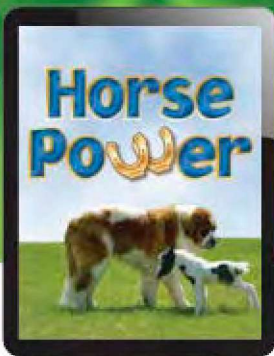


Lesson 20

INFORMATIONAL TEXT



✓ GENRE

Informational text gives readers information about a person, topic, event, or idea. It may include text and graphic features such as headings, captions, and photographs.

✓ TEXT FOCUS

Tone is a writer's attitude toward the topic he or she has written about. A text can have more than one tone. In this selection, the writer's tone is interested, respectful, and friendly. It highlights the special connection between humans and horses.

Horse Power

by Keelah Malcolm

People and horses have been companions for thousands of years. Before cars and trains, we used horses to do work and to travel from place to place. We still use horses to help round up cattle on ranches and to move about on large farms. Mounted police officers use horses to patrol crowded events such as concerts and fairs. We even use horses to compete in sporting events such as polo matches and horse races. More and more, however, people with special needs are using horses to make their lives better.



Guide Horses

You already know that dogs can be guides for blind people, but did you know that horses can be as well? In the United States, some people train miniature horses to act as guide animals. Why miniature horses instead of dogs? Horses live longer. Dogs live an average of twelve years, while miniature horses can live for twenty to thirty years. With an extended lifespan, horses are able to bond with and help their handlers for a much longer time than dogs. Guide horses also provide an alternative for people who are allergic to or afraid of dogs.

Caring for a guide horse can be hard work. A guide horse's handler needs to lift heavy bags of feed and bales of hay, and refill buckets—not bowls—of water. The handler also needs to clean up after the horse and keep it groomed. Even though a guide horse is small, it must have a large outdoor space where it can roam and exercise when it is not working. Learning to trust a guide horse takes time, too, and most handlers go through special training themselves in order to be matched to the right companion. For people who are willing and able to put in the effort, a guide horse can be a helper they will love and rely on for many years.



A guide horse helps this young woman to travel and to learn in the classroom.





Therapy Horses

Some standard-sized horses are trained to work in other ways with people who have special needs. These horses are called therapy horses, and they can help people both physically and emotionally. For example, people with physical disabilities often have weak muscle tone. Learning to ride a horse helps them strengthen their muscles so they can support themselves more easily. Riding also helps them improve their balance and coordination—all while having fun!

Some children with autism have trouble forming connections with the people around them. With therapy horses, they get a chance to form a connection with an animal. They learn to brush and care for the horse, which helps them learn about the needs of a living being. Some of these children don't communicate much, or at all, with family or friends. However, riding a horse is new and exciting. Sometimes, the experience is exciting enough that a child will begin to communicate with the horse by using gestures or calling the horse by name.

The relationship between people and horses is a special one. Horses are hard workers and can provide hours of pleasure as riding companions, but perhaps their most treasured quality is their ability to bond with people who need their help. Talk about horse power! There is no denying the healing benefits of spending time with these remarkable animals.



Therapy horses are used to help a variety of people with different disabilities.

