

## **Julia's Book Recommendations**

### ***The Saddle Club Series*, by Bonnie Bryant**

Three young girls share a love of horses and an enduring friendship in a small Virginia town. It was books like these, about girls my age who actually had the chance to regularly ride horses and not just trade stickers of them in the cafeteria, that nourished my horse-loving spirit. I now understand why my parents encouraged me to read ***The Babysitter's Club*** books instead, as babysitting was a more practical and attainable after-school activity for me to shoot for.

### ***Black Beauty*, by Anna Sewell**

Black Beauty is the story of a beautiful black horse who just wants to be loved and taken care of. Some of his masters are kind to him, and others are harsh. At one point, his stable catches on fire and he almost perishes! As I write this, my heart is breaking. Black Beauty! Come home with me! I will love you forever! Wow. These books have still got it, huh?

### ***Misty of Chincoteague*, by Margeurite Henry**

Paul and Maureen are a brother and sister who love horses, and long for one of their own. Will they be able to save up enough money to buy wild mare Phantom and her foal, Misty, who have captured their hearts? Based on the story of a real life wild pony who was raised in captivity by the Beebe family of Chincoteague Island, Virginia, every child who reads this story will dream of visiting Chincoteague—which I can say from experience will NOT disappoint. Plus, it's cheaper than Disneyland. Family road trip!

### ***The Black Stallion*, by Walter Farley**

A teenage boy and a wild stallion are stranded on a deserted island together and have to bond together and learn to trust one another for survival. If that situation doesn't sound like an absolute dream come true, then you're probably no longer 11.

### ***National Velvet*, by Enid Bagnold**

This beguiling tale of a young English girl, Velvet, who wins a horse in a raffle, learns to ride it, and becomes the unlikely winner of the Grand National Steeplechase, is a classic underdog story that touches upon wider themes of family loyalty and ambition. Largely eclipsed by the 1944 film, which starred Elizabeth Taylor, Velvet in the novel is a little grittier and less of a glamour-puss, but her determination is just as inspiring.

### ***The Red Pony*, by John Steinbeck**

One of Steinbeck's earlier novels, the story is broken into four distinct parts following a period in the life of young Jody, a boy growing up on a ranch in California. Jody loves horses, and he learns some of life's hardest lessons from them. So many hard lessons. Because, you know, Steinbeck.

***The Horse and his Boy*, by C. S. Lewis**

For those of us who loved the Chronicles of Narnia, but thought they needed more talking horses. *The Horse and his Boy* tells the story of young Shasta and his companion, the talking horse Bree, who journey together to Narnia in search of freedom. This tale is the only one set entirely in the world of Narnia and featuring only Narnian characters.

***Summer of the Redeemers*, by Carolyn Haines**

For readers who are a bit older and ready for a little mystery, romance, and danger with their horses, I highly recommend this fast-paced, gripping read. Set in a small Mississippi town where several suspicious newcomers—including a mysterious young woman who seems to love horses more than anything else, and a secretive religious group—have arrived to shake things up, this creepy, well-written tale is difficult to put down.

***My Friend Flicka*, by Mary O'Hara**

When the son of a Wyoming rancher fails the fifth grade, his parents decide to give him a young colt to care for, because they believe it will help him learn to take responsibility and improve his grades. Yet when I flunked math in fifth grade, my parents got me a tutor. How is this fair?