

Can Horses Inspire Reading?

By Erin Hayes, ABC News, Kissimmee, FL, March 31, 2011

You can lead kids to words, but can you make them read? It's an old question that two men in Florida are answering "Yes" to, especially if you've got a horse — a black stallion specifically. The Black Stallion Literacy Project uses real horses to catch a child's interest — and then introduces them to the classic The Black Stallion children's books.

"I just see it benefiting the children so much," said Cathy Landry, a fourth-grade teacher at Reedy Creek Elementary School in Kissimmee, FL. Before the children read the books, they first meet the characters. The program brings a black pony ("Little Black") and chestnut horse ("Big Red") to their elementary school campus. One at a time, the children approach the large animal and give it a pat. Before they head back in line, each first grader is given a hard cover copy of Little Black, A Pony, by Walter Farley, while fourth graders receives a copies of The Black Stallion.

Then, a deal is struck. The first graders are told that when they have learned to read the book, they will earn a trip to a horse farm. The incentive in place, they are motivated to read. Once at the horse farm, they read favorite passages of Little Black, A Pony, to a horse handler, and then they receive a second Walter Farley book, Little Black Goes to the Circus to keep. For the fourth graders, the goal is to get them to read a chapter book, increase their comprehension and encourage writing. Each fourth grader is told to read at least the first one-third of The Black Stallion, watch the Francis Ford Coppola film (which departs from the book), and complete a workbook. The prize is a live performance of The Black Stallion at the Arabian Nights theater. "It's exciting," said student Teresa Quirindondo, "because the little boy was saved by the horse and I've never seen a horse save a boy."

THE ANIMALS CAPTURE IMAGINATION

Teachers and principals report that virtually all of their first-grade students are motivated to read by this program and that the fourth graders are reading and writing more as a result. The horses, teachers say, capture the children's imagination. And from there, it is easy to get even the most **reluctant** reader to start reading the The Black Stallion — especially when they get to read a horse story to an actual horse.

"When they touch that horse, they have a connection now, a real connection with what they are reading about," said Tim Farley, whose father, the late Walter Farley, wrote The Black Stallion more than 60 years ago.

Tim Farley and his childhood pal, Mark Miller, dreamed up the project over a pizza back in 1999. Miller owns the Arabian Nights Horse Theatre in Kissimmee. Friends for more than 30 years, Tim and Mark share a common interest in encouraging children to read. Tim knows the influence his father's books have had on millions of children, and Mark grew up (and remains) in the company of horses — a winning combination for a program designed to motivate children to read. The Black Stallion Literacy Foundation (BSLF) began serving children in 2000. Since then, more than 400,000 children in 10 states across the U.S. have participated in the reading programs.

"He knows the magic of the books probably greater than I do," said Miller, "but I know the magic of the horse maybe a little better than he does." Miller didn't get interested in reading until a high school teacher introduced him to Zane Grey's horse books. "Learning can be fun and it should be fun," said Miller. "That's what the whole point of it is: that it is fun."

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Horse Tales Literacy Project (formerly The Black Stallion Literacy Foundation) helps children discover the joys of reading and the excitement of learning through the wonders of live horses and the Black Stallion books by Walter Farley, as well as other classic horse literature. Our goals are to spark the imagination of first grade students so they will want to learn to read, and to motivate fourth and fifth graders so they will experience the joy of reading.



Horse Tales Literacy Foundation is an innovative partnership of educators, businesses, volunteers, education foundations, and staff members focused on promoting literacy through the winning combination of live horses and classic horse literature. The program is based on classic horse books and the natural connection between children and horses.

Horse Tales Literacy Project is presently composed of both school-based and community programs, in which activities are developed around Walter Farley's and other classic horse literature. School-based programs consist of curriculum-based literacy programs for 1st and 4th-5th grades. Community programs are similarly curriculum-based **literacy** programs, but are turn-key embedded programs for after school and summer camp programs. All of the HTLP literacy programs are age-appropriate and aligned with both state and national standards in reading and other curriculum areas.

Since its inception in 1999, the BSLF and HTLP literacy programs have:

- Inspired over 400,000 first and fourth-fifth grade children to read
- Grown from fewer than 5,000 students participating in Florida and Arizona in 2000, to reaching over 66,720 students in ten states across the nation
- Received recognition as a "Daily Point of Light" by President George W. Bush and has been featured on the ABC Nightly News as the "best" motivational reading program for school-aged children.
- Been recognized by The Heart of Florida United Way as a major influence on Florida's children and literacy
- Maintained a loyal volunteer base consisting of 200 people across the country
- Been recognized by Governor Mike Huckabee of Arkansas, who proclaimed February as Black Stallion Literacy Month
- Established partnerships with many local and national companies including Wal-Mart
- Established partnerships with **equine** associations and therapeutic riding centers to help keep costs down

In addition, Horse Tales Literacy Project:

- Is working to develop Community Programs in After School and Summer Camp programs
- Has established partnerships with the YMCA, Boys & Girls Clubs, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and other youth organizations to introduce turn-key embedded literacy programs

WHAT THE PROGRAM WANTS TO ACCOMPLISH IN 2012

Goal 1: Promote and encourage children to become lifelong readers.

Goal 2: Reduce the rate of illiteracy by providing children a mechanism to become engaged readers.

Goal 3: Sustain and grow the Horse Tales Literacy Project's programs nationally.

Horse Tales Literacy Program offers two school-based literacy programs for elementary aged children:

~ FIRST GRADE: 6 & 7 Year Olds

The program introduces children in first grade to reading their very own hardcover books.

Each child receives two hardcover Walter Farley books, Little Black, A Pony and Little Black Goes to the Circus, to start or add to their own personal library. The program also provides an exciting event where children learn about and interact with live horses! Every child even has the opportunity to read to a horse!

~ FOURTH-FIFTH GRADE: 9 to 11 Year Olds

The fourth-fifth grade program continues the legacy of reading by providing all the children with their own copy of The Black Stallion, a universally recognized children's classic. Children are also introduced to the critically acclaimed 1979 movie of the same name. The program concludes with an interactive experience with live horses! This highly popular and effective program can be used with classes in fourth or fifth grade.

For more information, visit: <http://horsetalesliteracy.org/>

-----Answer the following questions-----

1. _____ Which of the following is a good definition of **equine**?
A. turkeys B. elephants C. turtles D. horses
2. What makes a connection with the kids' books? _____
3. What are the goals of this program?
4. _____ What would be a good THEME for this article?
A. Can Horses Inspire Reading?
B. classic stories can get your free books
C. classic stories & enriching experiences can encourage students to love reading
D. two old friends can create a wonderful reading program
5. _____ What is the nickname of Bartholomew Roberts?
A. Redbeard B. Blackbeard C. Yellowbeard D. Bearded Dragon

Name: _____

Can Horses Inspire Reading?

SURVEY: Record important titles, subtitles, bold-faced words, captions, etc.

QUESTION: Write out at least 3 "Who, What, When, Where, Why, or How" questions based on your survey.

1.) _____

2.) _____

3.) _____

READ: As you read, look for and write down answers to the questions from above.

1.) _____

2.) _____

3.) _____

RECITE: Create a 7-Question, Multiple-Choice Quiz with at least 3 choices (A-B-C). Include the answers too.
