

Shetland Pony Steeplechase

by Jane Buxton

JUNIOR JOURNAL 42
This text is levelled at Gold 1.



OVERVIEW

This recount, focusing on Steffi's participation in a steeplechase, captures the excitement and pleasure of riders and spectators. It describes what a steeplechase is and how the riders prepare for the race, and it then gives an exciting account of the race itself. It follows the structure of a recount, written in the present tense, with an introduction, a series of events in chronological order, and a personal response in the form of an evaluative statement. There is a glossary for many of the subject-specific words. Students can find further information about Shetland ponies in the report "Shetland Ponies" in the same Journal.

There is an audio version of the text on the *Junior Journal 42 and 43 CD*.

RELATED TEXTS

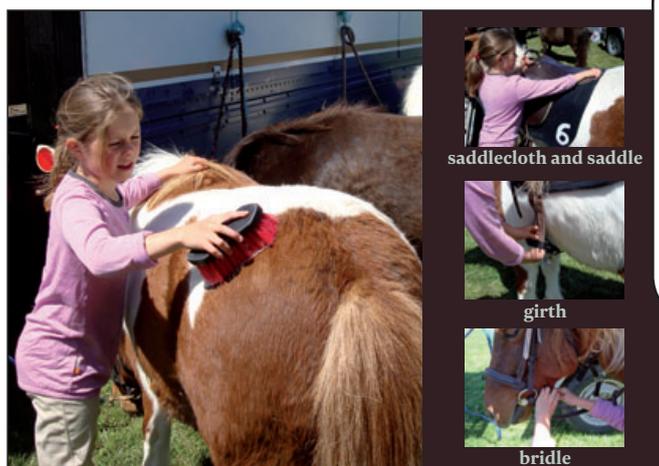
Texts about horses or ponies: "Shetland Ponies" (JJ 42); "A Foal is Born", "Don't Fall Off!" (both in SJ 1.3.09)

Texts about children competing in events: *Tom's Tryathlon*, *Skate Champs* (RTR, Purple); "Motocross" (JJ 30)

Stories with a similar "mystery" structure that require students to look for clues: *The Mask Parade* (RTR, Turquoise), "The Pet Day Problem" (JJ 40), "Out of This World" (SJ 1.1.08)

TEXT CHARACTERISTICS

Key text characteristics relating to the reading standard for after three years at school are shown in the boxes.



Visual language features, including some introductory text in italics, bold print for key vocabulary linked to a glossary, labelled photographs that are and linked to the body text, and the "speed-blurred" photograph on page 12

A variety of sentence structures, including complex sentences

Steffi grins as she rides into the arena. The crowd cheers as the ponies and riders line up.

"They're off!" calls the commentator. "In front we have Stormy, followed by Sam, then Foxy ..."

Steffi and Basil clear the first jumps beautifully. Some ponies are excited and want to race. Their riders have to hold them in. But Basil **canter**s calmly round. Over more jumps they go and into the second lap.

Oops! Someone's fallen off, but she isn't hurt. The riderless pony gallops past. Now they're into the last lap, and they're really racing.

A mix of explicit and implicit content that requires the reader to make connections between ideas and their prior knowledge to make simple inferences, visualise the events, and identify main points, for example:

- the verbs that clarify the sequence of events
- explicit statements about the purpose for the race on pages 8 and 10
- the explicit and implicit information about how the riders and spectators feel about the ponies
- definitions and explanations, including a glossary
- phrases that require some inference: "they're really racing", "the ponies fly across the finish line."

Steeplechase

by Jane Buxton

Today's race is at the **A and P Show**. The ponies arrive, and Steffi leads her pony, Basil, off the truck. She brushes Basil and cleans out his hooves. She puts the **saddlecloth** on his back, places the **saddle** on top, and buckles up the **girth**. Then she puts Basil's **bridle** on him.

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Some unfamiliar words and phrases, the meaning of which is either supported by the context or photographs or explained within the text, including descriptive vocabulary, subject-specific vocabulary, and commonly used words that have multiple meanings

The inclusion of dialogue, some of which is not explicitly attributed

Reading standard: after three years at school

English (Reading)

Level 2 – Structure: Show some understanding of text structures.

Level 2 – Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

SUGGESTED READING PURPOSES

(What can the students expect to find out or think about as a result of reading this text?)

- To find out what happens at a Shetland pony steeplechase and why it is an exciting event for the participants
- To think about the purpose for the race and if it was achieved
- To explore how the author makes the race sound exciting

SETTING A LEARNING GOAL

(What opportunities does this text provide for students to learn more about how to “read, respond to, and think critically about” texts?)

Some behaviours you could expect to see as the students read in order to meet the reading purpose are suggested below. **Select and adapt** from them to set your specific learning goal(s). Be guided by your students’ particular needs and experiences – their culture, language, and identity (*Reading and Writing Standards for Years 1–8*, Knowledge of the learner, page 6).

The students:

- identify and summarise the main points and sequence of events
- make connections to their prior knowledge and use explicit and implicit information in the text to help them visualise the events
- look for and use clues such as context, definitions, and photographs to work out or confirm the meanings of some unfamiliar topic-specific words or phrases
- think critically about the purpose of the race and if it was achieved
- use word-solving strategies to decode and/or work out the meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases.

TEXT AND LANGUAGE FEATURES**VOCABULARY**

- Some unfamiliar words and phrases, including “Shetland Pony Steeplechase”, “saddlecloth”, “buckles up the girth”, “commentator”, “reins”
- The words with more than one meaning, for example, “jumps”, “buckles”, “laps”, “fly”
- The words with special features, for example: the suffix in “riderless”; the irregular plural “hooves”; adverbs, such as: “properly”, “slowly”, “beautifully”, “calmly”

POSSIBLE SUPPORTING STRATEGIES

Monitor students’ **decoding** attempts by noticing their use of key words during discussion and/or by asking questions that require the students to use key words. Prompt students to remember the strategies they can use, often in combination. For example:

- breaking words into syllables or familiar chunks (“Shet-land”, “com-men-ta-tor”)
- drawing on knowledge of spelling patterns and analogies to other known words (“reins”/ “eight”, “weigh”; “Steeple”, “saddle”, “buckle”, “bridle”, “table”, “circle”)
- rereading the phrase or sentence around the unfamiliar word to confirm decoding attempts
- drawing on their knowledge of word structure (the “ly” ending for adverbs; the suffix in “riderless”)
- using visual language features, such as the labelled photographs on page 9 and the glossary.

Monitor students’ **word-solving strategies** to work out the meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases. Prompt students to remember the strategies they can use, often in combination, for example:

- thinking of the overall context and making connections to their own experiences
- rereading or reading on so that they can use the next word or the overall context of the sentence or paragraph (for example, to clarify that “jumps” is being used as a noun on page 8 and “clear” is being used as a verb on page 11)
- using the glossary for words in bold print and referring to the photographs and labels
- using their knowledge of how prefixes and suffixes can affect the meaning of a word (“riderless”) and using context to confirm.

Have a dictionary available to confirm or clarify word meanings.

STRUCTURE

- The complex sentences, including “This helps the crowd to recognise the riders ...”, and “Steffi grins as she rides into the arena”, and the poetic structure “Over more jumps they go ...”

Support the students to read and understand compound and complex sentences by breaking the sentences into separate clauses. Identify the main ideas of each clause and how they are connected. Use Who? What? Where? When? How? and Why? as prompts.

INTRODUCING THE TEXT

- Read the title.
- Have the students use the title, the photographs on pages 8–9, and the introductory text in italics to form hypotheses about what the text will tell them. Have the students work in pairs to brainstorm any words they think will occur in the text. Have the pairs share their words and something about why they've included them. As the pairs share their words, create a class brainstorm, feeding in key vocabulary items for reading this text and discussing and clarifying these items. As the students read through the text, tick the words that occur as they come across them.
- Encourage the students to share their knowledge of horses or ponies and their experiences of competing in events. *What is exciting about competing?* You could make connections to *Tom's Tryathlon* and *Skate Champs* (RTR, Purple).
- Discuss the text features (labelled photographs, bold print, the glossary) that can help them when they read.
- Share the reading purpose and learning goal(s). Set up a chart with questions to support the reading purpose, for example: What is a steeplechase? What happens at the steeplechase? How does the author show that it's exciting?
- An example of a partially completed chart is shown at the end of Reading and Discussing the Text.

METACOGNITION

Effective readers are metacognitive. They are aware of the processes and strategies they draw on and are able to explain how they used these to successfully make meaning and think critically. Examples of metacognitive behaviours, or strategies that promote metacognitive behaviours, are threaded through the notes and indicated by .

EXPECTED STUDENT BEHAVIOURS

(what to look for, prompt, and support as the students work towards achieving their learning goal)

-  As they read or reread this text, students notice when meaning has broken down. They draw on a range of strategies to correct the problem and can explain what they did.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR STUDENTS TO READ, RESPOND, AND THINK CRITICALLY

-  Ask questions: *How did you know that bit was wrong? Or I noticed that you reread that bit when you got confused. How did rereading help you?*
-  Use prompts: *How did you know that bit was right? Think about the strategy you used. How did it help you?*
-  Give feedback: *I noticed that you read this as... and then you fixed it up by ...*

READING AND DISCUSSING THE TEXT

In order to meet the reading purpose: **The students make connections to their prior knowledge and use explicit and implicit information to identify and summarise the main points and visualise the events. They think critically about the purpose of the race and if it was achieved.**

EXPECTED STUDENT BEHAVIOURS

(what to look for, prompt, and support as the students work towards achieving their learning goal)

PAGE 8

The students identify what a steeplechase is. They make connections between the ideas in the first two sentences below the italicised text and can explain why the jumps are low. They notice that "jumps" is being used as a noun.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR STUDENTS TO READ, RESPOND, AND THINK CRITICALLY

- Ask questions: How are these jumps different to those in a normal horse race? What part tells you that?
- Model your thinking: *I notice three main pieces of information in this paragraph. This will help me to think about what information I need to make a summary.*
- If necessary, ask questions to support summarising: *What information is useful for our chart?*
- Prompt students to notice that this introductory paragraph gives general information about steeplechases.

PAGE 9

Students notice the bold print and use the glossary and labelled photographs, plus other word-solving strategies (see Text and Language Features section), to work out the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary.

They make connections between their prior knowledge, the text structure, and labelled photographs to track and visualise what Steffi is doing.

They summarise the page in one sentence.

Have the students practise using the glossary to find out the meaning of one or two words or phrases. *When you're reading, how will you know which words are explained in the glossary?* Discuss some additional ways the students can work out the meanings of unfamiliar words, for example, reading the rest of the sentence, looking for a definition close by, and using the photographs and labels.

If the students read "girth" as "grith", model writing the word and splitting it into its component phonemes /g/ir/th/ and/or showing the analogy to other known words ("girl", "birthday").

Prompt the students to look for the verbs that describe what Steffi is doing. *Think about how the photos can help you.*

Ask questions to help students identify that this is a recount of one specific race. Explain that recounts are usually written in the past tense but this one is written in the present tense for dramatic effect.

Ask questions: *What is this page mostly about? What is it telling us? Can you picture in your mind what is happening? Where does this information belong on the chart?*

PAGE 10

The students notice connections between ideas within paragraphs and/or sentences.

They summarise the main points in each paragraph.

Ask questions to draw the students' attention to connections between pieces of information. (In particular, use the pronouns and identify what each of the three clauses in the third sentence means. For example: *In paragraph 1, who does "their" refer to? Who wears coloured shirts? What does "This" refer to? Why do they wear such bright shirts? What does the crowd need to do? What does the commentator do?*

As the students will be reading silently, you can monitor their thinking and processing by asking them to provide specific examples. You could say: *Show me where ..., Read me the sentences that ...*

In paragraph 2, who is Lesley? Read me the part that tells you.

You could direct the students to work in pairs to summarise each paragraph.

Ask questions to clarify the students' focus on the reading purpose:
What important information can we add to our chart?

PAGE 11

The students recognise that the race has now started and identify some exciting elements. For example, "They're off!"

The students infer that it's the narrator who says "Oops!"

In the final paragraph, the students infer the meaning of "riderless" by making connections with the previous sentence.

They make connections to Lesley's advice on page 10 about the "last lap" and use this to infer that "they're really racing" means they're going as fast as they can.

Have students share the parts that help them to visualise the excitement.

🗨️ Ask questions: *What is helping you visualise the excitement of the race?*

Model your thinking: *I see there are no speech marks here. I wonder who's saying this.*

Prompt the students to reread the previous sentence and to make connections to their knowledge of suffixes. If necessary, model some examples of how the suffix "less" changes the meaning of a word ("hopeless", "helpless", "fearless").

What did Lesley tell them to do in the last lap? How does this help us to understand what "they're really racing" means?

PAGE 12

The students infer that "fly" in "the ponies fly across the finish line" means that they went very fast.

They use context and knowledge of speech marks to infer that the unattributed pieces of dialogue in the first paragraph are some of the comments that Steffi can hear.

The students infer how Steffi and the spectators feel about the race, using evidence from the text. They identify the main idea on this page – that the race is great fun and it doesn't really matter who wins.

Prompt the students to make connections to the phrase "they're really racing" on page 11.
Do ponies really fly? What does this mean?

Why are the speech marks there? Who is talking? 🗨️ How do you know?

Ask questions: *I see that Steffi came fourth. How does she feel? What information in the text helped you know that? What is the main idea on this page?*

🗨️ With support, the students reflect on their learning. The revisit the reading purpose and learning goals and they explain some of the strategies they used, for example, how they tracked the sequence of events and made connections between ideas or clarified word meanings.

🗨️ The students identify some challenges in the text and how they worked (or tried to work) them out.

🗨️ Together, review the summary chart. Prompt critical thinking: *Now that we've read the whole text, is there anything you think we should add or change?*

🗨️ Ask questions: *What parts helped you make connections to your own experiences of racing or competing in an event? How did making connections to your own experiences help you to feel the excitement of the race?*

What is a steeplechase?

- a race over jumps
- a fun event
- a chance to show off what the ponies can do

What happens at the steeplechase?

- the riders get the ponies ready
- they wear coloured shirts
- the trainer briefs them about safety and the best way to run the race

How does the author show that the race is exciting?

- the riders love to show off their ponies
- Steffi grins
- the commentator calls out
- the crowd cheers

AFTER READING

- Students can reread the article as they listen to the audio version on the *Junior Journal 42 and 43 CD*. Audio versions also provide English language learners with good models of pronunciation, intonation, and expression.
- Provide opportunities for the students to carry out further research if they still have unanswered questions.
- Have students use the information from the summary chart and the vocabulary brainstorm to write a short explanation of the process of a steeplechase. Refer to explanations of processes that you have read and review the text features. Provide sentence starters and/or writing frames to support students who require support. Depending on the needs of your students, co-construct the first paragraph, and then have the students complete the next paragraphs independently.
- The students identify and discuss some ways the author made the race sound exciting. Refer to the summary chart and/or make some photocopies of the text, and have the students work in pairs to highlight parts they found exciting. Together, discuss some examples, such as:
 - the focus on Steffi, which makes the text more personal and encourages the reader to make connections to their own experiences
 - the writer's informal, conversational style, which makes it easier to convey excitement, for example, when she says "Oops!"
 - the use of the present tense and dynamic vocabulary for example, "They're off!", "Faster, Basil!", which create a sense of pace and excitement
 - the inclusion of unattributed speech to show the spectators' reactions.

Model how to incorporate some of these text features, as appropriate, during shared writing.