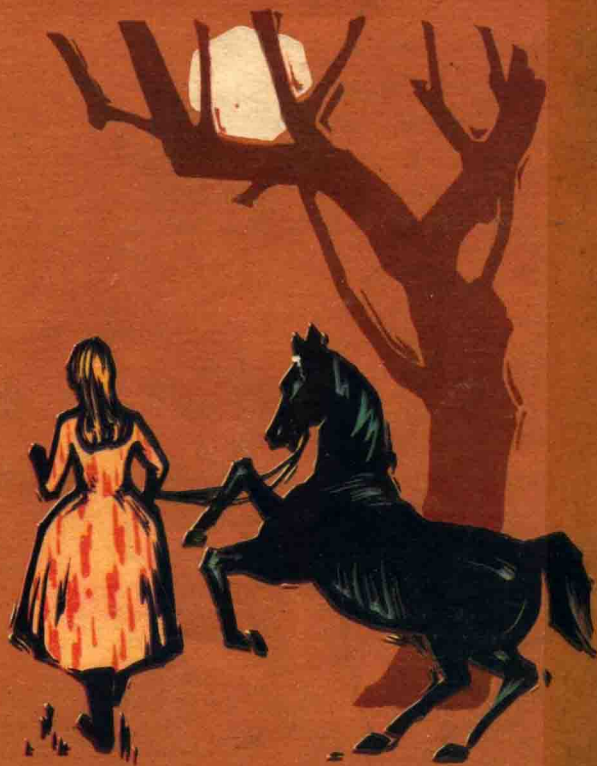


# Black Beauty

Anna Sewell



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*Simplified by D K Swan*

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500 word  
vocabulary

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Words with a star \* are outside Stage 1 of the New Method Supplementary Readers and are not explained in the text.

These extra words are in a list on page 51.

I *My mother*

I don't remember everything about the time when I was very small. I remember a big field of green grass. There were a few trees in it, and on hot days my mother stood under a tree and I drank her milk. That was before I grew bigger and began to eat the grass.

There were some other young horses in the field. As we grew bigger, we played and ran round and round the field. We jumped about, or we went down on our backs on the grass and kicked our legs happily in the air. We were glad to be alive.

When I stopped taking her milk, my mother went to work every day. She came back in the evening, and I told her all about my day.

'I'm glad you are happy,' she said. 'Play as much as you can. But you must remember that you are not like these other young horses. They are all going to be farm horses; they're good horses, but not like us. Your father is well known in this part of the country, and your grandfather—my father—was Lord Westland's best horse. When you're a little older, you'll learn\* to take people on your back or to take them from place to place in their carriages\*.'

I asked, 'Is that what your work is, Mother? Is that what you do for Farmer Grey?'

'Yes, that's what I do. Farmer Grey sometimes rides me and sometimes drives me as his carriage horse. Here he is now.'

Farmer Grey came into the field. He was a good, kind man, and he liked my mother very much.

'Well, my dear Duchess,' he said to her, 'here's something for you.' He gave her something nice to eat. 'And how is your little son?' He patted me and gave me some bread, which was very nice.

We couldn't answer him, but my mother showed him that she loved him. He patted her and went away.

'He's very kind,' my mother said, 'and you must learn to please him. Always do your work gladly, and never bite or kick. Then he'll always be nice to you.'

## 2 *Learning*

I grew older. My coat began to look very good. It was black. I had one white foot, a white star on my face, and a small white mark on my back, but every other part of me was black.

When I was grown up, Squire Gordon came to look at me. He looked at my eyes, my mouth, and my legs.

'Very good,' he said. 'Very good. Now he must learn to work. He'll be a very good horse then.'

What must a horse learn?

He must learn to stand still when a man puts harness\* on him. The bad part of a horse's harness is the bit\*. If you have never had a bit, you can't think how bad it is. It is a cold hard iron thing, and the

man puts it into your mouth. It hurts\*. You can't move it because the head harness—over your head, under your mouth, and across your nose—makes it stay in your mouth.

I was very unhappy with the bit in my mouth, but Farmer Grey was kind in every other way. I didn't bite or kick. My mother always had a bit in her mouth when she was working. Other horses have bits too. I knew that. So I stood still when they put it in. After a time it didn't hurt me so very much.

The saddle\* wasn't so bad. A horse must learn to have a saddle and to take a man, woman, or child on his back. He must go where the rider wants him to go, and he must go at a walk, or (a little quicker) a trot\*, or (very quick) a gallop\*.

They put the bit in my mouth and the saddle on my back every day. Then Farmer Grey himself walked with me round the big field. After that, he gave me some good food, and patted me, and spoke to me. I liked the food and the patting and kind words, and after a time I wasn't afraid of the bit and the saddle.

One day Farmer Grey got on my back and sat there in the saddle. The next day he rode me once round the field at a walk. It wasn't very nice with a man in the saddle, but I was glad to have my kind master\* on my back. He rode me in the field every day for a time.

The next bad thing was putting iron shoes on me.

Farmer Grey went with me, but I was still afraid. The man took my feet in his hands, one after the other. Then he cut away some of the hard part. It didn't hurt me, so I stood still on three legs as he did each of my feet. Then he made iron shoes to go on them. Putting them on didn't hurt, but I couldn't move my feet in the same way as before. After a time I grew to like the shoes. They saved my feet from hard roads and stones.

Next I learnt to go in carriage harness. There was a very small saddle, but there was a big collar\*, and there were blinkers\* at the sides of my face. With the blinkers on I could see things in front of me, not to the side.

Farmer Grey began by making me pull\* a carriage with my mother. 'You'll learn a lot from her,' he said, as he put the harness on me.

I did learn a lot. She showed me how to move, and how to know what the driver wanted.

'But there are good drivers and bad drivers,' she said. 'And there are good masters and bad masters. Farmer Grey is a good master—a very good master. He's kind, and he thinks about his horses, but there are other men who are bad, or hard, or just foolish. You must always be good, and try to make people love you. Never be lazy, even if people are unkind to you or foolish.'

### 3 *Birtwick Park*

In May a man came to take me away to Squire Gordon's home at Birtwick Park.

'Be a good horse,' Farmer Grey said to me, 'and always do your best.'

I couldn't say anything, so I put my nose in his hand. He patted me kindly.

Birtwick Park was big. There was a big house, and there were a lot of stables\* for horses and places for many carriages. I was taken to a stable for four horses.

They gave me some food, and when I had eaten it I looked round me. There was a pony\* in the next part of the stable. He was small and fat, with a pretty head and happy eyes.

'Who are you?' I asked.

'My name is Merrylegs. I'm very beautiful. I take the young ladies on my back. Everybody loves me. You must be good if you live next to me in this stable. I don't like horses who bite.'

A horse looked at Merrylegs from the other side. She had a very beautiful red-brown coat, but her eyes looked angry, and her ears were laid back in the way an angry horse puts its ears.

'Have I ever bitten you?' she asked angrily.

'No, no!' Merrylegs said quickly.

When the red-brown horse went out to work that afternoon, Merrylegs told me about her. 'Ginger does bite,' he said. 'One day she bit Jamies in the



arm and hurt him. Miss Flora and Miss Jessie, Squire Gordon's little girls, are afraid of her. They don't bring me nice things to eat now, because Ginger is here.'

'Why does she bite?' I asked. 'Is she bad?'

'Oh no! I think she has been very unhappy. She says that nobody had ever been kind to her before she came here. She'll change here. I'm twelve years old, and I know a lot. I can tell you that there isn't a better place for a horse than this, anywhere. John is the best groom\* in the country; James is the kindest boy; and Squire Gordon is the best master any horse ever had. Yes, Ginger will change here.'

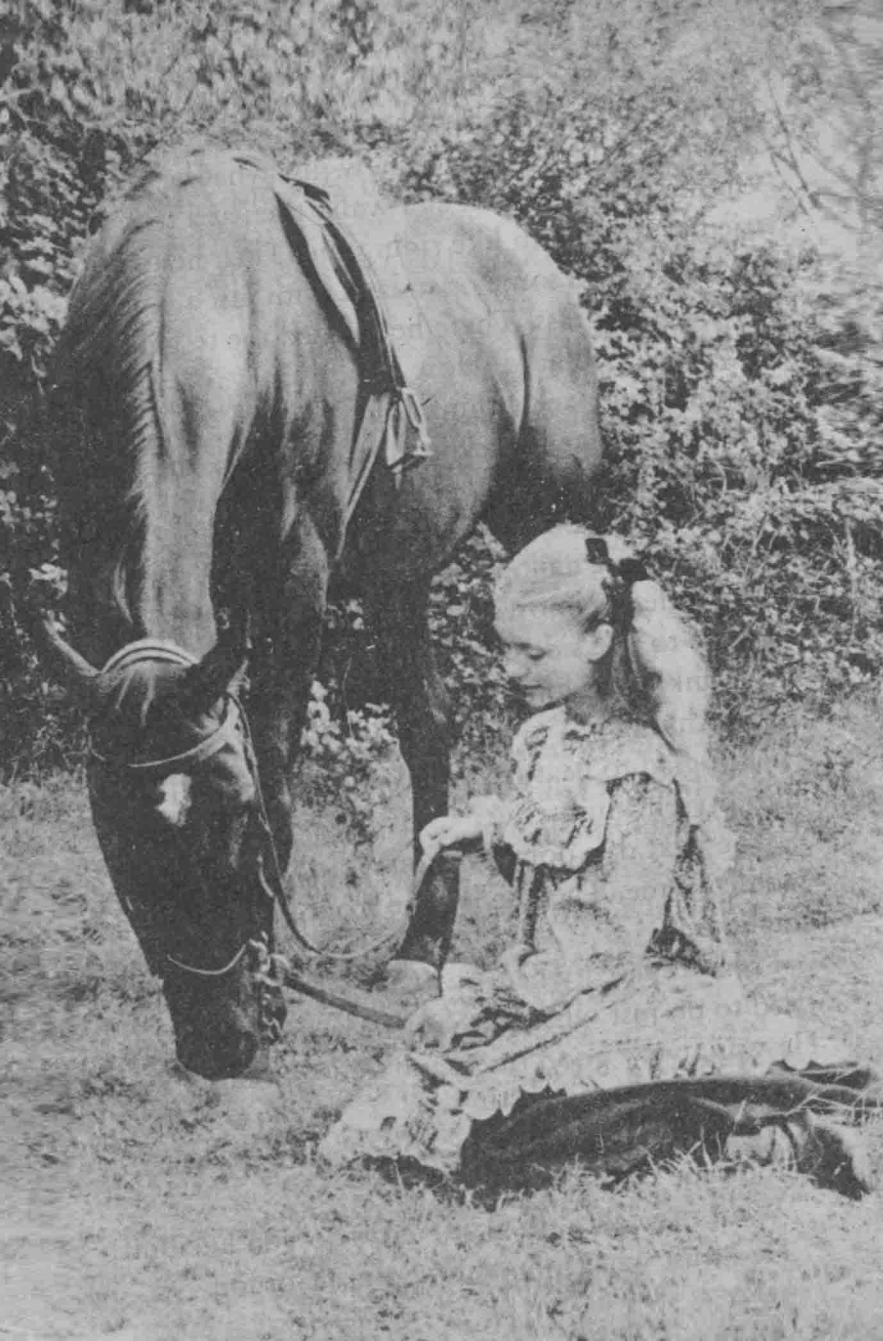
#### 4 *I begin well*

The head groom's name was John Manly. He lived with his wife and one little child in a very small house near the stables.

The next morning he took me outside the stable and groomed me. He worked hard, and made my coat clean and beautiful. Then Squire Gordon came to look at me.

'He looks very good,' the Squire said. 'I wanted to try him myself this morning, but I have some other work. So you ride him, John, and then tell me how he goes.'

John put a saddle on my back, but it was too small, and he changed it. He got another saddle, not



too big and not too small, and we went out. He was a very good rider, and I knew just what he wanted. On the road we went at a walk, then at a trot. I tried to make him like riding me. Then he took me off the road to some open land with just a few trees and a lot of grass. There he wanted me to gallop, and I galloped hard. How good that was! I liked it very much, and I think John liked it.

When we were back at Birtwick Park, the Squire asked John Manly, 'Well, John, how does he go?'

'He's very good—very good. He goes like a bird, and he loves a gallop, but if you move the reins\* just a little, he knows what you want: he stops, or he goes to one side or the other. Nobody has ever been unkind to him, so he is not afraid of anybody or anything.'

'I'm glad to hear it,' Squire Gordon said. 'I'll try him myself tomorrow.'

The next day, John groomed me and put the saddle on me. Then he led me from the stables to the house.

I remembered what my mother told me and I tried to do just what the Squire wanted me to do. He was a very good rider, and he was kind to me all the way.

His wife was at the door of the big house when he took me back there.

'Well, my dear,' she said, 'how do you like him?'

'He is just what John said,' Squire Gordon

answered. 'He's the nicest horse I've ever ridden. What shall we call him?'

'He's black and very beautiful. We could call him Black Beauty, couldn't we?'

'Black Beauty—yes—yes, I think that's a very good name.'

John came to lead me to the stables.

'We've got a name for him, John,' the Squire said. 'My wife thought of it. He's going to be Black Beauty.'

John was very glad. 'Come along, my Black Beauty,' he said, as he led me away. 'You ARE a beauty—and it's a good English name.'

### 5 *My new friends*

John liked me. He was a very good groom, and he made my black coat look beautiful. He looked at my feet every day. He knew if one of them hurt, and then he rubbed something into it. He talked to me a lot. I didn't know all the words, but after a time I knew what he was thinking. I liked John Manly as much as I have ever liked anybody.

I liked the stable boy, James Howard, too. He had learnt from John how to be kind to horses. He helped John to groom me, and John showed him the places where a groom may hurt a horse if he rubs too hard, and the places where a horse likes to be rubbed or patted.



After a few days, I went out to pull a carriage with Ginger. I was afraid of her. She laid her ears back when they led me towards her, but she stood still as they harnessed me beside her.

John drove us, and we worked very well. Ginger wasn't at all lazy. She pulled as hard as I did up the hills, and she was always ready to move more quickly. Many horses don't go fast\* if the driver doesn't hit them with his whip\*. Ginger was like me: we went as fast as we could if the driver wanted us to go fast. John didn't like the whip, and he never whipped us, but we worked hard for him.

After Ginger and I had been out a few times with the carriage, we became good friends.

We liked little Merrylegs very much. He was brave and always happy. The Squire's little girls loved to ride him, and they were never afraid of falling off his back.

Mrs Gordon, the Squire's wife, loved all three of us, and we loved her.

Squire Gordon liked his people to have one day without work every week. His horses had the same. On Sunday they led us to a field of good grass, and we stayed there for the day, without reins or harness of any kind. We ran, and played, and were happy. Then we stood under some trees and told stories.

6 *The bridge*

One day in November, the Squire wanted to see some men in Hertford. It was a long journey, so John harnessed me to the dog-cart\*. I always liked the dog-cart. With its big wheels\* it wasn't at all hard to pull. John Manly drove, and my master sat beside him.

A lot of rain had fallen, and it was a bad day. In one place the road went across a river by a wooden bridge\*. There was so much water in the river that some parts of the bridge were covered. But we could see the good wooden sides, and the bridge didn't move under my feet. I wasn't afraid, and we went across.

My master's work made him stay for a few hours in Hertford. Night was falling as we began the journey home. It was raining again.

My master was driving. When we came to the bridge, he didn't pull the reins at all. So I began to take the dog-cart across the river. As soon as my feet were on the bridge, I knew that we mustn't go over it.

I stopped.

'Go across,' my master said. 'Go across, Beauty. Don't be afraid. There's a little water over the bridge, but it's not a lot.' He touched me with the whip, but I stood still.

'He's afraid of something,' John said. And he jumped down and came to my head. 'Come,

Beauty,' he said, and he tried to lead me over the bridge.

I still knew that we mustn't go. I couldn't move.

There was a house on the other side of the river for the man who worked on the road. Just then the man heard us and saw the lights of the dog-cart through his window. He ran out of the house with a lamp, shouting, 'Stop! Stop! Wait!'

He came to his side of the bridge and shouted to us. 'Part of the bridge has gone down the river,' he called. 'The water washed it away. You can't come across. You must go up the river to the next bridge.'

'Thank God!' my master said.

'You Beauty!' John said to me, and he led me away from the bridge.

As we went towards the other bridge, Squire Gordon and John Manly said nothing for a time. Then they began to speak about the thing that had happened at the bridge. My master said that men know how to think and to find the answers to questions. God has made them in that way. But God has made horses and some other friends of man in another way. They know some things without thinking, and because of that, they can sometimes save men.

'Yes,' John said. And he told some stories about horses who had saved their masters.

When we got to Birtwick Park, Mrs Gordon ran out. 'Oh, I'm so glad to see you at last! Has



something bad happened?’

‘No, my dear,’ the Squire said. ‘But we could have died if Black Beauty hadn’t saved us.’ He went into the house with her, telling her about what happened at the bridge.

John drove to the stables and unharnessed me. Oh, what a good dinner he gave me that night! And how well he groomed me and did little things to show his thanks!

### 7 *James Howard*

The Squire came to the stables one day and spoke to John Manly. ‘How is James working, John?’ he asked.

‘Very well,’ John answered. ‘He has learnt a lot. He is kind to the horses, and the horses like him. He’s learning to drive, and he’ll soon be a good driver.’

Just then, James himself came in. ‘James,’ the Squire said, ‘I have a letter from my friend Sir Clifford Williams, of Clifford Hall. He asks me to find a good young groom for him. The pay is good, and the young man will soon be head groom, with his own room, stable clothes, driving clothes, and boys to help him. I don’t want to lose you, and John will be sad to see you go —’

‘I will. Yes, I will,’ John said. ‘But I wouldn’t try to stop him.’