

LEARNING AREAS: HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY, MATHEMATICS

The History of Australian Thoroughbreds



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Since the arrival of the first horses in Australia in 1788, the Australian thoroughbred breeding industry has grown exponentially to become one of the biggest and strongest of its kind in the world. Today, the industry contributes nearly \$1.2 billion to the Australian economy, with nearly 9,500 full-time employees.



The industry through the years

A stallion, three mares, and three yearlings were originally brought to Australia in 1788 with the first European settlers.

Within the next two years, an additional 400 stallions were brought to Australia, including Rockingham, Australia's first **thoroughbred sire** (the male parent of a horse that goes on to win a race). For the first 150 years of European settlement, English bloodlines dominated the Australian thoroughbred population. Some of the most significant stallions during this period included Musket, Lochiel, Valais, and Delville Wood. Between them, these sires produced some of the most successful racing horses in the first half of the 20th century.

It was an Irish-bred horse, however, that went on to significantly shape the Australian thoroughbred industry for the second half of the century. Star Kingdom (pictured right) was the most sought after stallion in the nation after he sired the first five winners of the Golden Slipper. At one point, 25% of all stallions in Australia were descendants of Star Kingdom. His bloodline continues to influence the pedigrees of Australian racehorses.

In more recent years, Australia has seen an increase in the use of **shuttle stallions** from Europe and North America. Shuttle stallions are highly valuable thoroughbreds who are 'shuttled' between the Northern and Southern hemisphere for breeding purposes. The most significant of these stallions has been Danehill, who won nine premierships of his own and produced 11 title winning sons and grandsons.

Today, Australia is regarded internationally as a key exporter to most horse racing nations in the world, particularly to countries in Southeast Asia.



A history of Australian horse racing

Although there are reports of unofficial races being held in Sydney as early as the 1890's, the first official horse race to be held in Australia took place in Hyde Park (Sydney, NSW) in October 1810. It was organised by officers of Governor Macquarie's 73rd Regiment. It was another 28 years before the first official Victorian horse race was held in Melbourne in March 1838. The sport continued to spread to other states and territories in the following years.

Today, thoroughbred racing is Australia's third most attended spectator sport after AFL and NRL. There are approximately 380 registered racecourses throughout Australia, hosting over 2 million spectators each year. Five of the major events on the Australian racing calendar include Caulfield Cup, Cox Plate, Golden Slipper, The Everest, and Melbourne Cup.

The race that stops a nation

The Melbourne Cup is arguably Australia's most well-known horse race. Held annually at Flemington Racecourse on the first Tuesday of November, it has become one of Australia's most significant global sporting events.

First held on 7 November 1861 with 17 competing horses and 4,000 spectators, the inaugural winner of the Melbourne Cup was a thoroughbred named Archer. Since then, over 160 horses have been immortalised as Melbourne Cup winners, with some of the most famous winners being Phar Lap and Makybe Diva.

Although known as 'the race that stops a nation', the international interest and global appeal of the Melbourne Cup has increased dramatically over the last 30 years. This is made evident by the increasing number of international thoroughbreds that are brought to Australia specifically to compete in the event, viewing it as their 'ultimate target'.

Famous Australian thoroughbreds Research

a) Throughout the 20th century, the Australian thoroughbred breeding industry was shaped significantly by a number of key horses (see The industry through the years). Choose a famous thoroughbred and conduct research to discover more.



THOROUGHBRED PROFILE

Name:

Dates of birth/death:

Country of origin:

Owner: Breeder:

Notable achievements:

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Significant Australian events: The Melbourne Cup Response



Scan the QR code or click on the link to watch **Defining Moments in Australian History: First Melbourne Cup (5:48)**.

Respond to the question below.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7r_QL4vOgA

b) Why is the first Melbourne Cup considered to be a defining moment in Australian history? Comment on the significance of the Melbourne Cup both within Australia and internationally.



Race day statistics Mathematical task



Scan the QR code or click on the link to view the name and country of origin of each Melbourne Cup winner (1861 - 2023).

<https://sites.google.com/piefa.edu.au/melbourne-cup-winners/home>

c) Construct a chronological timeline to represent selected winning horses and their country of origin.

- Determine the scale of your timeline.
- Construct your timeline either physically (string, paper) or digitally.
- Add the names of winning horses at chosen intervals along the timeline (for example, indicate which horse won at each 10 year interval along the timeline).
- For each horse included on the timeline, add a picture of the flag of their country of origin.



Race day statistics Mathematical task (cont.)

d) Construct three graphs representing the following data. Select your chosen type of graph and justify your selection.

Graph 1 - Country of origin of winning Melbourne Cup horses from 1870 - 1890

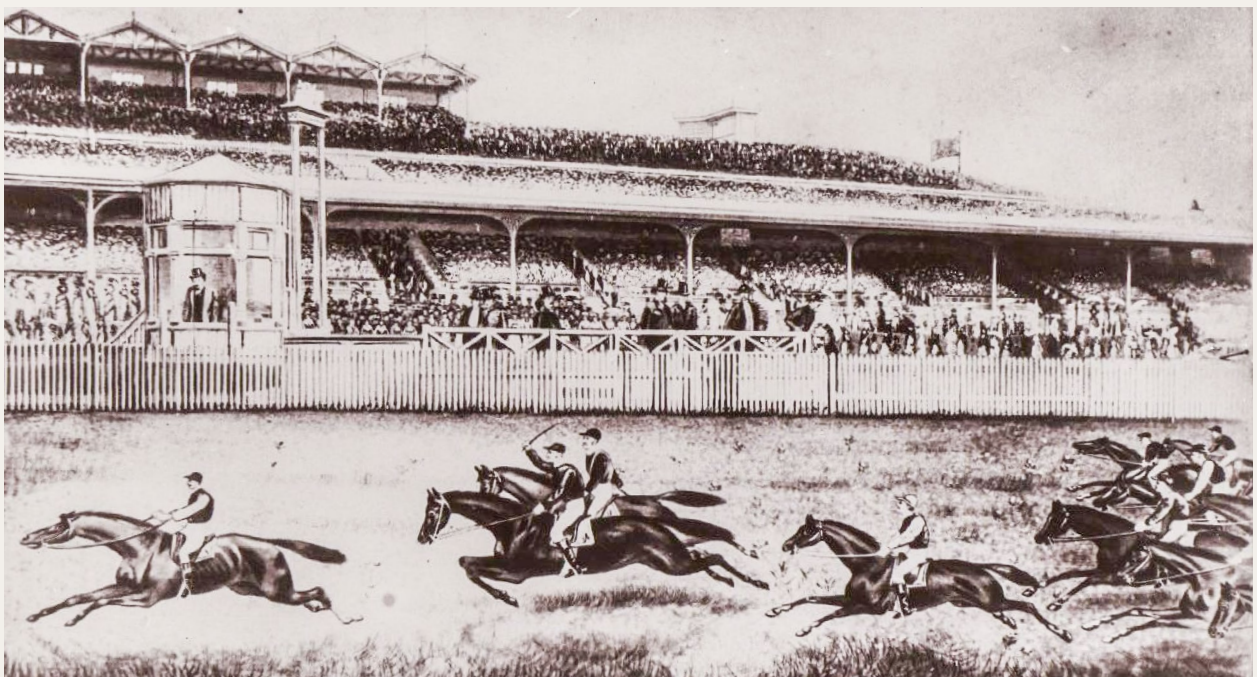
Graph 2 - Country of origin of winning Melbourne Cup horses from 1940 - 1960

Graph 3 - Country of origin of winning Melbourne Cup horses from 2000 - 2020

e) Response

“Over time, the Melbourne Cup has evolved from being a local Australian event to a prestigious international race, attracting top thoroughbreds from around the world”.

Write a response to this statement, offering your opinion on the validity of the statement. Use data obtained from Activities c) and d) to support your response.



Learning Areas | Australian Curriculum Content:

History

Significant events, ideas, people, groups and movements in the development of Australian society (AC9HH9K04)

Geography

The ways that places and people are interconnected with other places through trade in goods and services, at all scales (AC9HG9K07)

Mathematics

Solve problems involving very small and very large measurements, time scales and intervals expressed in scientific notation (AC9M9M02)

Choose appropriate forms of display or visualisation for a given type of data; justify selections and interpret displays for a given context (AC9M9ST04)

ATTRIBUTION, CREDIT & SHARING

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