

## 7 THE FIRE

10 One day the Squire and Mrs Gordon decided to visit their friends who lived about forty-six miles from our home, and they love them.

In the evening we stopped at a big hotel to spend the night. We drove into a yard. The stableman brought us to the stable and two grooms looked after us. One man, Towler, had a pipe in his mouth.

“Towler,” the stableman said. “Get some hay for these horses. Put your pipe down first!”

“All right,” said Towler. He got the hay, and left.



### Glossary

- **drove:** (here) rode a horse and cart
- **hay:** dried grass

- **pipe:** 
- **yard:** area beside buildings

I didn't know what time it was, but I woke up in the middle of the night. I felt very uncomfortable<sup>•</sup>. Ginger was coughing<sup>•</sup>. It was dark, and I couldn't see anything, but the stable was full of smoke<sup>•</sup>, and it was hard to breathe.

I heard a strange noise. I did not know what noise was, but I was very frightened<sup>•</sup>.

At last I heard steps outside, and the stableman came in with a light. He tried to lead<sup>•</sup> the horses out, but they were very frightened. Eventually he came to me and tried to drag<sup>•</sup> me out. I didn't want to go. In the end, he tried as all and then left the stable.

Maybe we were foolish<sup>•</sup>, but we knew we were in danger and we did not trust<sup>•</sup> anyone.

## DANGER

What is the danger for Black Beauty and the other horses?  
Describe a dangerous situation you were in.  
How did you escape?

- **coughing:** making a noise as you expel air from your mouth
- **drag:** pull in a rough way
- **foolish:** stupid
- **frightened:** scared; feeling afraid of something
- **lead:** guide; direct
- **smoke:** black cloud from fire
- **trust:** feel that you believe someone
- **uncomfortable:** strange; not relaxed

I looked up and I saw a red light dancing on the wall. Then I heard the shout of “Fire!” coming from outside. There was a terrible roaring noise.

Next I heard James’ voice, calm and cheerful, “Come, my beauties, wake up and come with me,” he said. He tied his scarf over my eyes, and led me out of the stable and out of danger. Then he ran back inside. I gave a sigh as I saw him go. Ginger told me later that she heard my whinny and it gave her the courage to come out.

I heard a crash in the stable, then I saw James with Ginger; she was coughing and he was not able to speak.

We got out as quickly as possible when Squire Gordon took us all to a large hotel on the other side of town.

But Ginger and I knew that my horses burned to death in the stable – it was terrible. We felt very sad.

The next morning James heard that Dick Towler was responsible for the fire. The night before a man saw him in the stable with a pipe in his mouth. At Birwick Park the rule was “No pipes in the stable”. And it was a very good rule.

## Glossary

- **burned to death:** died in the fire from burns
- **cheerful:** happy
- **courage:** bravery; strength
- **responsible:** (here) it was his fault; he did it
- **roaring:** (here) loud and frightening
- **wake up:** stop sleeping



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We returned home and were glad to be in our own stable again. But we were sad because James had a new job, and he was leaving soon. One morning James asked John:

“Who is going to take my place here when I leave?”

“Little Joe Green,” said John.

“Little Joe Green! Why, he’s a child!”

“He is fourteen and a half,” said John. “He is a good worker, and kind, too.”

At last the day came for James to leave us. He looked very sad.

“Cheer up, James,” said John. “You’re going to make lots of new friends in your new job.”

But we were all very sad to say goodbye to James.



## Glossary

- **cheer up:** be happy

## After Reading

### Characters

- 1 **Black Beauty** met many different human beings during his life, some kind, some cruel. Look at this list of characters from the book. Who was kind and who was cruel to Beauty? Write their names in the correct list.

Joe Green      Nicholas Skinner      Stephen Smith  
Mr Barry's groom      Jerry Barker      William Squire Gordon

KIND	CRUEL



- 2 Read the clues and fill in the name of a character from the story.

a) I used to bite people because I was angry when they were not kind to me.

b) I am small, fat and grey. I loved being in the meadow with Black Beauty and Ginger.

c) I am a young boy. Black Beauty is my special friend and I often bring him food.

d) We bought Beauty when he was four. My wife and I were very fond of him.

e) I used to be a hard-working cab owner. But I was always kind to my horse, Jack.

f) I am a groom and am very glad that I have found Black Beauty again.



- 3 Find the names of the characters in the wordsnake. Then put the remaining letters in order to find another person. How is s/he important to the story?



- 4 Circle three adjectives that describe Black Beauty.

lazy      unfriendly      intelligent      friendly  
hard-working      stupid      angry      cruel

- 5 Discuss these questions in pairs.
- Describe the character of Black Beauty.
  - What is the difference between Beauty and Ginger's characters?
- 6 Ginger, Mr. Pegg and Black Beauty were happy when they spent Sunday in the meadow together, and told their stories. Write the conversation between the three horses, imagining what they say to each other.
- Act it out in class.