

BOOK REVIEW

TITLE & AUTHOR: -

This review is about the book "Black Beauty" written in 1877 by English author Anna Sewell.

INTRODUCTION: -

One of the primary reasons why I chose this book is my personal inclination towards stories of survival and struggle, as well as my profound empathy and compassion for the marginalized and the voiceless. Additionally, I have always been fascinated by horses since childhood, making this book a perfect blend of everything I was looking for.

My initial expectation was that this book would be an emotional rollercoaster with a soul-crushingly sad ending. The ending was more about relief and freedom than death and pain. Indeed, Black Beauty made me cry, laugh, and reflect on the privileged life I am fortunate to lead. Read on to know about my perspective of this masterpiece by Anna Sewell.

SUMMARY: -

The plot of this book unfolds as an autobiography of a horse named Black Beauty. Beauty recounts the journey of his life, beginning with his idyllic youth in a meadow with his mother, Duchess, to his experiences with various owners. Black Beauty endures challenges, including harsh treatments, a burning stable, and exhausting labour as a cab horse in London. Through it all, he retains his noble spirit.

Each chapter offers insight into the bond between humans and animals, shedding light on the treatment of horses in Victorian England. The book also explores the lifelong friendships Beauty forms with his fellow horses Ginger and Merrylegs and how the horses' well-being lies at the mercy of their owners.

Sewell's story advocates for the compassionate care of animals while offering a moving narrative of survival and perseverance. It highlights the intrinsic dignity of all beings and challenges societal norms, calling for humane treatment of animals, especially working horses subjected to harsh conditions in Victorian England.

The story also delves into themes of resilience and perseverance, reflecting broader struggles against oppression. Additionally, Sewell critiques the rigid class structure of the time, shedding light on social inequality. By weaving these elements into a compelling narrative, Black Beauty urges readers to reflect on their actions and make conscious choices that promote justice and compassion in their relationships with both humans and animals. It remains a timeless call for empathy and reform.

ANALYSIS & OPINION: -

Anna Sewell delivers a deeply engaging narrative through the unique perspective of a horse, which worked remarkably well to evoke empathy and convey a powerful message about animal welfare. Sewell's ability to intertwine emotional depth with social commentary makes the novel a standout.

However, some readers might feel that the book lacks a strong overarching plot, as the story is more of a series of vignettes than a linear narrative and it might also feel overly sentimental at times.

In *Black Beauty*, Ginger emerges as one of the most compelling and memorable characters, distinguished by her fiery spirit and tragic story. Her experiences highlight the consequences of human cruelty. Her backstory reveals the harsh reality of her early life, where she suffered from neglect and physical abuse, shaping her mistrustful and aggressive nature. The cruelty she faces later in life as a cab horse erodes her spirit, illustrating how sustained mistreatment can break even the strongest of spirits. Ginger's character serves as a powerful advocate for change, showing the devastating effects of systemic abuse.

An excerpt from the book relating to Ginger's dialogue—"Well," said she, "if I had had your bringing up, I might have had as good a temper as you, but now I don't believe I ever shall."—shows us that compassion is a fundamental right and that every being craves for good care.

Reiterating, one of the most important lessons in *Black Beauty* is the significance of empathy and ethical treatment of animals. Sewell masterfully illustrates how creatures' lives depend heavily on their human caretakers, urging readers to reflect on their responsibilities towards animals.

PERSONAL OPINION: -

Anna Sewell's writing profoundly impacted me by deepening my understanding of animal welfare and human responsibility. The story made me realize how often we turn a blind eye to the suffering of animals, even when their well-being rests solely on our shoulders. By seeing the world through *Black Beauty*'s eyes, I felt as though I walked in his shoes, experiencing both the kindness and cruelty that shaped his life. It was a wake-up call to treat all living beings with respect and empathy. Sewell's message has stayed with me, encouraging me to step up to make a difference whenever I can.

It truly struck a chord with me that even in dire circumstances, one must never give up. *Black Beauty* is a timeless reminder to cherish life's blessings and stand up for what's right, even when the odds seem stacked against us. The lessons it offers are unforgettable.

CONCLUSION: -

Anna Sewell perfectly captures the innocence and selfless nature of these voiceless horses while exploring the human-animal bond. It is a poignant social commentary. It exposes the inhumane treatment of animals and also the working-class who are helpless and voiceless.

This book is definitely a must read. It will swell up your eyes. It tugs at your heart resonating a profound message that even small acts of compassion can leave an indelible mark, altering lives for the better.

This novel appeals to a wide audience, from young readers learning about the importance of care and kindness to adults who cherish thought-provoking literature. It's an excellent choice for anyone seeking an inspiring narrative that encourages empathy, compassion, and reflection on societal norms.

All I can say about this heartwarming tale is that it remains a timeless masterpiece and a beloved classic that continues to inspire compassion and reform.