

# THE HORSE AND HIS BOY

BY

C. S. LEWIS

Narnia and the North! This becomes the cry of young Shasta's heart after overhearing the man who calls himself his father, telling a visiting nobleman the story of how Shasta came to live with him. It seems some years ago a boat had washed up on the shore containing only a small baby and a man who had obviously starved himself to death the keeping the baby alive. Thinking this was a fortunate gift of free labor, the man took the baby as his own and named him Shasta. Over the years Shasta was treating as a slave, not knowing his origin. After learning this, Shasta runs to the stable to plan what to do when the horse belonging to his "father's" guest speaks to him and convinces him that he is not a Calormene but, because of his fair coloring, must have come from the North, from either Narnia or Archenland. Bree had been kidnapped as a pony and had served the Tarkaan as a war horse, keeping his ability to speak a secret. So, the two decide to set off for Narnia and for freedom.

On the way, they meet a young Tarkeena who is fleeing a forced marriage. She too is riding a talking horse, Hwin. Hwin has told Aravis about Narnia, where they do not force young ladies to marry. Aravis and Hwin decide to join Shasta and Bree. Their journey takes them through the great city of Tarkaan, where they become separated when Shasta is mistaken for the prince of Archenland. Meanwhile Aravis, in trying to escape through the palace of the Tisroc, finds herself hiding behind a sofa listening to the Tisroc agree to Prince Rabadash's plan to lead a surprise attack on the country of Archenland.

Finally, Shasta and Aravis are reunited with Bree and Hwin, and push onward to Archenland in order to sound the alarm before Prince Rabadash's army attacks. Almost there, they feel they cannot go on, when a lion chases them and proves they have more strength than they thought. Happily, Shasta is in time to give the cry of alarm and the Narnians go to the aid of the Archenlanders in a brief but fierce battle with the Calormenes. After a decisive victory, Shasta learns that he is indeed an Archenlander and a very special one. Prince Rabadash learns what it is to be judged for his foolishness and Aravis, Bree, and Hwin learn what it means to find freedom at last.

This fifth book in the Chronicles of Narnia series by C. S. Lewis deals with some of the events that took place during the time of the first book, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. Mr. Lewis once again skillfully weaves deep truths into the excitement and high adventure of the skillfully told story.

# VOCABULARY

When you read a good book, besides being entertained, you will find that your vocabulary is improved. Without having to look up a word, you can very often discern its meaning from the context in which it is used. Can you guess the meanings of these words taken from *The Horse and His Boy*? Look them up to check your answers.

1. scimitar

*He had a turban on his head and a sheathed scimitar at his side.*

- a. a dangerous weapon
- b. a curved sword
- c. a javelin

2. judicious

*"I am wholly of one mind with you in this judicious plan."*

- a. a prejudiced
- b. ridiculous
- c. showing good judgment

3. august

*He began his august and beneficent reign with great pomp.*

- a. long-lasting
- b. admirable
- c. harsh

4. feigned

*The polite audience feigned their applause.*

- a. pretended
- b. vigorously executed
- c. announced

5. decorum

*Despite his lack of decorum, many people thought he was part of the nobility.*

- a. identification
- b. good sense
- c. dignified behavior, speech, or clothing

6. inexorable

*"May the strength of our great leader, the inexorable, the irresistible, be with you always!"*

- a. unyielding, unchangeable
- b. cannot be copied
- c. not angry

7. salutary

*Until your father began his salutary and unending reign, the land was desolate and uninhabitable.*

- a. kind
- b. harsh
- c. favorable

8. phantasm

*We were all frightened by the horrible phantasm.*

- a. monster
- b. ghost
- c. animal

9. obliterate

*We watched as the flood seemed to obliterate the world.*

- a. destroy
- b. replace
- c. light up

10 chafed

*She was very chafed by his long delays and unhelpful answers.*

- a. entertained
- b. angered
- c. irritated

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe the main characters in *The Horse and His Boy*.
2. Why does Shasta leave his home to go to Narnia?
3. What assumptions do Shasta and Aravis make about each other that prove to be false?
4. Compare the countries of Narnia and Calormen.
5. Why did Aslan attack Aravis?
6. What role does Aslan play in the story?

## ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

The following exercises are intended to expand your understanding and enjoyment of this wonderful book:

1. Since authors always bring part of themselves to their work, it is interesting to find out something about them when you read their books. Find out who C. S. Lewis was.
2. Have you ever ridden a horse? If possible, visit a stable and go for a ride. Do you have to

hold on with your knees like Bree told Shasta?

4. The Calormenes are known for their story telling capabilities. Practice telling an exciting story by choosing an incident from the book *The Horse and His Boy*. Perhaps how Shasta gets separated from the horses and Aravis in Tarkaan or the battle scene where Prince Rabadash is defeated.
5. *The Horse and His Boy* is a type of literature called fantasy. What makes it so?
6. The Calormenes love to quote their poets. An example is: Natural affection is stronger than soup and offspring more precious than carbuncles. This could also be called a proverb. This type of language often utilizes similes or metaphors, comparing two unlike things. Try writing a few quotes of the style of the poets.
7. The idea of mistaken identity is intriguing to authors. Some examples are found in books such as Dickens' *The Prince and the Pauper* and *The Prisoner of Zenda* by Anthony Hope, in movies such as *The Parent Trap* with Hayley Mills, and even in Scripture within the story of Esau and Jacob. Write a story about twins or look-alikes being mistaken for each other.
8. Read the other books in this series:

*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*

*Prince Caspian*

*The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader"*

*The Magician's Nephew*

*The Last Battle*

## TEACHER HELP

### Vocabulary

1. b, 2. c, 3. b, 4. a, 5. c, 6. a, 7. c, 8. b, 9. a, 10. c

### Discussion

1. The main characters in *The Horse and His Boy*:

#### *Shasta*

A boy who was kidnapped at birth and adopted by a cruel Calormene farmer who treated him like a slave. Shasta escapes with a talking horse named Bree. They travel to Archenland where Shasta finds out he is the son of the King. He starts out weak and timid but ends up proving his valor by helping to save Archenland from the invasion of the Calormenes.

#### *Bree*

A proud warhorse who was also captured from his homeland and forced to serve a Calormene soldier. He accompanies Shasta back to Archenland. On the way he learns humility.

#### *Aravis*

A proud, Calormene aristocrat. When she learns she will be forced into a marriage with an old, high-ranking official, she runs away with her horse Hwin. She joins with Shasta and

Bree and helps to avert a Calormene plot to attack Archenland. She also learns humility and eventually marries Shasta.

### *Hwin*

A gentle horse who is also a talking horse who was captured and now belongs to Aravis. She is faithful and humble.

### *Rabadash*

The son of the Calormene ruler. He is brash, arrogant, and cruel. He attempts to invade Archenland but fails after Aravis learns of his plan and tells Shasta. He ends up defeated and humiliated.

### *Aslan*

The heavenly, true king of Narnia. In the story he presents himself as a lion and as a cat. He protects and guides Shasta and Aravis.

2. Shasta overhears the man that he thinks is his father offering to sell Shasta to a stranger. He realizes that his “father” found him adrift in a boat when he as a baby. Now Shasta knows why he looks so different from other people around him. He also discovers that the stranger’s horse, named Bree, can talk. Bree says that Shasta looks like the people who live in Archenland where he comes from. They decide they will both run away and try to make their way back to their homeland.
3. Shasta assumes that Aravis is happy to make the journey by herself and does not need him. He does not expect her to wait for him at the caves after they go through Tashban. He is wrong because Aravis is very honorable and would not break her agreement with him. Aravis assumes that because Shasta was the son of a poor fisherman, he will not be a good fighter, but she is proved wrong when he bravely fights to rescue her from the lion’s attack.
4. Both lands are ruled by a Monarch. The Calormene Tisroc is selfish and cruel, while King Lune is kind and benevolent. The people and animals of Narnia are free and happy. In Calormen slavery and forced marriages are common.
5. Aravis, Shasta, and the horses feel safe as they cross the river into Archenland. To their horror, they realize that Rabadash’s army is catching up to them. As they race for the safety of the Hermit’s enclosure, they hear the snarl of a lion. This causes the horses to run faster. Just as they reach the gates, the lion jabbed at Aravis, scratching her shoulders. Later we learn that the scratches on her shoulders matched “tear for tear, throb for throb, and blood for blood” the stripes given to her stepmother’s slave when Aravis drugged her so that she could make her escape. This was so she would know what it felt like and fell responsibility for her actions.
6. From the beginning of the story, Aslan directs the action. He directs the boat that the baby Shasta is in. Acting as if he were two lions, he pushes Shasta and Aravis together. He takes the form of a cat at the tombs to protect and comfort Shasta. Later, he frightens Bree into a final burst of speed so that Shasta makes it to the Hermit of the Southern March and safety. Finally, he brings comfort to Shasta and reveals who he is as he walks beside him in the dark.