

The Melbourne Cup

At 3 o'clock in the afternoon on the first Tuesday of November each year, everyone seems to be crowded around a TV screen watching a bunch of horses running around a circle.

This horse race is called the "Melbourne Cup" and according to its advertisements it is "the race that stops the nation."

So why is this race such a big deal?

Well, the Melbourne cup really is the best of the best when it comes to horse racing. The race is 3.2km and held at the Victoria Racing Club on the Flemington Racecourse in Melbourne.

Since it was first held in 1861, the Melbourne Cup has become like the grand final of horse racing. Around 300-400 horses try out for it each year, but only the best 24 are selected to run in the race.

Lots of people place bets on the horses in the race and hope that the one they like comes first. Of course, with 24 horses in the race and only one winner, everyone is trying to figure out which horse will win and everyone wants to know all the latest tips.

Unfortunately, 23 out of the 24 horses will not win the cup, and there will be far more losers than winners. So the people who stand to win the most aren't gamblers; they're the owners of the winning horses.

The total prize money for the 2011 race is more than \$6 million. The first 10 horses all win some prize money with the winner getting a huge \$3.3 million dollars.



They also win a trophy - but it's no ordinary trophy. The winner's trophy contains 1.65 kg of gold worth \$125,000 dollars. It took over 200 hours to make by hand. The winner gets to keep it and a new one is made each year.

The owner of last year's winning horse: "Americain", is hoping to get a second trophy this year by winning the Cup two years in a row.

However, there are 23 other horses all out for that number one spot, and anything could happen on the day.

Activities

- 1 – What is the Melbourne Cup? Where is it held? When is it happening?
- 2 – Why does the author say that the Melbourne Cup is like the "grand final" of horse racing?
- 3 – Do you think the author thinks it's smart to bet on the Melbourne Cup? What gives you that impression?
- 4 – What are some other events that happen each year that "stop the nation"?
- 5 – Imagine that there was a race between all different kinds of animals (without people riding them). Describe the race. Who would win? Who would come last? Would anyone get squashed?

Student Worksheet – The Melbourne Cup

Name: _____

Were there any words that you didn't understand?

Write them here, then ask your teacher or look up their meanings in a dictionary.

Word	Meaning

Answer the following questions by looking at the article.

1 - What is the Melbourne Cup? Where is it held? When is it happening?

2 - Why does the author say that the Melbourne Cup is like the "grand final" of horse racing?

3- Do you think the author thinks it's smart to bet on the Melbourne Cup? What gives you that impression?

4 – What are some other events that happen each year that "stop the nation"? (Think of at least 3)

5 – Imagine that there was a race between all different kinds of animals (without people riding them). Describe the race. Who would win? Who would come last? Would anyone get squashed?
