

Black Beauty

Activities pack



Summary of *Black Beauty*

Andy McCuddy and his brother, Andy McCuddy (it's a family thing), have fallen on hard times. When they discover their beloved copy of *Black Beauty* in the cosy horse trailer they call home, they take the bit firmly between their teeth and re-enact portions of the page-turning adventure with their panto horse Hamish!

Created by Andy Manley and Shona Reppe, the dream team behind *White* (New Vic 2015), and acclaimed storyteller Andy Cannon, this is *Black Beauty* as you've never seen it before.



Making *Black Beauty*

There are only two people on stage throughout the show, and Hamish of course! Sometimes you only see one of the Andys, another time you will see both, and when Hamish is on stage you don't see either. Why do you think that is?

There are lots of props in the show that help Andy and Andy re-enact the scenes from their favourite story, and these props also help the audience. How do you think they help the audience?

"I'm still finding and making a few magic props!"

Shona Reppe, designer

What props do you think could be used to make a horse on stage?

Definition: A prop is an object used on the stage by the actors. They are generally moveable objects that are not part of the set or costume. For example, if you see people setting a table on stage, the dishes, cutlery and food would all be props!

Drama activity

Part of the magic of *Black Beauty* is in the storytelling methods it employs.

With your students, become storytellers and bring a book to life!

1. Begin by inviting students to come together in a seated circle and ask them:

What are different ways to tell a captivating story?

Then, write down their suggestions on chart paper for future reference.

Note: *Suggestions may include: fun characters and character voices, moments of suspense, music, comedy, etc.*

2. Tell students, *"It's storytime, but you're not just going to listen to the story, you're going to become all of the elements that help make up the story!"*

3. Read through the book once for the entire class so they get a sense of the story. Then go back through the book, highlighting vocabulary, characters, settings and other elements of the story using the following questions:

- *What colours did you see in the book?*
- *What items or objects did you see in the pictures?*
- *What characters are part of the story?*
- *What did they like to do together?*
- *Where do you think they lived?*
- *How did the characters feel throughout the story?*

4. Then, tell your students that they're going to bring the story to life in your classroom by exploring engaging elements of storytelling, selecting a few elements such as:

- Tableau (A frozen picture)
- Participants as Characters (Who/What is in the story)
- Creating Physical Setting (Where the story takes place)
- Soundscaping (The background music, noise or soundtrack made with the mouth, body or found objects)
- Thought-Tracking (Hearing what individual characters are thinking at any given point in the story)

5. Put all of these ideas into practice by leading students through a **Story Whoosh**, in which they create moments of the story in the centre of the circle, while you act as the narrator and offer direction as the story is told. Note: It's best to activate the story one page at a time.

Drama activity

6. Once you've finished a page or two of the book, have everyone in the centre of the circle go back to their seated position by saying the word, **"WHOOSH!"** and making a sweeping motion with your hands. Have seated students do this, too! Once you've repeated this for each page of the story, you will have essentially created your very own storyteller's theatre!



Reflection Questions

- What was it like to explore the story physically after hearing it?
- Did becoming different parts of this story help you better understand it? Why or why not?
- What were some of your favourite moments from this activity?
- What was the most challenging part of this activity?

Materials Needed: A book such as *The Story of Black Beauty* by Alan Marks, *Giraffes Can't Dance* by Giles Andreae; *Dear Zoo* by Rod Campbell or *Little Blue Truck* by Alice Schertle; and costume pieces (optional)



This Animal Life

Choose an animal and write a story about a day in their life on the paper below.
On the next page, draw a picture of that animal.

[illegible]

DRAWING ACTIVITY



Make a difference

In Anna Sewell's 1877 novel, *Black Beauty*, she writes about human kindness and cruelty — all from the point of view of a horse. In the many decades since that book was first published, Sewell's story is said to have helped change the way we treat and think about horses. What is one thing you can do to advocate for the humane treatment of horses? For example, if you pledge to visit a horse sanctuary for a day, that one small gesture of goodwill could make a huge impact. You could even write a letter to an animal rights advocacy group or one specific to horses!

Write what you think you can do to help protect animals in the space below.
