

The Map of the Kingdom: High Fantasy Reigns Supreme in *The Little White Horse*

Published in 1946, Elizabeth Goudge's *The Little White Horse* is a Victorian inspired children's fantasy featuring beautiful illustrations, a literary map, and a floorplan by the prolific freelance illustrator C. Walter Hodges. A general success and awarded the prestigious Carnegie Medal, *The Little White Horse* was regularly in and out of print throughout the late 20th century. Sparked by a 1998 comment of adoration made by acclaimed author of the Harry Potter series, J.K. Rowling, *The Little White Horse* once again came into print in 2001. Despite *The Little White Horse's* endurance, there is little critical conversation on the text and Goudge's unique fantasy brand. Without this conversation, considering how critics classify and define fantasy fiction is valuable. Critics such as Jack Zipes and Sheila Egoff find the distinctions between the fantasy fiction subgenres, such as high and low fantasy, cut and dry. Zipes' and Egoff's high fantasy definitions are especially valuable when conducting a close reading of *The Little White Horse*. Using Zipes and Egoff's definitions demonstrates that *The Little White Horse* presents various high fantasy characteristics. As *The Little White Horse* includes high fantasy characteristics, is written by a female author, and features a female protagonist, it is significant that it predates the two series authored by men which often serve as prototypes for the subgenre: *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien and *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis. I argue that *The Little White Horse's* noteworthy high fantasy characteristics become especially clear in the printings that include Hodge's literary map. In this paper, I will look at how the map enhances the presentation of three features common to high fantasy texts: the portal to the other world, the battle of good versus evil, and religious allegory as the true "epic journey." Ultimately, much of the religious allegory revolves around locations in the kingdom that are near to water. Most importantly, the titular "little white horse" originates from the eastward sea, which the main character views as a "doorstep to heaven" (Goudge 132).