Paired Passages

Black Beauty
by Anna Sewell

This passage is narrated by a horse named Black Beauty.

When I was four years old Squire Gordon came to look at me. He examined my eyes, my mouth, and my legs; he felt them all down; and then I had to walk and trot and gallop before him. He seemed to like me, and said, “When he has been well broken in he will do very well.” My master said he would break me in himself, as he should not like me to be frightened or hurt, and he lost no time about it, for the next day he began.

Every one may not know what breaking in is, therefore I will describe it. It means to teach a horse to wear a saddle and bridle, and to carry on his back a man, woman or child; to go just the way they wish, and to go quietly. Besides this he has to learn to wear a collar, a crupper, and a breeching, and to stand still while they are put on; then to have a cart or a chaise fixed behind, so that he cannot walk or trot without dragging it after him; and he must go fast or slow, just as his driver wishes. He must never start at what he sees, nor speak to other horses, nor bite, nor kick, nor have any will of his own; but always do his master’s will, even though he may be very tired or hungry; but the worst of all is, when his harness is once on, he may neither jump for joy nor lie down for weariness. So you see this breaking in is a great thing.

I had of course long been used to a halter and a headstall, and to be led about in the fields and lanes quietly, but now I was to have a bit and bridle; my master gave me some oats as usual, and after a good deal of coaxing he got the bit into my mouth, and the bridle fixed, but it was a nasty thing! Those who have never had a bit in their mouths cannot think how bad it feels; a great piece of cold hard steel as thick as a man’s finger to be pushed into one’s mouth, between one’s teeth, and over one’s tongue, with the ends coming out at the corner of your mouth, and held fast there by straps over your head, under your throat, round your nose, and under your chin; so that no way in the world can you get rid of the nasty hard thing; it is very bad! yes, very bad! at least I thought so; but I knew my mother always wore one when she went out, and all horses did when they were grown up; and so, what with the nice oats, and what with my master’s pats, kind words, and gentle ways, I got to wear my bit and bridle.

Next came the saddle, but that was not half so bad; my master put it on my back very gently, while old Daniel held my head; he then made the girths fast under my body, patting and talking to me all the time; then I had a few oats, then a little leading about; and this he did every day till I began to look for the oats and the saddle. At length, one morning, my master got on my back and rode me round the meadow on the soft grass. It certainly did feel queer; but I must say I felt rather proud to carry my master, and as he continued to ride me a little every day I soon became accustomed to it.

Words that could be defined for students are in bold.

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The Secret Garden
by Frances Hodgson Burnett

This passage takes place in a garden. Colin is a young boy who was sickly and wheelchair bound, but is beginning to recover and be able to walk. Mary is his cousin, and Dickon is a friend to both of them.

At first the robin watched Mary and Colin with sharp anxiety. For some mysterious reason he knew he need not watch Dickon. The first moment he set his dew-bright black eye on Dickon he knew he was not a stranger but a sort of robin without beak or feathers. He could speak robin (which is a quite distinct language not to be mistaken for any other). To speak robin to a robin is like speaking French to a Frenchman. Dickon always spoke it to the robin himself, so the queer gibberish he used when he spoke to humans did not matter in the least. The robin thought he spoke this gibberish to them because they were not intelligent enough to understand feathered speech. His movements also were robin. They never startled one by being sudden enough to seem dangerous or threatening. Any robin could understand Dickon, so his presence was not even disturbing.

But at the outset it seemed necessary to be on guard against the other two. In the first place the boy creature did not come into the garden on his legs. He was pushed in on a thing with wheels and the skins of wild animals were thrown over him. That in itself was doubtful. Then when he began to stand up and move about he did it in a queer unaccustomed way and the others seemed to have to help him. The robin used to secrete himself in a bush and watch this anxiously, his head tilted first on one side and then on the other. He thought that the slow movements might mean that he was preparing to pounce, as cats do. When cats are preparing to pounce they creep over the ground very slowly. The robin talked this over with his mate a great deal for a few days but after that he decided not to speak of the subject because her terror was so great that he was afraid it might be injurious to the Eggs.

When the boy began to walk by himself and even to move more quickly it was an immense relief. But for a long time—or it seemed a long time to the robin—he was a source of some anxiety. He did not act as the other humans did. He seemed very fond of walking but he had a way of sitting or lying down for a while and then getting up in a disconcerting manner to begin again.

One day the robin remembered that when he himself had been made to learn to fly by his parents he had done much the same sort of thing. He had taken short flights of a few yards and then had been obliged to rest. So it occurred to him that this boy was learning to fly—or rather to walk. He mentioned this to his mate and when he told her that the Eggs would probably conduct themselves in the same way after they were fledged she was quite comforted and even became eagerly interested and derived great pleasure from watching the boy over the edge of her nest—though she always thought that the Eggs would be much cleverer and learn more quickly. But then she said indulgently that humans were always more clumsy and slower than Eggs and most of them never seemed really to learn to fly at all. You never met them in the air or on tree-tops.

Words that could be defined for students are in bold.
In the passage, how does the master treat Black Beauty? Use two details from the text to support your answer.

Write your answer in complete sentences.

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CCLS Alignment: RL.5.1; additional standards may be added after further development.

Commentary: This question aligns to CCLS RL.5.1 because it asks students to use evidence from the passage to support what is said explicitly and what is implied about how the master (Squire Gordon) treats Black Beauty.

Rationale: The response accurately explains that the master (Squire Gordon) is caring but firm with Black Beauty. He wants to break Black Beauty himself so that he will not be frightened or hurt. He treats Black Beauty with pats, kind words, and gentle ways.
Describe the challenge that Black Beauty faces in the story and how he responds. Use two details from the text to support your answer.

Write your answer in complete sentences.

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CCLS Alignment: RL.5.2

Commentary: This question aligns to CCLS RL.5.2 because it asks students to describe a challenge that Black Beauty faces and how he responds.

Rationale: The response accurately identifies the challenge: being broken in. Black Beauty is not thrilled at first but accepts the bit because he wants to be grown up and please his master.
How do the robin’s feelings toward Colin change from the beginning of the story to the end? Use two details from the text to support your answer.

Write your response in complete sentences.

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Aligned CCLS: RL.5.3

Commentary: This question aligns to CCLS RL.5.3 because it asks students to compare the feelings of a character from the beginning of the passage to the end, and describe the change.

Rationale: The response accurately explains the changes in the robin’s feelings toward Colin. He first is anxious because he thought Colin could be dangerous like a cat. He is then relieved when Colin leaves his chair. By the end of the story he identifies with Colin as he observes him learning to walk.
Both stories are told from the perspective of an animal. How does this perspective affect how the stories are told? Compare and contrast how Black Beauty and the robin view their surroundings. Using details from both passages, describe how the animals’ perspectives influence how events are described.

In your response, be sure to:

☐ describe the perspective of Black Beauty from “Black Beauty”
☐ describe the perspective of the robin from “The Secret Garden”
☐ explain how each author uses these perspectives to help the reader understand the events as they unfold
☐ use details from both stories

Write your response in complete sentences.

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Aligned CCLS: RL.5.6, W.5.2

Commentary: This question aligns to CCLS RL.5.6 because it asks students how the animals’ perspective influences how the story is told. It also aligns to CCLS W.5.2 because it asks students to write an explanatory piece.

Rationale: The response accurately describes the animals’ perspectives in both stories. It explains how telling stories from an animal’s perspective allows the reader to see human behavior from a new angle. The response explains how Black Beauty’s perspective of “breaking in” and “bits” differs from that of humans because the horse can explain how it feels to him. The response explains how the robin understands Colin’s use of a wheelchair and how he compares his learning to walk with learning to fly.