



Traveller

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Examines the events of the Civil War through the eyes of General Robert E. Lee's closest companion and devoted horse, Traveller.

Traveller Details

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Author : Richard Adams

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From Reader Review Traveller for online ebook

Dark-Draco says

This novel is written in the style of Black Beauty, where Traveller tells his story. From his young days on the farm through the campaigns of the American civil war, he becomes the trusted horse of General Robert E Lee. The book is well written and you really get the sense of the horse trying to puzzle out the things he sees and does. From his point of view, the 'Blue Men' are the enemy and 'Marse Roberts' the man to give them a good seeing too. It's a book you can enjoy and smile at, even though some of the scenes are really harrowing, but Traveller's gentle nature sees him through.

Laurie says

I loved the book. It's a interesting method which keeps the reader's attention while displaying valid information about the Civil War and Robert E. Lee. Just a hint: It is told through the point of view of Lee's trusted steed, Traveller. If you like history AND something a little bit different, you will enjoy this book. I LOVE all of Richard Adams' books that I have read. I think you will, too.

Tamora Pierce says

I love this book. It is absolutely brilliant: the American Civil War, as seen by Confederate Commander Robert E. Lee's favorite horse, Traveller. The book begins with Traveller in a barn, the old campaigner telling stories to a rapt pair of cats. He explains how he started out, under another name and other ownership, a young horse with a good reputation. It is this which brought him to the attention of the Confederate command, and then to the man he would call "Marse Robert." Traveller tells the war as a horse would see it, taking on verbal tics (calling the Yankee enemy "those people" as Lee does, referring to artillery as "bangs") and interpreting Lee's 1863 heart attack just before Gettysburg as a fall due to Traveller's own misbehavior. It's also a great way to see the legends of the army: Traveller renames many of them, so that Stonewall Jackson becomes "Cap-in-Eyes," and J.E.B. Stuart is "Jine the Cavalry" for his habit of always saying "join the cavalry!" (Traveller is not cute, though, not with camp life or the realities of the war.) For those who might be confused about the timeline, there are paragraphs between the tales, explaining what is taking place between the armies. And through it all is an extraordinary love between horse and man.

Jake says

Ever wondered how Mr. Ed would have held up as a Civil War steed?

No. I haven't either. But Richard Adams had such musings it seems, and they resulted in this novel novel. (Sorry, had to go for the trite word play.)

Robert E. Lee, legendary Confederate General, had a horse named Traveller. This is historical fact. The novel follows the Civil War from the horse's point of view. As such, it's limited in which aspects of the war

the audience gets to see. Locked into that premise, the novel is a bit less satisfying than say, *The Killer Angels*. Still, the narrative is enjoyable and often intense, including a graphic depiction of the fate many horses faced. Just remember the horses often had it better than the foot soldier, if only because they were attached to well-fed officers.

Lastly, I will say this is a book I found without the aid of a catalog or search engine. I found it by wandering the shelves, happening on a familiar name, "Traveller," and then opting to give it a try. If you've never bypassed the search engines and gone straight to the shelf to explore, you have likely missed a novel or two you would enjoy.

Kristal Cooper says

Another very creative novel from Richard Adams! This time, he tells the story of the Civil War from the perspective of General Robert E. Lee's horse. Traveller's southern drawl and country colloquialisms are just charming. Unfortunately, he often doesn't know the names of the battles, towns, or soldiers that he's describing. I could only have liked this book better if I remembered more about the Civil War from my history classes 20 years ago. Luckily, my husband recently watched the Ken Burns series on the subject, so he was able to answer many of my questions. A Civil War buff, I believe, would LOVE this book -- therefore, I'm sending it to my favorite high school teachers.

Candy Atkins says

I loved this book and Traveller so much I named my big grey warm-blood Traveller after him. (and my family fought for the North)

Traveller and me

M.M. Anderson says

Loved this book! A history lesson from the point of view of the horses that served in the Civil War.

Jason says

I must address something I've seen in other reviews on here and elsewhere on the internet. Some people seem confused or even put off that this glorifies the south... How does one explain that water is wet? The sky up? Two and two make four? Traveller was General Robert E. Lee's horse, and the story is told from his point of view. If I read a book called Blondi about WWII seen through the eyes of Hitler's German Shepard, I would expect it to glorify the Nazi cause. If I think that's too much for me to handle, then I'd best not try reading it. This is my advice for anyone thinking about reading this book: if you find the Confederacy offensive to the point that you can't look at the Civil War objectively, then don't read this.

Who'da thunk a Brit could capture the Virginian patois so well in print? I could hear Traveller's voice perfectly, and it sounded akin to my own. I was raised in Richmond, though I have rural roots and was always spending time with relatives in the country, so this is a good thing. Well done, Mr. Adams.

I'm afraid Traveller is a couple of oats short of a feedbag, but it's not really his fault. Not all equines can be as smart as Mr. Ed. Some of the other horses who understand battles better than he (such as Little Sorrel) point this out to him from time to time. He starts his journey looking forward to getting to the War everyone is excited about. (This was before Lee bought him). He figures a war must be a heavenly place with lots of good feed to eat, pastures to run though with plenty of good rolling spots, etc., and laments at the end of the book that he never gets to the war though he really lives through the whole thing, and tells the barn cat all about it over the course of a few years after the war is over. He's convinced that Marse Robert (his name for General Lee because that's what his slaves and servants called him) won the war and is now commander of the whole country since he's still giving orders to people. (Lee at this point is president of Washington College which would become Washington and Lee University later). As near as I can tell all the facts are presented accurately, but Traveller's point of view provides an amusing twist.

He's still terrified of the blue men (his name for the Yankees) years later.

"What's so scary about us?"

I guess that's understandable after you've spent three years getting shot at by them.

He has his own names for most of the generals. It was sometimes hard keeping them straight, but it wasn't bad enough that I had to put down the book. Here are the more prominent ones:

Stonewall Jackson - Cap in his Eyes (because he often wore his hat low)

Longstreet - Old Pete (an actual nickname)

Stuart - Jine the Cavalry (because he suggested Traveller would be great in the cavalry and ought to join it)

A. P. Hill - Red shirt (you can probably figure this one out)

Pickett - Ringlets (due to his curly hair)

Though he's not as well known as the other confederate generals, my favorite was the nick for General Borcke as Vot-You-Voz. Borcke was German and spoke with an accent Traveller couldn't follow.

Traveller describes the battles to Tom the cat over the course of a few years after the war is over, and covers all of the ones Lee was involved in. However they're not listed by name (except occasionally in aside blurbs after the fact), so if you're not familiar with the battles this part would be really hard to follow. Also if you're not into Civil War battles, I can see how these parts would be repetitive and tedious which is a common complaint I've seen in other reviews. I'm all about this kind of stuff, though, so I loved it. I found myself getting lost in the battles, so I looked them up as I went along and used The West Point Atlas of War: The Civil War to refresh myself as it's been several years since I've studied the Civil War in detail. I was confusing Chancellorsville with Wilderness and Spotsylvania which is kind of understandable since they were pretty much fought on the same ground but in different years. I also confused a few details of some other battles, but got it all straight in the end by looking up a couple of things. Still, I'm really impressed with how accurate everything is in this historical fiction.

There are also a lot of amusing bits between his battle yarns. At one point he finds that Tom has fallen asleep. "Well, isn't that just like a cat!" is his response to that. Sometimes he directs the cats in a campaign to

get a rat that's hiding somewhere in the barn as if he were a general. He also relates some common jokes from the war: "Come on out of that hat. I know you're in there, I can see your legs hanging down." He explains this after telling Tom once to "Come on out of that fur." My favorite line was when he was talking about Joel Sweeney's (who may have written the song Jine the Cavalry with J.E.B. Stuart) banjo playing: "...he'd sit there and make it go *pilly willy winky pop*, sometimes for the whole evening, and the fellas'd all get to singing, an' Jine-the-Cavalry'd fill up a big brown jug and laugh and tell Sweeny (sic) to play some more."

This book wasn't all fun and games, though. It definitely exposes the hardships of war for both sides, though mostly for the confederacy since that's what Traveller saw first hand. However he was also there for the Battle of the Crater which was pretty much the Union's "Pickett's Charge" moment and a complete slaughter of blue men. And it wasn't just battles that were hell. Conditions for the South were bleak for the last two years of the war. They couldn't replace anything they used, had no food, boots, clothes, anything. I believe more died from sickness and starvation than from battle wounds by the end of it.

Traveller captures the essence of Lee. He's considered to be a great human being. That's debated since he was a slave owner, though he fits the mold of a benevolent one. He educated his slaves (which was illegal), eventually freed them, helped fund the move to Liberia effort, and urged allowing slaves to serve in the Confederate army with manumission being a reward for doing so. Still, looking at him through 21st century eyes some will never see him as anything but evil because he once owned slaves. He was a complex man, but honor was a big part of him and his loyalties lay with his home state. He was also a really good general. He made a few boneheaded maneuvers such as Pickett's Charge, but a war that could've been over in six months to a year lasted instead for four years, and Lee's generalship is part of the reason for that due to a combination of skill, luck, and bad decisions from the Union generals he was facing. He also had a way of instilling confidence and loyalty in his men that no one else could manage. No matter how bleak something might seem, he was able to make people feel better about it and get them to carry on. Traveller tells us all about it. And about how well he treated his horses even if he didn't have anything for them to eat sometimes. He did the absolute best he could with what he had.

This book won't appeal to a wide audience. In order to enjoy it you'll need an interest in the War Between the States and prior knowledge of it might be required for following it. An interest in battle specifics, strategy, and tactics wouldn't be amiss either. If you don't have those, reading this might be slow going for you. If you *do* have those, then this book is awesome.

And I'm going to leave this here because I can: Joan Baez - The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down. Now, I know some people consider it akin to sacrilege to prefer this cover over *The Band*'s original version, but I can't help it; this one just does it for me even if Joan's politics makes my skin crawl. Like Linda Ronstadt, she has a wonderful voice though the personalities make me want to puke. Still, this song strikes a chord with me and she sings it beautifully.

"Virgil, quick come see; there goes Robert E. Lee." I bet he was riding Traveller.

Beth says

Excellent read. A sensitive and compassionate story told from the viewpoint of Genral Robert E. Lee's horse, Traveller. Travellor narrates a quasi-history of his life and times as Lee's horse during the trials and tribulations of the Civil War. Adams does an excellent work in giving the horse life and character. As with

all fiction, Adams takes liberty in giving human and horse characters personality, feeling and depth all while attempting to maintain a measure of historical accuracy.

Geoff Sebesta says

In my life I have read many books, and this is one of the weirdest.

There's great difficulty to knowing where this book was coming from, and close to the end I figured out why; because it is coming from three places at once. It is an experiment by a great writer. It is a indulgent exercise by a doddering old Englishman. And it is possibly the greatest book ever written from the point of view of a horse....which isn't saying much.

It isn't precisely a good book, and it definitely might be a bad book but not bad in a bad way. It's...uh....

Normally when I read a book on the American Civil War my first question is, what about slavery? What's this book's opinion on slaves?

Traveller has no opinion on slavery. He's a horse. As far as he's concerned the Civil War had no effect whatsoever on the sort of slavery that he's born into.

So is this a coded plea for animal rights? Considering the author, I had my suspicions. And then something truly baffling happened.

I very rarely give spoiler warnings, but if you have any serious intention of reading this book, you might want to skip this part or you will not be able to read the book in the way the author intended. Simply giving you this information will influence your feelings about the book the entire time and the giant synaptic "jump" at the end of the book, where Adams attempts to actually put you in the head of a horse, will not play quite out the same. I'm not saying it won't be a good book, but it won't be the same.

Ready?

Okay, the horse thinks that the South won the Civil War.

Which is so insane that it must be true.

And Adams mostly pulls it off, he mostly gets across the way that a horse actually *would* think that, how, from the horses's point of view, they sort of did!

But this is deeply undone by the long and winding middle of the book. Adams is obviously one of those weird British aficionados of the American Civil War, might even be one of those guys who goes out to a field near Colchester or something to re-enact Antietam. It's a real thing, look it up, they really do American Civil War re-enactments in England. Either way, Adams's middle-aged delight in knowing all the battles of the Civil War possesses him at some point, and he can't resist introducing you to all the officers of Lee's high command (and their horses) and taking you step-by-step through four years of war, every battle, every skirmish. I bet it's all historically accurate, too. When it's so dense and complex that it's obvious that not even a talking horse could understand it, then Adams actually squishes in news dispatches written in a sort of newspaper jargon, conveniently translating what just happened from "horse" to "history." But this leads to

odd moments like the horse calling some commanders by name and keeping track of the news by the gossip of other horses. Basically the middle part is much, much too long to maintain the illusion that it's anything other than a magical talking horse. The real horse-y parts, at the beginning and end, are undermined by Mr. Ed Goes To War in the middle.

The ending, in which Traveller doesn't exactly understand that General Lee has passed away, doesn't really work in the same book as Traveller the Civil War Correspondent who tells us Stonewall Jackson was shot by one of his own sentries at the Battle of Chancellorsville. Either a horse knows the news or he don't, but you can't change your mind mid-novel.

This book is marbled through and through with deep streaks of illogic and unseemliness. I was curious how the horse would deal with the starving soldiers eating horses, but that never comes up at all. He knows enough English to make fun of a German guy's accent but not enough to know what the word "war" means. Perhaps worst of all, Traveller's opinion of slavery is sufficient for a horse, but not sufficient for Mr. Ed. There are a lot of problems like that.

But, like I said, this book does a better job of getting inside a horse's head than any other book I've ever read...and that's not saying much. At times it really works. The American Civil War must be one of the greatest slaughters of horses in human history, and it's an important story that deserves to be told, and to be told from this particular and bizarre point of view. I only wish Adams had worked on it, not as a professional producing a book for the public, but as a maniac who can't let something go for decades. This book needed another decade of editing and polishing and general re-jiggering. Not a year, a decade. The quest to get into a horse's head can only succeed through discipline, research, and astounding leaps of intuition. The only way to do that is time. Lots and lots and lots of time.

And if you don't know anything about the American Civil War, you are definitely going to be confused.

However, this story raises some really important questions. Modern readers simply cannot get into the mindset of a slave. It is far too foreign. We can perhaps imagine what it's like to be a field hand and to be beaten into obedience every day, but the life of a "faithful slave" is impossible. We can't begin to imagine what it must have been like to be an uneducated, deeply oppressed individual who sides with their own oppressors against the very people who are fighting to free them. The closest mental framework that we have is found in animals and pets. The only door for a modern reader to understand how the slaves felt about the people who held them in bondage is through an animal metaphor, and this book does a better job of explaining how a "faithful slave" might have seen their owners during the Civil War than any other book I've ever read. The South was a time and a place when they were literally forcing human beings to live like animals, so it sort of works. Traveller is, on some level, a house slave's view of the Civil War from the South's side. That's a tremendously important and tremendously difficult story.

On the whole, I'm glad that I read this maddening, baffling, trivial, indulgent, tremendously experimental and courageous novel. We *should* learn more about how horses through history. It's a story that needs to be told, and maybe needs to be told better, but this is a good start. Maybe this needs to be a genre.

Plus, it definitely got me thinking. There are few books that have made me wonder like this one.

``Laurie Henderson says

*I dreamt last night that there was wind and rain.
I got up and looked out, but all was strange;
A muddy track across a wooded plain;
A distant tumult, angry cries, exchange
Off fire. And then, out of that dreadful night,
Appeared a scarecrow army, staggering,
Defiant, famished. In the quenched starlight
They marched on to their bitter reckoning.*

*Their sleepless, bloodshot eyes were turned to me.
Their flags hung black against the pelting sky.
Their jests and curses echoed whisperingly,
As though from long-lost years of sorrow -*

Why, You're weeping! What then? What more
did you see?

a gray man on a gray horse rode by.

All animal lovers should enjoy reading about the adventures of "Traveller" Robert E. Lee's beloved horse during the Civil War.

Traveller relates his experiences, as he understood them to be, in an entertaining manner..

He still has nightmares about the *Blue Men* as he rests comfortably in his old age.
Although the innocent animal didn't understand why the Blue Men kept advancing, he did know they were his master's enemy and therefore his as well.

The link below tells the true story of Traveller who turned out to be a pretty amazing horse in real life as well as in this book.

<http://www.horseandman.com/horse-stor...>

I've rated this book by the author of Watership Down 5 stars and found it to be just as magical.

Jennifer says

I loved this book through and through. Richard Adams takes you into a horse's mind in a compelling and heart stirring way (sounds corny saying that).

When first contemplating reading Traveller a bit a sheepishness rises as you pull the book off the shelf and you wonder how an author could write a book about a horse for adults. Aren't horse books for young girls? But, let me tell you, this book is powerful and there's depths in it that probably little girls couldn't begin to fathom.

Cindy says

Traveler is General Robert E Lee's horse through the American Civil War. In this book, the war is in the past and the old war horse is telling his story to a couple barn cats. The tale of the Civil War, through the eyes of the General's horse, is not the place for unbiased reporting, but it is a great story, nonetheless.

Art says

The War Between the States (aka the Civil War) as seen through the eyes of Robert E. Lee's horse. A wonderful read.

Suzanna says

The perfect book for me! I love history (Civil war is a favorite) Plus I love horses, so Adam's tale about the Civil War Horse of Robert E. Lee is wonderful. Lee's story as told by his favorite horse Traveler.

Joyce Rodella says

Excellent book...from Robert E Lee's horse's point of view. We never think of the hardships the horses went through during the fighting and grueling marches. Ever so faithful even after his human dies....

Annie says

Another all time favorite...I really love Richard Adams. This one tells the story of the civil war, from the point of view of Robert E. Lee's horse, Traveler. Again, could be read as a children's book, but it's really not and is as good a book on the civil war as any other I've read.

Allison Janezic says

Telling the story of the American Civil War, as seen by Confederate Commander Robert E. Lee's favorite horse, Traveller. The book told in the first person allows us to view the Civil War through Traveller's eyes. Fans of Watership Down will enjoy this book. Beautiful and sad this novel gives us a new spin on a piece of American history.

Joel says

The story of the Civil War from the perspective of General Lee's horse. I guess I was hoping this would be a

story about a horse with the Civil War stuff used as background, but it was very focused on telling the straight-forward story of the Civil War. It was structured around Lee's battles and campaigning. It is more engaging and literary than reading a history textbook or even a lot of historical war fiction. If you want an account of the Civil War with an interesting, distinctive narrator, this is a good choice. It just isn't another *Watership Down*.

Rena Sherwood says

This could have been so much better than it was. The South is portrayed as the hero of this story. Huh? There were hints that what the horses went through was similar to what slaves went through, but this promising theme was never carried on. Instead, the book focuses on the battles of the Civil War -- which are incredibly repetitive.
