relationships and episodes in *Black Beauty*.

How would you characterize Sewell’s attitudes toward the various human classes?

How does she apply the class system to horses?

Would you call Sewell a snob?

What does Sewell (or Black Beauty) think of fox-hunting? (6-8)

To what does Sewell normally attribute bad behavior in horses?

What is wrong with the bearing rein? (29, 86) With tail docking? (37) With docking the ears and tails of dogs? (38-39)

What are the implications of Sewell’s comparisons of horses and machines? (34, 115)

How would you characterize the religious basis of the philosophy of kindness (or the critique of cruelty) set forth in *Black Beauty*?

What is the meaning of the assertion that “horses have no relations”? (20)

What is the significance of Black Beauty’s constant name changes?

How are anti-cruelty standards enforced in this novel (to the extent that they are enforced)? (164)

To what extent does Sewell blame cab drivers for their (generally) harsh treatment of their horses? (165-8)

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