



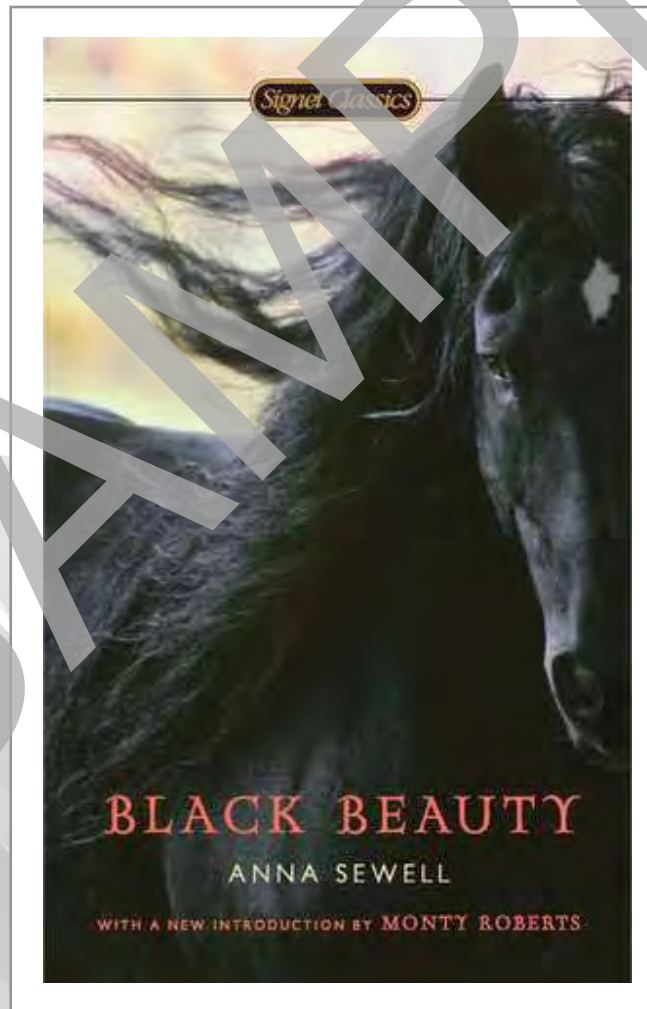
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 6-8**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# Black Beauty

Anna Sewell



**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

# Black Beauty

Anna Sewell

## TEACHER GUIDE

**NOTE:**

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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## Skills and Strategies

### Comprehension

Cause/effect, compare and contrast, correct sequence, drawing conclusions, important details, summarizing, visualizing

### Literary Elements

Figures of speech, mood, story map, effects of reading, flowchart

### Vocabulary

British and archaic usage, dictionary of horse-related terms, crossword puzzle, dictionary use, word mapping, synonyms

### Listening/Speaking

Dramatic reading, acting

### Critical Thinking

Analyzing dialogue, analyzing characters, predicting, recognizing opinions

### Across the Curriculum

Art—illustrating text, designing a monument;  
Science—anatomy of a horse;  
Social Studies—researching SPCA; Writing—paragraph, dedication, riddles, crossword clues, bio-poem, scene in play form, news story, point of view

**Genre:** fantasy

**Setting:** 19th-century England

**Point of View:** first person

**Themes:** courage, strength (both physical and spiritual), dealing with sudden change, kindness vs. cruelty

**Conflict:** person vs. animal

**Style:** autobiographical

**Tone:** initially placid but always with a hint of harsher possibilities

**Date of First Publication:** 1877

## Summary

Black Beauty is a horse that narrates his own life story. The story begins with his earliest recollections as a colt by his mother's side. Because he is a handsome and good-tempered horse, Black Beauty seems likely to have good experiences with his human owners. At first that is true, when he is a kind gentleman's riding horse. Then circumstances change, and he has more and more difficulties. Eventually he becomes a working horse and as such is expected to perform ever-harder labor that tires and ages him. Along the way, he encounters both kind and callous owners of all classes. A society matron thoughtlessly subjects him to cruel practices in order to force him into what is considered a "smart" stance. Later, a struggling cab driver treats him as kindly and considerately as possible. All the while, the horse patiently and bravely endures, trying his best to satisfy his owners. He undergoes a series of name changes along the way before he is finally rescued by a kind family whose groom recognizes him and restores his original name, Black Beauty.

## About the Author

Anna Sewell was born in Yarmouth, England, in 1820. Her mother was an author of children's books. Crippled when she was 14, Sewell achieved some mobility by horseback riding and driving a pony and carriage. Even before this, though, she loved horses and was moved to write *Black Beauty* by the cruel treatment she observed being inflicted on horses. Sewell finished the book in 1877, but did not live to see its great success. She died in 1878. The popularity of the book with youthful readers has continued even into the 21st century, with total sales of at least 30 million copies.

## Using Predictions

We all make predictions as we read—little guesses about what will happen next, how a conflict will be resolved, which details will be important to the plot, which details will help fill in our sense of a character. Students should be encouraged to predict, to make sensible guesses as they read the novel.

As students work on their predictions, these discussion questions can be used to guide them: What are some of the ways to predict? What is the process of a sophisticated reader's thinking and predicting? What clues does an author give to help us make predictions? Why are some predictions more likely to be accurate than others?

Create a chart for recording predictions. This could either be an individual or class activity. As each subsequent chapter is discussed, students can review and correct their previous predictions about plot and characters as necessary.

Use the facts and ideas the author gives.

Use your own prior knowledge.

Apply any new information (i.e., from class discussion) that may cause you to change your mind.

Predictions

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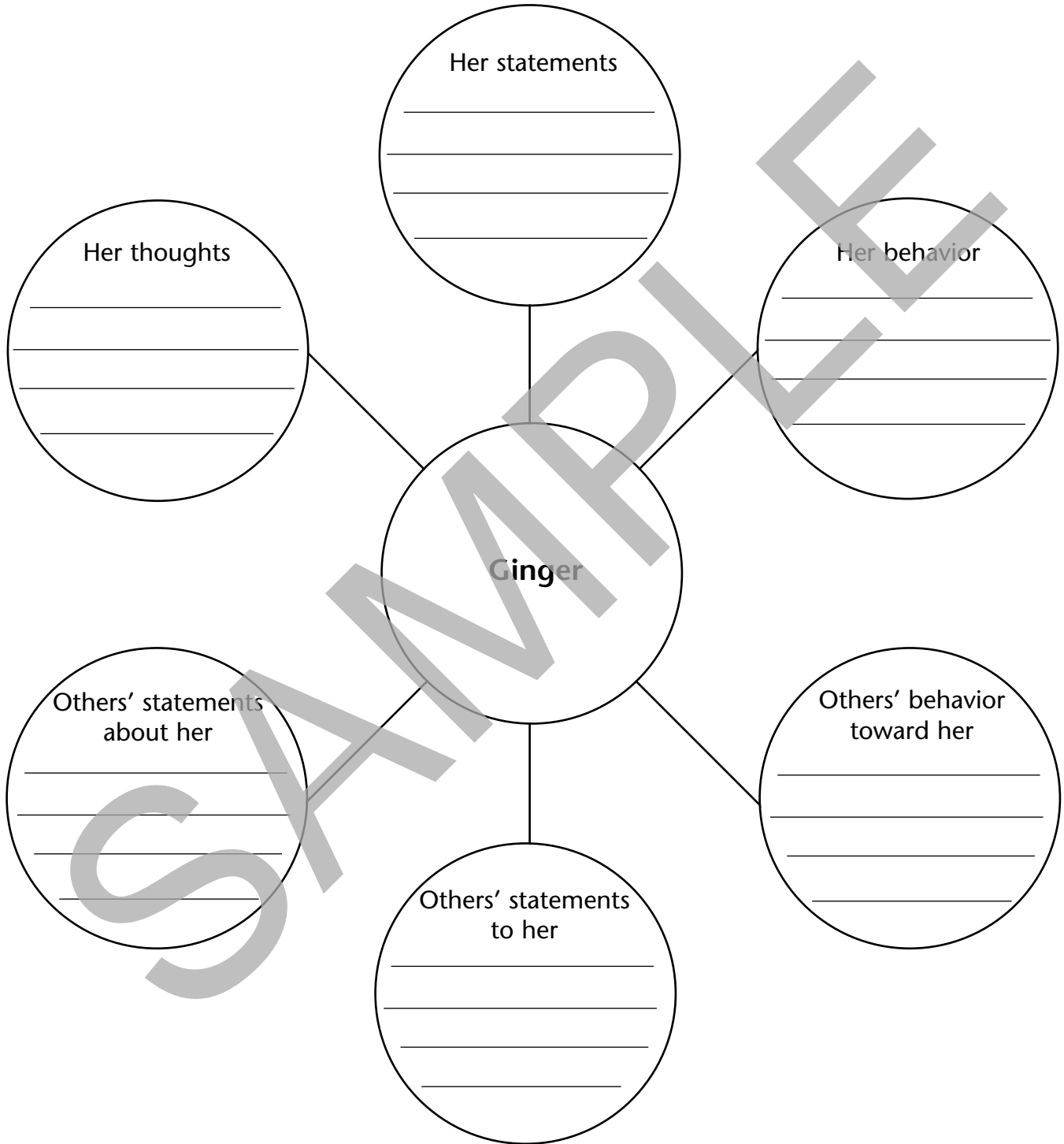
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# Character Web

**Directions:** Complete the attribute web below by filling in information specific to a character in the book.



## Supplementary Activities

1. Writing: Write advertisements for each of the Squire's horses when the family must leave the country. Include important details that a prospective buyer would want to know, such as size, coloring, and personality. Use lively language to attract readers' attention and interest.
2. Literary Devices: Interpret what the author means by each of the following figures of speech:
 

"...so I thought if I beat the bush on this side, the birds would fly out, and I should learn what I wanted to know quickly" (p. 70).

"...I would not stand in his light for the world" (p. 71).

"...I have top wages, and can lay by for a rainy day or a sunny day ... and Nelly is as happy as a bird" (p. 85).
3. Mood: Describe the mood at the end of Section 2. Explain how it compares to the beginning of the book.
4. Writing: Based on what you know about Black Beauty and what you have learned about the proper care of horses, state three wishes you have for how Black Beauty should be treated at his new home. Keep a record of your wishes so you can compare them with Beauty's eventual fate.

## Chapters 22–31, pp. 105–160

Black Beauty is not treated well at his next home, mainly because he is required to wear the cruel bearing rein. He is repeatedly injured, through no fault of his own, and is sold to a livery stable. There he is used by a variety of people, some of whom are callous and careless. He does no better at his next home with Mr. Barry and is soon sold again.

### Vocabulary

constrained (116)  
 interceded (126)  
 obliged (126)  
 frequented (129)  
 distinguish (131)  
 poultice (133)  
 foremost (136)  
 warrant (137)  
 contemptuously (143)  
 harassed (145)  
 prevailed (152)  
 blustered (156)

### Discussion Questions

1. How do the requirements of "fashion" affect Beauty and Ginger at their new home? (*The grooms are required to use the painful and harmful bearing rein because it is supposed to make the horses look elegant. pp. 110–111*)
2. A trusting Black Beauty asks his new partner, referring to the bearing rein, "Do you think that our masters know how bad it is for us?" (p. 115) Based on Max's response, discuss where the burden of guilt lies for this mistreatment of horses. (*Students may feel that because dealers and horse doctors know the effects of the bearing rein, it is their responsibility to speak up for the horses and convince their owners to stop the practice. pp. 115–116*)
3. What are the effects of Reuben Smith's forgetting his promises to stay away from alcohol? (*Beauty is badly injured, Reuben is killed, and his family must go to the gloomy Union House. pp. 125–134*)
4. What is the fate of a job horse? What, if anything, might the owner of the horse do to change this? (*Because many different people can rent a job horse, they each treat the horse differently. There may not be too much the owner can do except perhaps offer such reminders as not to overload the horse, use the whip, go too fast, or leave it out in bad weather. pp. 139–143*)