

4. The Horse and His Boy Discussion Group

Week	Date	Reading Assignment	Chapters Discussed
Wk 1	Sept 10	Chs 1, 2	1. How Shasta Set Out on His Travels 2. A Wayside Adventure
Wk 2	Sept 17	Chs 3, 4, 5	3. At the Gates of Tashbaan 4. Shasta Falls in with the Narnians 5. Prince Corin
Wk 3	Sept 24	Chs 6, 7, 8	6. Shasta Among the Tombs 7. Aravis in Tashbaan 8. In the House of the Tisroc
Wk 4	Oct 1	Chs 9, 10	9. Across the Desert 10. The Hermit of the Southern March
Wk 5	Oct 8	11, 12, 13	11. The Unwelcome Fellow Traveler 12. Shasta in Narnia 13. The Fight at Anvard
Wk 6	Oct 15	Chs 14, 15	14. How Bree Became a Wiser Horse 15. Rabadash the Ridiculous

...Next beyond her
 MERCURY marches; --madcap rover,
 Patron of pilfrers. Pert quicksilver
 His gaze begets, goblin mineral,
 Merry multitude of meeting selves
 Same but sundered. From the soul's darkness,
 With wreathed wand, words he marshals,
 Guides and gather them--gay bellweather
 Of flocking fancies. His flint has struck
 The spark of speech from spirit's tinder,
 Lord of language! He leads forever
 The spangle and splendour, sport that mingles
 Sound with sense, in subtle pattern,
 Words in wedlock, and wedding also
 Of thing with thought.

from C.S. Lewis' poem, "The Planets"

"It is difficult to see the unity in all these characteristics. 'Skilled eagerness' or 'bright alacrity' is the best I can do. But it is better just to take some real mercury in a saucer and play with it for a few minutes. *That* is what 'Mercurial' means."

C. S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image*

"There must have been some wonderful flowering shrubs hidden in that shadowy undergrowth for the whole glade was full of the coolest and most delicious smells. And out of the darkest recess among the trees there came a sound Shasta had never heard before—a nightingale. Everyone was much too tired to speak or eat.

C. S. Lewis, *The Horse and His Boy*

Chapter Nine: Across the Dessert

1. Of the companions who are the freest? Why do you think so?
2. How does the 'mercurial' show up in this chapter?
3. To what do the travelers fall asleep? Why might this be significant?
4. What and where are the tensions of movement and speed in this passage?

Chapter Ten: The Hermit of the Southern March

1. What do the companions see and what does that mean for them?
2. How quickly are they moving and what encourages them to move faster?
3. When Aravis is in trouble, what does Shasta do? How is his shout described?
4. How is the Hermit's house and enclosure described?
5. How does the 'mercurial' appear in this chapter?
6. Why does the hermit call the horses, "cousins"?
7. In the story as a whole, how does "luck" play into it?
8. What is Bree's struggle? What has Shasta done to him? What has Bree lost?

Ode to a Nightingale

BY [JOHN KEATS](#)

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
 My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
 One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
 But being too happy in thine happiness,—
 That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees
 In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
 Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
 Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
 Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
 Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
 With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
 And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
 And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
 What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
 Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
 Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
 Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
 And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
 Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
 Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
 Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
 And hapy the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
 Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;
 But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
 Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?

idiot (n.)

early 14c., "person so mentally deficient as to be incapable of ordinary reasoning;" also in Middle English "simple man, uneducated person, layman" (late 14c.), from Old French *idiote* "uneducated or ignorant person" (12c.), from Latin *idiota* "ordinary person, layman; outsider," in Late Latin "uneducated or ignorant person," from Greek *idiotes* "layman, person lacking professional skill" (opposed to writer, soldier, skilled workman), literally "private person" (as opposed to one taking part in public affairs), used patronizingly for "ignorant person," from *idios* "one's own" (see **idiom**).

In plural, the Greek word could mean "one's own countrymen." In old English law, one who has been without reasoning or understanding from birth, as distinguished from a *lunatic*, who became that way.

Bree said the first thing now to do was to fix a place where they would all promise to meet on the far side of Tashbaan even if, by any ill luck, they got separated in

Lewis, C. S.. *The Horse and His Boy: The Chronicles of Narnia* (Kindle Locations 499-500). Harper Collins, Inc.. Kindle Edition.