



The Horse & His Boy Study Guide

The Horse & His Boy, by C.S. Lewis
Adapted for the stage by Anna Chatterton
Directed by Christine Brubaker
Designed by Jennifer Goodman
Lighting design by Siobhan Sleath
Projections Design by Cameron Davis
Original Music and Sound Design by Deanna Choi
Movement and Puppetry direction by Alexis Milligan

Who are you when you travel? What do you leave behind? Who are you when you travel? What parts of you do you find?

The Horse and His Boy is a story about who you are at the beginning of a journey and who you are at the end. It is a story about discovering your place in the world. It is a story about being brave and dreaming big.

THE STORY

This story takes place in the imaginary world of Narnia and the surrounding countries of Archenland, and Calormen.

Shasta is a boy who lives by the sea in Calormen. He helps his father catch and sell fish. Shasta is unhappy because his father is cruel and treats him like a slave. He dreams of what lies north – beyond the distant hills.

Shasta come to learn the cruel fisherman is not his real father. To avoid being sold into slavery, Shasta plans to run away. He meets Bree – a talking horse from the northern land of Narnia. The two plan their escape.

As Shasta and Bree make their way north, Bree teaches Shasta how to ride. As they near the great city of Tashban on the edge of the desert they realize they are not alone. Another horse and rider are close by. Suddenly, a lion appears and chases both riders and horses. They flee for their lives.

They manage to outrun the lion. The other rider turns out to be a girl named Aravis and another talking Narnian horse named Hwin. They tell their stories.

Aravis is a young Calormen girl from a wealthy family. She is strong and independent. As in Calormen tradition, her father has arranged for her to marry. Aravis does not want to get married. Her horse Hwin reveals she can talk. Aravis and Hwin decide to run away together – to Narnia and the North.

The four join forces and decide to travel together. The horses, Bree and Hwin become instant friends. Shasta and Aravis – not so much. The two humans bicker and fight and do not get along.

Their journey together is a thrilling adventure, full of near escapes; help from friends; mistaken identity; a desert crossing to outrun an army; ghouls, lions; and an epic battle.

At the end of the story the main characters have a better understanding of who they are and where they belong.

Who wrote the story of *The Horse and His Boy*?

This is C.S. Lewis [*image of C.S. Lewis*]. He is an author and wrote *The Horse and His Boy* - one of seven books in the Narnia series.

This is Anna Chatterton [*image of Anna Chatterton*]. She is a Canadian writer who adapted *The Horse and His Boy* story to create the play for the Shaw Festival.

C.S. Lewis had a deep regard for horses. As a soldier in World War I, he was deeply moved by the deaths of thousands of horses that were part of the fighting. Even though he did not know how to ride a horse, he told a friend...“I love the sight and sound and smell and feel of a horse. I'd sooner have a nice, thickset, steady-going horse that knew me & that I knew how to ride than all the cars and private planes in the world.” It is not surprising then, that C.S. Lewis included horses in many of his stories.

The set is the background for the story. [*Images of set design and construction*]

Set design involves many people and many steps before it appears on the stage. The set designer begins with a concept and a sketch. A model of the design is built. The design is then constructed and painted. Finally the sets are erected on the stage by theatre technicians ... the result? You will see when you come to the show!

This story takes place in many locations within the imaginary world of Narnia. To easily transition from one location to another, the set designer drew inspiration from light box dioramas and video game backgrounds. As you look at the various set designs, note how shape and colour is used to distinguish each setting. Projections on a back curtain called a scrim, are used to enhance the various settings.

Let's show you some costumes! [*Images of costume sketches*]

The Horse and His Boy has over 50 characters played by 14 actors. The costumes are designed to allow actors to transform quickly from one character to another. The colours of the costumes cleverly match the colours of the sets.

The Horse and His Boy is a story that has many animal characters. The costumes have been designed to support the 'look' of the animal with simple additional costume pieces such as tails, horns, headpieces and ears.

This story asks you to listen, to watch, and to think.

During the show, listen for how the actors use their voices to emulate different sounds such as galloping horses, *Thubudythubudy*. Listen for how they vocally create background sounds of the scenes. *Drip Drip. Drip drop drip. Haze. Maze. Mist...* Pay attention to how they use rhythmic vocal patterns to tell the story. *On and on and on. Trot, walk, trot, jingle-jangle-jingle, squeak-squeak-squeak, hot horse on course Quiver shiver Where is that river?* This is called onomatopoeia – where the word's pronunciation imitates its sound ... like 'drip' and 'jangle' and 'squeak'.

The music in the play has been influenced by *Roomful of Teeth*, a vocal ensemble group who explore the expressive potential of the voice. [*Video of Roomful of Teeth*]

The actors use different theatre styles to tell the story of *The Horse and His Boy*. As you already know, the actors become different animal characters using their bodies and creative movement. The mask headdresses created for the actors playing Bree and Hwin, (the talking horses) are rigid hoods on top of their heads. The mask does not cover their face but is an extension of their bodies to simulate the silhouette of a horse. Melodrama is a theatrical style in which actors use extravagant and exaggerated gestures. Watch how this is used when Aravis tells her story of why she is running away to Narnia. Shadow mime uses a scrim or screen behind which the actors use their bodies in silhouette poses to tell the story. During the play, see how this technique is used in the final battle scene!

The Horse and His Boy makes us think about what it means to go on a difficult journey and face many hardships. We reflect on who we are at the beginning of a journey and how we are transformed at the end. What do we learn along the way? *The Horse and His Boy* makes us think about what it means to be a hero. Shasta makes decisions and carries on even when he is scared and unsure. Aravis, by deciding to forge her own path, leaves behind her family and all that she knows to pursue her dreams. And Bree and Hwin, knowing the journey will be difficult, still decide to make the treacherous trek in order to return to their home in Narnia. All the characters yearn to find their place in the world. *The Horse and His Boy* shows us that sometimes you find where you belong is not always the place where you were born and raised.

When you go to live theatre and see a play, you are also going on a journey. Your imagination will allow you to travel with Shasta, Aravis, Hwin and Bree. At the end of the play you too may be changed! We look forward to sharing our story with you.

<https://www.shawfest.com/beyond-the-stage/teachers/#teachers-resources>