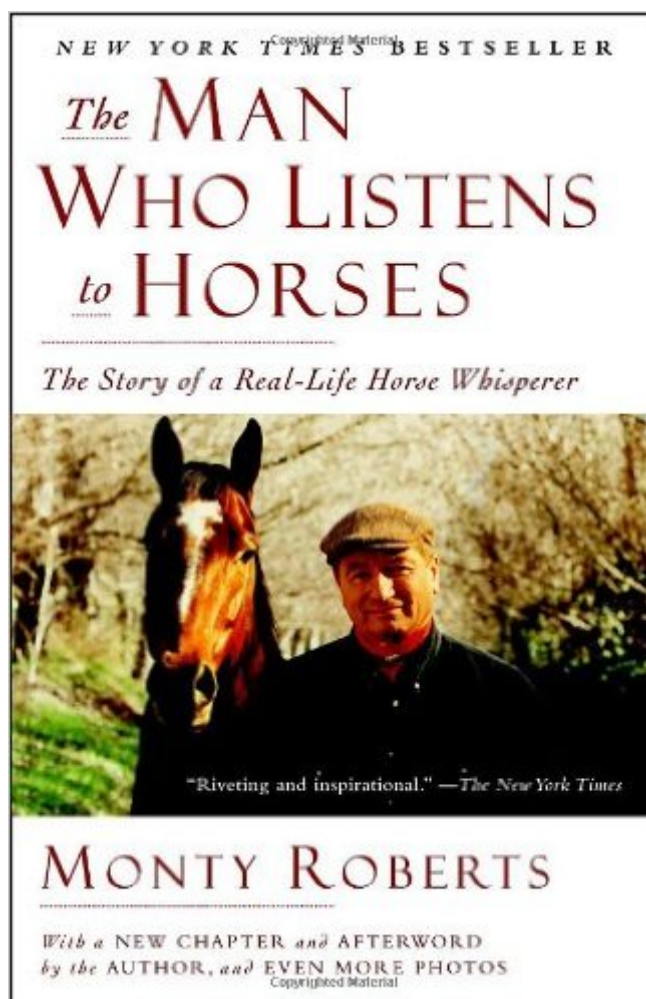


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The Man Who Listens To Horses: The Story Of A Real-Life Horse Whisperer



Synopsis

Monty Roberts is a real-life horse whisperer—a “an American original whose gentle Join-Up® training method reveals the depth of communication possible between man and animal. He can take a wild, high-strung horse who has never before been handled and persuade that horse to accept a bridle, saddle, and rider in thirty minutes. His powers may seem like magic, but his amazing horse sense is based on a lifetime of experience. In *The Man Who Listens to Horses*, Roberts reveals his unforgettable personal story and his exceptional insight into nonverbal communication, an understanding that applies to human relationships as well. He shows that between parent and child, employee and employer, abuser and abused, there are forms of communication far stronger than the spoken word that are accessible to all who will learn to listen. This new edition features engaging photographs, a chapter that traces Roberts’s amazing experience gentling with a mustang in the wild, and an Afterword about the remarkable impact this book has had on the world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. For me, it is a book about communication. I have no particular interest in horses, horsemanship, horse training, etc. That’s not why I read this book, nor why I have since recommended it to many of my friends. No, the book’s appeal to me is what it has to say about people. Monty tells a story that illustrates a simple yet profound truth: You can best communicate by imagining yourself in the other’s place. For Monty, the most obvious "other" is a horse. Monty was able to communicate exceptionally well with horses because he could imagine himself in their place. Unfortunately, Monty could empathize with horses that his father "broke"

because his father treated Monty in the same harsh way. Monty sought an alternative way to train horses that was based on understanding and on compassion, and he found it. The story's appeal is largely emotional. Since reading it, I have found it difficult to explain to other people what it meant to me, and yet I have found its message useful in my business consulting practice. I think that fact reflects the richness of Monty's story and helps to explain the breadth of its appeal to many readers. You needn't read too much between the lines to see that this book is about listening, about empathy, and about human warmth in all areas of human endeavor. It is much more than a biography, or a story about horses. Apparently, there has been some debate about the accuracy and the balance of this biography. Did all the events that Monty Roberts describes really occur? Did he originate all the innovations in horse training that he claims? Well, if you read what his critics have to say then I'd suggest you be sure also to read his responses, which can be found on his web site. It's beyond me to know where the truth lies. But if you are wondering in view of all the controversy whether you should still read the book, if you are concerned it may contain false claims, then let me say that I would recommend the book to you anyway. If you like, think of the whole thing as a work of fiction. Even then it would still be worth reading. The book is highly readable. To be sure, it's not an outstanding work in terms of style. The story construction is a bit mechanical. And, occasionally, I wondered whether a given passage was in the book only for the self-aggrandizement of the author. But eventually the mechanics of the story worked themselves out. Questionable passages were generally redeemed as they later turned out to be important in the story's development. And, in spite of the shortcomings, the author's use of language is artful and most of the writing flows very nicely.

This is a fascinating autobiography of one of the most sought-after horse trainers in the world. Monty Roberts takes us from his childhood, growing up on a ranch in California, all the way up through the years right before the book was first published in 1996. He learned to ride at a very young age and was quite successful on the rodeo circuit and in reined cow horse competitions. But what really gave him his ambition to develop a method of communicating with horses was the abuse with which he saw his father treat horses, and the the abuse he himself received from his father. Convinced that there must be a better way to train horses, he observed the behavior of mustangs, and ultimately came up with a technique he calls 'join-up'. 'Join-up' involves working with a horse in a round pen, first encouraging the horse to flee around the perimeter by making steady eye contact and assuming an imposing stance. The handler then watches for three tell-tale signs that the horse wishes to communicate - first the horse will lock his inside ear on the handler, then begin licking and

chewing, and finally lower his head near the ground as he travels around the pen. Once the horse has given these signals, the handler takes his/her eyes off the horse and shifts away from the animal. At this point the horse will usually come up behind the handler and stand very close, allowing the handler to touch him. Then the horse can be saddled, bridled, and at last, mounted and ridden. (This is a very truncated explanation - the book goes into much more detail.) Of course Roberts was not the first to use methods like these. Some other reviewers here have complained about this fact, accusing him of taking undue credit. But Roberts himself admits this in his book. He points out that there were trainers in previous centuries that tried (and had success with) similar methods, but that for whatever reason these methods did not take a firm hold on the general equestrian population. So yes, Roberts does do a lot of self-promotion here (another thing some have complained about), but this is because he's attempting to spread the word about his method of training. He is using the book first and foremost to sell his technique, but this is because he wishes to make the training experience a better one for horses. This book takes us through Roberts' journey of learning, and all the trials and triumphs that led him to where he is today. He tells us of his experience with mustangs, his successful childhood riding career, the encounters with his father that helped shape his own way of thinking, the development (and narrowly-avoided disaster) of his Thoroughbred racehorse facility Flag Is Up Farms, various success stories of his 'join-up' method, his meeting with Queen Elizabeth II of England, his many tours to demonstrate his techniques, and even his success in using 'join-up' with wild deer. He also introduces us to the horses that have shaped his life and carved a place for themselves in his heart - Brownie, his childhood mount; Johnny Tivio, his all-time favorite; and Dually, his most recent mount. Toward the end of the book there is a 'How To' appendix describing in detail the 'join-up' technique. Roberts lists all the necessary equipment (nothing fancy is needed - everything is standard equipment that any horse owner should already have; the only thing you may have to 'borrow' is the round pen itself if you do not have one), and takes us through the procedure in a clear step-by-step fashion. He explains the purpose of each aspect of 'join-up' and how the horse will perceive the handler's actions. He also explains the meaning of the horse's responses to these actions. The appendix is very easy to follow and the technique is simple enough that it is easy to remember afterward, without having to lug the book to the arena with you. The book concludes with an afterword by Lawrence Scanlan, the author of 'Riding High' and co-author (with Ian Millar) of 'Big Ben'. Scanlan describes his experience observing the 'mustang project' that Roberts embarked upon in 1997. This takes us briefly into the story of Shy Boy, a small mustang stallion Roberts attempts to gentle (in the wild, not in a pen) with his 'join-up' technique. The afterword is very short. Roberts went on to write about his experience

with Shy Boy in his next book 'Shy Boy: The Horse that Came in from the Wild'. I have not read that one yet, but plan to soon, as I was very impressed with 'The Man Who Listens to Horses'. I would highly recommend it to anyone involved with horses.

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