

The Melbourne Cup – The Horse Race that Stops the Nation

Before you start, read the name of this story. What do you think it might be about? What words to do with horses, or racing, do you already know?

The Melbourne Cup is one of the most famous horse races in the world. It is held on the first Tuesday of November every year at the Flemington **racecourse** in Melbourne. The very first Melbourne Cup was on 7 November 1861. A horse called Archer won. His owner rode him all the way from Sydney to Melbourne so he could be in the race.



The track that the horses race on is **circular**. It is over three kilometres long. About 17 horses run in the Melbourne Cup. The people who ride the horses are called **jockeys**. Jockeys must be very small and light, because if they are heavy they slow the horses down.



Lots of people watch the Melbourne Cup. Some go to the race, others watch it on television. People pay money to guess which horse will win. This is called betting. If the horse you bet on wins, you can win money. But if the horse you bet on loses, you don't win anything at all. If you bet too much, you can lose a lot of money!

This year, a horse called Media Puzzle won the Melbourne Cup. A jockey called Damien Oliver rode him. Damien's brother Jason, who was also a jockey, died the week before the race when he fell off his horse during **training**. Damien wore his brother's pants for good luck during the race. When Damien won, he **dedicated** the race to his brother.

The Melbourne Cup is also famous for **fashion**. People who go to the race **dress up** in their best clothes. Men wear suits and women wear beautiful dresses and big hats. Some people are so excited about dressing up and looking at everyone's clothes that they forget to watch the horses at all.



Melbourne Cup Day is a **public holiday** in Melbourne. This means that kids don't have to go to school and some people don't have to go to work. Horses are brought from as far away as Europe and the Middle East to run in the race.

It's only a horse race, but some people get very excited about the Melbourne Cup. That's why they call it 'The Race that Stops the Nation.'

So, what is the Melbourne Cup?

When is it held? _____

What year was the first Melbourne Cup? _____

Which horse won the race this year? _____

There was something special about the jockey who won. What was it? _____

People don't only go to watch the horses. Why else to they go? _____

Why do you have to be careful if you bet money on horseracing?

What do the underlined words mean? If you don't know, use your tutor and a dictionary to help you work it out.

Other activities

*Some people think horse racing is cruel, because it is hard work for the horses and sometimes they get hurt while they make money for their owners. What do you think? Discuss it with your tutor.

*All the jockeys wear brightly colored uniforms. Draw a jockey with the colors you would choose if you were a jockey. Or write a fashion report about someone's clothes.

*Get this week's newspapers. Look at (or cut out) the pictures and find words to describe: the jockeys, the horses, the trainers and the people dressed up.

* Pretend you are a jockey who has just won the Melbourne Cup. How would you feel? Who do you thank in your speech?