

**The Silver Donkey**  
By Sonya Hartnett

One of the major ideas in the book is that of bravery. Discuss whether the soldier is brave, or a coward. Look at this theme as it develops throughout the book and whether your opinion changes during the course of the story.

On Page 145 The soldier says that he has done a shameful, cowardly thing. Do you agree? Do you think he is a bad man? Why / Why not?

Draw a Venn diagram and illustrate both the individual and shared qualities that the children exhibit.

On p124. Fabrice has a dream. But life is not fair. Do you think the reaction of the soldier to Fabrice's problems is fair? Are his problems more important? What does it tell us about the soldier?

On p96 'His eyes weren't actually blind but simply tired of seeing, and stubbornly refusing to see'. Why is he refusing to see and what is he refusing to see?

There is strong use of figurative language such as metaphors and similes. In terms of the children, most similes and metaphors refer to animals, such as '*wild as kittens born under stables*' (p6); '*as if the sisters were fleet butterflies*' (p6); (p7) '*stepping from the shadows like fawns*', Coco has a '*sparrow's quick eyes*' (p7) and hair '*like a black poodle*'(p8); '*following the voices as if they were birds*' (p9); the girls waited, '*tense as cats*' (p10)

How does this animal imagery invite us to react to the girls, see them? What does it suggest about them? What does it suggest the author thinks about animals and children by putting them together?

You might like to write some of your own similes that create vivid pictures of your friends and families

Where is the book set?

Find out where the narrowest part of the English Channel is between the French coast and England. Locate pictures of French coastal villages, on the web or in books.

The story is set during spring. Why did you think the author chose that time of the year, apart from the logistics that winter would be too cold for the soldier to survive etc. Does the season of spring give any clues as to the outcome/point of the story?

The forest is an important part of the setting too. Why do you think the soldier will miss the forest? (p154)

*'That knowing suffering means that we don't want to inflict it'*. Discuss these ideas in terms of the book and in a wider context.