

Discussion Questions for *Ballad of the Horse and Mule*, by Barbara Gregorich

1. As the story begins, do you like Robert Stroud? Why or why not? How would you describe his character? How do you feel about him when the story ends? Has he changed? If so, how, and what things made him change.
2. What are some of the physical obstacles that the endurance riders encounter? What are some of the mental obstacles? Which do you think are more difficult to overcome: physical or mental?
3. In several scenes, young people are attracted to the mule. Why do you think that is? Why do you think Robert Stroud isn't attracted to the mule?
4. Have you read ballads before? Which do you remember, and why? Why do you think the author chose to tell this story in ballad form? Does the ballad form add something to this story that straight prose wouldn't?
5. **Day 58:** What do you think is meant by the line "Yes fracture is the norm"? In what ways does the story show this? When you first read this line, were you aware that it was foreshadowing? Did you notice any foreshadowing in the book? If so, give some examples.
6. As you read, what did you think was going to happen to Robert Stroud? What made you reach the conclusion you did?
7. Did you enjoy the daily standings charts? Why or why not? How did they the charts add to the story that was being told through verse?
8. Who did you want to win the race? Why? Were you satisfied with the way the story ended? Explain.
9. What is endurance? Did each of the 100 riders have endurance? Did the winner have endurance? Discuss.
10. Are there different kinds of friendships depicted in *Ballad of the Horse and Mule*? If so, describe some of them. In the book, is one kind more important than the others? Explain why you think so.
11. Did you have a favorite chapter or scene? Discuss what it was and why.
12. Have you been through any of the eleven states that the race goes through? If so, did *Ballad of the Horse and Mule* call to mind any of the physical features you noticed while traveling through those states?
13. Do you think the mule stands for something? Is it a symbol? Discuss.