

# Parmesan, the Reluctant Racehorse

Teachers' notes written by Jacqui Halpin

## **Publication Details**

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Illustrated by John Phillips

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## **Synopsis**

Parmesan, the racehorse, thinks he's a dog. Instead of training with other horses, he's off with his doggy friends doing doggy things. Will he still be ready to run in the Spring Carnival?

A humorous light-hearted tale that celebrates the joy of being yourself and running your own race.

## **About the author**

Jacqui Halpin's passion for children's literature started when reading bedtime stories to her children. They outgrew their childhood books but Jacqui never did. Jacqui writes junior fiction, picture books, and short stories (for adults and children). Her short stories appear in anthologies by Stringybark Publishing and Creative Kids Tales.

Jacqui is a Brisbane author and member of Aleesah Darlison's Talent Team.

Bookings for school visits and author talks can be made by contacting

[Greenleaf Press](#).

While writing and editing Jacqui loves to sip tea from fine china and eat copious amounts of chocolate. She also has a love of bookshops, and should never be allowed to enter the children's book section with a credit card in her possession.

## **About the illustrator**

John Phillips is a self-taught artist and musician and has been creative all his life. His skills soon caught the eye of a national company and he was employed full time for many years, producing everything from cartoons, children's birthday cards, and sympathy card scenes right through to calligraphy and advertising material. It was during this time that John also began landscape painting with some success, but the artist's first love though is illustrating. "I do have a rather

weird sense of humour," he says, "and I love to capture all sorts of animals in outlandish, goofy situations."

### **Author's Inspiration**

The story of Parmesan, a racehorse who didn't want to run around the track because he thought he was a dog, came to the author in a dream. She wrote it down while she still remembered it and worked over many months to perfect the text.

### **Suggested Themes**

Parmesan, the Reluctant Racehorse explores themes of individuality, being different, thinking creatively, dealing with expectations placed on us by others, pressure to compete, caring for animals, animal behaviour, perseverance, and humour.

### **Questions for further discussion and exploration in class:**

- Look at the front and back covers. Do you think it will be a happy story or a sad story?
- Look at the endpapers at the very front of the book. What do you think the story will be about?
- How many doggy friends does Parmesan have?
- What is Parmesan's favourite thing to do?
- Where else have you heard the word parmesan?
- Joe tries to encourage Parmesan to run by dangling a carrot in front of him. What other things do horses like to eat?
- What was the main problem in the story?
- How does Joe manage to get Parmesan to run around the track?
- What sort of pet do you have? How would you encourage your pet to run around a track?
- What jobs do you think Joe does at the farm where Parmesan and the other horses live?
- What sort of person do you think Joe is?

- What is the most famous horse race in Australia?
- What number was Parmesan for the Spring Carnival race? What is your favourite number and why?
- Can you find three words in the story that are new to you? Try to work out what they mean from the way they are used, and from the illustrations.
- What illustrations in the book do you think are the funniest and why?
- In the story, Parmesan does many things dogs do that horses usually don't. Can you think of some other things dogs do that horses don't?
- Compare the differences between dogs and horses. How are horses similar to dogs? Eg; they both have four legs and a tail; they both run fast and can be trained.
- How are they different? Eg; horses have hooves, dogs have paws; horses neigh, dogs bark.
- In the end, Parmesan wins the race and makes his owner happy. What do you think? Does it really matter that Parmesan acts differently from the other horses?
- Do you think it bothers Parmesan that he doesn't act like the other horses?
- Do you think it bothers Parmesan that he doesn't look like the other dogs?
- In what way are you different from the other people in your family? In what ways are you the same?
- Look at the end papers at the very back of the book. What do you think has happened? How does the story end?
- What kind of feelings did you have when reading this story? Did you feel happy, sad, worried?

**Some creative activities:**

- What colour are the other horses in the race? If you could have your own horse, what colour horse would you like best. Draw and colour the horse you would like to have if you could have a horse of your own.
- Think of a funny name for your horse that is not a typical horse name.

- Draw a picture of one type of animal performing an action that is usually done by a different type of animal eg; a pig trying to sharpen his claws on a cat's scratching post.
- Make up your own story about an animal that thinks and acts like a completely different animal?
- People usually get dressed up to go to the races. Many people wear hats. Pretend you are going to the races and make a hat to wear.
- The story of Parmesan came to the author in a dream. Dreams can often make great stories. Write a story based on a dream you remember having. Draw a picture to go with your story.

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