



# A Horse's Tale

*Mark Twain*

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## A Horse's Tale Mark Twain

I am Buffalo Bill's horse. I have spent my life under his saddle - with him in it, too, and he is good for two hundred pounds, without his clothes; and there is no telling how much he does weigh when he is out on the war-path and has his batteries belted on. He is over six feet, is young, hasn't an ounce of waste flesh, is straight, graceful, springy in his motions, quick as a cat, and has a handsome face, and black hair dangling down on his shoulders, and is beautiful to look at; and nobody is braver than he is, and nobody is stronger, except myself. Yes, a person that doubts that he is fine to see should see him in his beaded buck-skins, on my back and his rifle peeping above his shoulder, chasing a hostile trail, with me going like the wind and his hair streaming out behind from the shelter of his broad slouch. Yes, he is a sight to look at then - and I'm part of it myself. I am his favorite horse, out of dozens. Big as he is, I have carried him eighty-one miles between nightfall and sunrise on the scout; and I am good for fifty, day in and day out, and all the time. I am not large, but I am built on a business basis. I have carried him thousands and thousands of miles on scout duty for the army, and there's not a gorge, nor a pass, nor a valley, nor a fort, nor a trading post, nor a buffalo-range in the whole sweep of the Rocky Mountains and the Great Plains that we don't know as well as we know the bugle-calls. He is Chief of Scouts to the Army of the Frontier, and it makes us very important. In such a position as I hold in the military service one needs to be of good family and possess an education much above the common to be worthy of the place. I am the best-educated horse outside of the hippodrome, every-body says, and the best-mannered. It may be so, it is not for me to say; modesty is the best policy, I think. Buffalo Bill taught me the most of what I know, my mother taught me much, and I taught myself the rest. Lay a row of moccasins before me - Pawnee, Sioux, Shoshone, Cheyenne, Blackfoot, and as many other tribes as you please - and I can name the tribe every moccasin belongs to by the make of it. Name it in horse-talk, and could do it in American if I had speech.

## A Horse's Tale Details

Date : Published July 1st 2000 by Blue Unicorn Editions (first published 1907)

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## **From Reader Review A Horse's Tale for online ebook**

### **Kalen says**

This story is a big contrast to Mark Twain's A Dog's Tale. Although both books have similar titles they do not share the same style. A Horse's Tale is not always narrated from the horse's point of view and I would have preferred this short story more if it had been narrated by Soldier Boy (the main horse character)

I thought the last chapter was really the storey Twain wanted to tell and the last chapter felt disunited from the rest if the story.

I thought it was interesting how Twain switched between narratives. For example the horse started the narration with a first person (horse ? ) perspective, then humans would narrate, then letters would narrate past events often to characters that are not involved in the stories events and finally animals would narrate to other animals regarding dialogue the first animal overheard amongst humans. Although these types of narration were interesting I don't think I appreciated them.

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### **Laura Verret says**

Again, the beginning was great, but the end was depressing. I don't like reading about people who are killed for no reason! If a tale has a martyr, they should at least die for a cause. However, the idea of Cathy occupying a military position was charming.

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### **Gary says**

I do normally enjoy the writing of Mark Twain and find it a welcome change from my usual psychological thrillers that I tend to read. But on this occasion I was disappointed, I had previously enjoyed 'The Dog's tale' and was hoping for something very similar but from a horses perspective but I found this short story on the whole a total let down.

The book starts promising with the narrative from 'Soldier Boy' who was Buffalo Bill's horse and is amusing but this changes to a tale of Soldier Boy's relationship with Cathy.

There are much better books by Mark Twain and I would suggest avoiding this one.

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### **Hayley Todd says**

As short as it is, it made me laugh and cry. Mark Twain certainly can make it believable that animals really do have the personalities we attribute to them

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## Maria says

I usually find Mark Twain both funny and to the point, but this tale wanders and is a bit confusing when it jumps around between the viewpoints of different horses and of people. There is a description of a bull fight towards the end that made my stomach clench in horror. Twain is so subtle that it is sometimes difficult to tell whether he is writing in approval or disapproval of the events he describes. This is a case in point. If I hadn't read Around the Equator and portions of his autobiography, I wouldn't have been able to tell that he meant his reader's stomach to clench in horror. I found the rest of the tale to be depressing in the extreme, which also was probably Twain's intent. I did wonder if he fashioned the little girl in this tale after his own daughter who died so young and for whom he mourned for years. I read somewhere that he used her as a guide for his Saint Joan, which I still think is the finest thing Twain has written.

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## Gary says

Beautifully written and touching, insightful and true. Sentimental without reserve or pretense. Twain.

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## Agape says

Çok eski bir baskı oldu?u için bulunabilir mi emin de?ilim ama güzel bir öykü derlemesiydi. Belki farklı ve ayrı? bas?mlar? olabilece?inden içindeki öyküleri tek tek yaz?yorum.

Beyaz Fil

Ölüm Zar?

Geç Kalan Pasaport

Misis Williams ve Y?ld?r?m

Eskimo K?z?n?n Roman?

Garip Bir Rüya

Alonzo Fitz Clarence ile Rosannah Ethelton'un A?kları

Bir Yarg?lama

Bir Ortaça? Roman? ?f?a Edilen S?r

Ya??yor mu? Öldü mü?

Kapitol Venüsü'nün Hikayesi

Bir At?n Hikayesi

Öyküleri genel olarak çok be?endim. Kafan?z? da??tacak, güldürecek, dü?ündürecek ve ne zaman bitti?ini anlamayacaksınız?z. Beyaz Fil isimli öykü trajikomikti, güzel ba?lad? dedim kendi kendime. Ölüm Zar? biraz daha masumane ve dü?ündürücüydü. Geç kalan pasaport heyecanlı? bir öyküydü ama Misis Williams ve Y?ld?r?m gerçekten çok komikti ve çok da güzel bir konuya parmak basm??t?. En çok e?lendi?im öykülerden birisiydi. Ya??yor mu? Öldü mü? adlı? öykü ise toplumun belli bir konudaki ve benzer konulardaki dü?ünce yap?s?na güzel bir de?inme olmu?.

Mark Twain'i her zaman sevmi?imdir. Özellikle Tom Sawyer'in kalbimdeki yeri bamba?kad?r. E?er kendisine a?ınaysanız ve öykü okumay? seviyorsanız? kesinlikle bu öykülerini okuman?z gerekti?ini dü?ünüyorum. Garip bir rüyan?n anlat?m? ve dü?ündürücülü?ü çok ho?uma gitti. Öykülerin içeri?ine dair bir ?ey paylaşmak istemiyorum çünkü çok da uzun de?iller. Ne desem büyüsunü kaç?rm?? olurum.

Kitaba ad?n? veren öykü ise çok güzeldi. Güzeller güzeli, sevimli mi sevimli Catherine'nin hikayesini bir çok ki?iden s?ras?yla okuyorsunuz. Özellikle Asker Delikanl? diye ça?r?lan at?n kendi kendine dü?ündü?ü k?s?mlar çok güzeldi. Hikayenin sonu ise oldukça etkileyiciydi.

Bütün öyküler üzerine dü?ündü?ünüzde bir tak?m ?eyler ö?renebilir, birçok ?eyi de fark edebilirsiniz. Sadece bu aç?dan bile okunmaya de?er hepsi.

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## Leonard Ondigo says

Genius!

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## Debbie Zapata says

I haven't read much Twain as an adult, and not too many of his short pieces in my youth, other than those assigned to us in school. I certainly had never heard of this one, which I noticed at Gutenberg and added to a challenge list of books about animals.

Twain starts by having Soldier Boy (the horse) speaking. *I am Buffalo Bill's horse*. From that you would expect a story of rough and ready Army Scout type of adventures told from the horse's perspective. This is not what happens, though.

The story is almost more about young Cathy, nine years old and being sent to live with her uncle the General of a cavalry post. While there, she charms everyone from soldiers to animals. I kept thinking of Kipling's story about Wee Willie Winkie, set in India. It was made into a movie starring Shirley Temple. Even though they did not look the same, I could not keep myself from picturing Shirley whenever Cathy was out and about.

Just about the time I was wondering if we were ever going to hear from or even about the horse again, he does show up, having a conversation with a Mexican horse who has arrived at the fort. He takes part in a few adventures with Shirley...I mean Cathy...and becomes her horse because of one of those adventures. But when the General retires and takes Cathy to Spain life changes for everyone.

There are some funny bits here, and others that will make you get all teary, especially the ending (I was expecting part of what happened but the rest was a punch in the gut). There is also a puzzling chapter where two men are riding along, one from Spain originally and the other born American. They are talking about bullfighting and the Spaniard describes the first one he ever saw. Being Spaniard, he does not see it as cruel, it is tradition. The American listens and thinks it would all be great fun, that not even burning people (read the 'n' word) is anywhere near as much fun. So what does Twain mean to say by this? I would like to think he meant how can any one country rant about the cruelty in another when there are even more cruel and horrible things happening within their own borders.

Here are Mongrel and Sage-Brush, the two horses who were carrying the Spaniard and the American and listened to the conversation. They are more concerned about the description of the bullfight, but I must say I have to agree with their conclusion:

*“Sage-Brush, you have been listening?”*

*“Yes.”*

*“Isn’t it strange?”*

*“Well, no, Mongrel, I don’t know that it is.”*

*“Why don’t you?”*

*“I’ve seen a good many human beings in my time. They are created as they are; they cannot help it. They are only brutal because that is their make; brutes would be brutal if it was their make.”*

*“To me, Sage-Brush, man is most strange and unaccountable. Why should he treat dumb animals that way when they are not doing any harm?”*

*“Man is not always like that, Mongrel; he is kind enough when he is not excited by religion.”*

*“Is the bull-fight a religious service?”*

*“I think so. I have heard so. It is held on Sunday.”*

*(A reflective pause, lasting some moments.) Then:*

*“When we die, Sage-Brush, do we go to heaven and dwell with man?”*

*“My father thought not. He believed we do not have to go there unless we deserve it.”*

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### **Tim Villegas says**

I am not sure what I was expecting from this story but the ending surprised me. There was some nice social commentary in the book and I enjoyed the repartee between the animals. I would highly recommend this book as a nice change of pace to what you would expect a Mark Twain story to be. Excellent read.

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### **The Fat says**

A pleasant inoffensive little tale with some great moments of humor until the extremely stark change of tone in the last two chapters. I guess it served the purpose of really hammering home the message Twain wanted but in a literary sense it didn't really work.

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### **Nicole Clarkston says**

We were perfectly charmed in the beginning, loving Twain's wit and humor, but it felt like a bait and switch at the end. A horse story became a girl story, which became a treatise on the cruelties of bullfighting. We thought we were getting a story about it Buffalo Bill! And it was NOT a happy ending. We all felt sick. I think that is what Twain intended, but the story didn't feel at all like a story. Rather, it seemed like a drunken, ironic rant.

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### **Katie says**

Was a delightful read about a spunky, lovable girl. I was thoroughly enjoying it...and then it had such an abrupt, dark end that was completely out of tenor with the rest of the book. I've thought a lot about Twain's intentions presenting it this way, and I'm not sure what I've concluded. Whiplash realism? Happiness and joy are fleeting? The innocence of childhood is a fragile thing that can easily be killed? Too many options...none

of them pleasant. :-/

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### **Lesley Lodge says**

This starts off with an unusual perspective on his rider and life in general - it's a book written in the some places from the horse's point of view, with a wide range of comments from the horse, both funny and historical. And Mark Twain (Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer) is as entertaining as ever on life in early 19th century America. Other parts of the book take the form of letters (from human characters). Be warned, though, the whole thrust of the book is to make a serious point about cruelty to animals - and it does this very graphically through the story. [spoiler alert - some heart-breaking scenes in the second half]. The thing is, the point about cruelty to animals did need to be made more forcefully in Mark Twain's day. These days, as a writer on horses in film, I prefer a lighter look at the role of the horse.

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### **Iris Hulsker says**

It was fun and entertaining. I was a bit shocked by the ending but I do not regret having listened to it.

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