

# The silver donkey essay



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The Silver Donkey, a tale of a young English soldier who fled the chaos of the first world war to be founded by two French sister, Marcelle and Coco.

Lieutenant Shepard is temporarily blind and has walked away from the war as he found it too hard to bear. The two sisters hide and feed the soldier and in return of their kindness, he tells the sister marvellous tales, each story connected to the keepsake he carries in his pocket: a perfect tiny silver donkey.

The lieutenant, himself longs to cross the channel and return home to his dying younger brother but such escape is beyond the ability to organise and execute for the two girls. Their thirteen-year old brother, Pascal is invited to join their mission as he hatches a plan to return the soldier to England.

During the days of the soldier's hidings, the three children learn the truth behind the silver donkey, and what the precious object means: honesty, loyalty and bravery. Bravery was a very important theme in the novel, The Silver Donkey, by Sonya Hartnett.

It was shown all the way through, not only in the Lieutenant but also in the sisters as well as the donkey in the many tales told. The first display of bravery was from the Lieutenant himself, when he decides to run away from the war despite of the consequences and his temporary blindness.

Lieutenant Shepard hides away in the forest after stealing an old man's clothes. The girls, when finding the soldier were brave enough to confront the mysterious man and then later keep his identity. The story tells many tales and morals of bravery and confidence.

The first tale the lieutenant tells to the girls was a tale about an old donkey named, Hazel who was to carry Joseph, his wife Mary and a baby yet to be born back to their hometown of Bethlehem for the census. As the new baby arrives Hazel, the donkey, soon kisses him. I quote from the novel, ' And Mary smiled, because when a donkey kisses a baby it means the child will share the traits which make the donkey the noblest creature of all: he will be patient, tolerant, modest, forgiving, humorous, gentle and brave.

The donkey is portrayed as a brave animal in this novel. There are other tales about the donkey that the lieutenant tells. Another is about a village long ago when the annual monsoon did not arrive leaving a drought to the people. The people, a tiger, elephant, snake and dog all went up individually to threaten the sky for rain but all came back down, insulted and unsuccessful. It was only when the donkey sought its courage and decided to confront the sky, that there was a change. I quote from the novel, ' donkeys are despised as witless and pig-headed.

You are forced to carry impossible loads, whipped till your hides are crossed with scars. You are fed the harshest food, and very little of it. When you are too torn to work, you are cast aside. Yours can be a thankful life, donkey... You endure much that is unforgivable, yet you forgive. ' Despite the discouragement of the people, the donkey is still brave enough to face the sky and ask for rain even though all in all it will only benefit those who treat him badly.