

1. 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 22	Chs 14, 15	14. How Bree Became a Wiser Horse 15. Rabadash the Ridiculous

There are many competing stones that vie for our loyalty and Sam tries to distinguish them, to locate the one hope-giving story:

"We shouldn't be here at all [Sam says to Frodo], if we'd known more about it before we started. But I suppose it's often that way the brave things in the old tales and songs, Mr. Frodo: adventures, as I used to call them. I used to think that they were things the wonderful folk of the stories went out and looked for, because they wanted them, because they were exciting and life was a bit dull, a kind of sport, as you might say. But that's not the way of it with the tales that really mattered, or the ones that stay in the mind. Folk seem to have been just landed in them, usually -- their paths were laid that way, as you put it. But I expect they had lots of chances, like us, of turning back, only they didn't. And if they had, we shouldn't know because they'd have been forgotten. We hear about those as just went on -- and not all to a good end, mind you; at least not to what folk inside a story and not outside it call a good end. You know coming home, and finding things all right, though not quite the same -- like old Mr. Bilbo. But those aren't always the best tales to hear though they may be the best tales to get landed in! I wonder what sort of tale we've fallen into?"

Sam has discerned the crucial divide. On the one hand, the tales that do not matter concern there-and-back-again adventures -- escapades undertaken because we are bored and seek excitement and entertainment. The tales that rivet the mind, on the other hand, involve a quest that we do not choose for ourselves. Instead, we find ourselves embarked upon a journey or mission quite apart from our choosing. What counts, says Sam, is not whether the quest succeeds but whether we turn back or slog ahead. One reason for not giving up, not quitting, is that the great tales are told about those who refused to surrender -- those who ventured forward in hope. Real heroism, Sam implies, requires us to struggle with hope, yet without the assurance of victory.

Frodo interjects that it's best not to know whether we are acting out a happy tale or a sad one. If we were assured oh happy destiny, then we would become presumptuous and complacent; if a sad one, then cynical and despairing. In neither case would we live and struggle by means of real hope.

"Don't the great tales ever end?" Sam asks. Frodo says no. Each individual story -- even the story of other fellowships and companies -- is sure to end. But when our own story is done, Frodo adds, someone else will take the one great tale forward to either a better or worse moment in its ongoing drama. What matters, Sam concludes, is that we enact our proper role in an infinitely larger story than our own little narrative: "Things done and over and made into part of the great tales are different. Why, even Gollum might be good in a tale."

Sam has plumbed the depths of real hope. The "great tales" stand apart from mere adventures because they belong to the One Great Story. It is a story not only of those who fight heroically against evil, but also of those who are unwilling to exterminate such an enemy as Gollum. As Sam discerns, this tale finds a surprising place even for evil. For it is not only the story of the destruction of the ruling ring, but also a narrative of redemption.

Dr. Ralph Wood

...Next beyond her
MERCURY marches; --madcap rover,
Patron of pilf'ers. 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"

But then, and quite different from such pleasures, and like a voice from far more distant regions, there came a moment when I idly turned the pages of the book and found the unrhymed translation of Tegner's *Drapa* and read I heard a voice that cried,
Balder the beautiful Is dead, is dead—

I knew nothing about Balder; but instantly I was uplifted into huge regions of northern sky, I desired with almost sickening intensity something never to be described (except that it is cold, spacious, severe, pale, and remote) and then, as in the other examples, found myself at the very same moment already falling out of that desire and wishing I were back in it.

C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*

I found Arthur sitting up in bed. On the table beside him lay a copy of *Myths of the Norsemen*.

"Do you like that?" said I.

"Do you like that?" said he.

Next moment the book was in our hands, our heads were bent close together, we were pointing, quoting, talking—soon almost shouting—discovering in a torrent of questions that we liked not only the same thing, but the same parts of it and in the same way; that both knew the stab of Joy and that, for both, the arrow was shot from the North.

C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*

Chapter One: How Shasta Set Out on His Travels

1. What is an adventure? How is that different from a quest?
2. What kind of poetry does Arsheesh seem to enjoy? Why this kind?
3. What kind of hospitality is offered to the Tarkaan? What has Shasta never learned? What does the Tarkaan offer
4. Arsheesh? What does this say about the culture of Calormen?
5. Where does Shasta come from? How does Shasta respond to finding out where he is from? What does that direction mean to him?
6. What time of day does Shasta find out about himself? How is this significant?

Chapter Two: A Wayside Adventure

1. What does Bree do the on the first morning of their adventure. What character flaw does this reveal?
2. What is the cry that Bree begins in chapter two and continues through the book?
3. What do Shasta and Bree come upon while traveling up the coast? Can you describe the interaction and the movements?
4. How does Bree answer Aravis when she accuses Shasta of being a thief? How is this reflected in the book's title?
5. How does Shasta feel around Bree, Hwin and Aravis?
6. What do the Calormen teach their children? Do you think this is good or bad?

Chapter Three: At the Gates of Tashbaan

1. What do you think of Aravis' storytelling? What is the tension between her storytelling and Shasta's questions?
2. With whom is Aravis connected? Disconnected? Not wanting?
3. What does Shasta ask about Aravis'
4. How do the virtues or vices of each manifest themselves in the characters?