

***The Legacy and Traditions of
Churchill Downs and the
Kentucky Derby***



The Kentucky Derby

The Kentucky Derby has taken place annually in Louisville, Kentucky since 1875. It was started by Meriwether Lewis Clark, Jr. at his track he called Churchill Downs, and it has run continuously since that first race. This first jewel of the Triple Crown has produced famous winners, with thirteen of these winners gaining that Triple Crown title. Lewis limited the Derby to only 3-year old horses. The race has evolved and grown over time and has changed since its first running, remaining an important event for more than a century. Through the study of the Derby's influential historic traditions, notable winners and horse farms in Kentucky, and its profound cultural impact, this program will identify and explore these different aspects that all contribute to the excitement and legacy of the "most exciting two minutes in sports."



To replicate the races he witnessed in Europe, Meriwether Lewis Clark Jr., the grandson of explorer William Clark, created three races in the United States that resembled those he'd attended in Europe. The first meet was in May of 1875. Family ties to the horse racing world led Clark to his purchase of what would become Churchill Downs, named after his uncles, John and Henry Churchill in 1883. The race grew in popularity largely because Lewis didn't charge for an infield ticket. Promoting the event as one for the elites, as well as the common people, dramatically increased the attendance and popularity of the event. Since its early beginnings, the Kentucky Derby has become the longest continually held sporting event in the United States and a worldwide tradition, attracting over 155,000 people each year.



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Question: How many years has the Kentucky Derby taken place in Louisville? _____

For Educators

K.H.CH.1 Identify and describe how communities change over time

K.C.KGO.2 Identify local and Kentucky state symbols and events

K.H.CH.2 Compare traditions found in communities over time, including those from diverse backgrounds

1.H.KH.1 Compare life in Kentucky in the past to life in Kentucky now

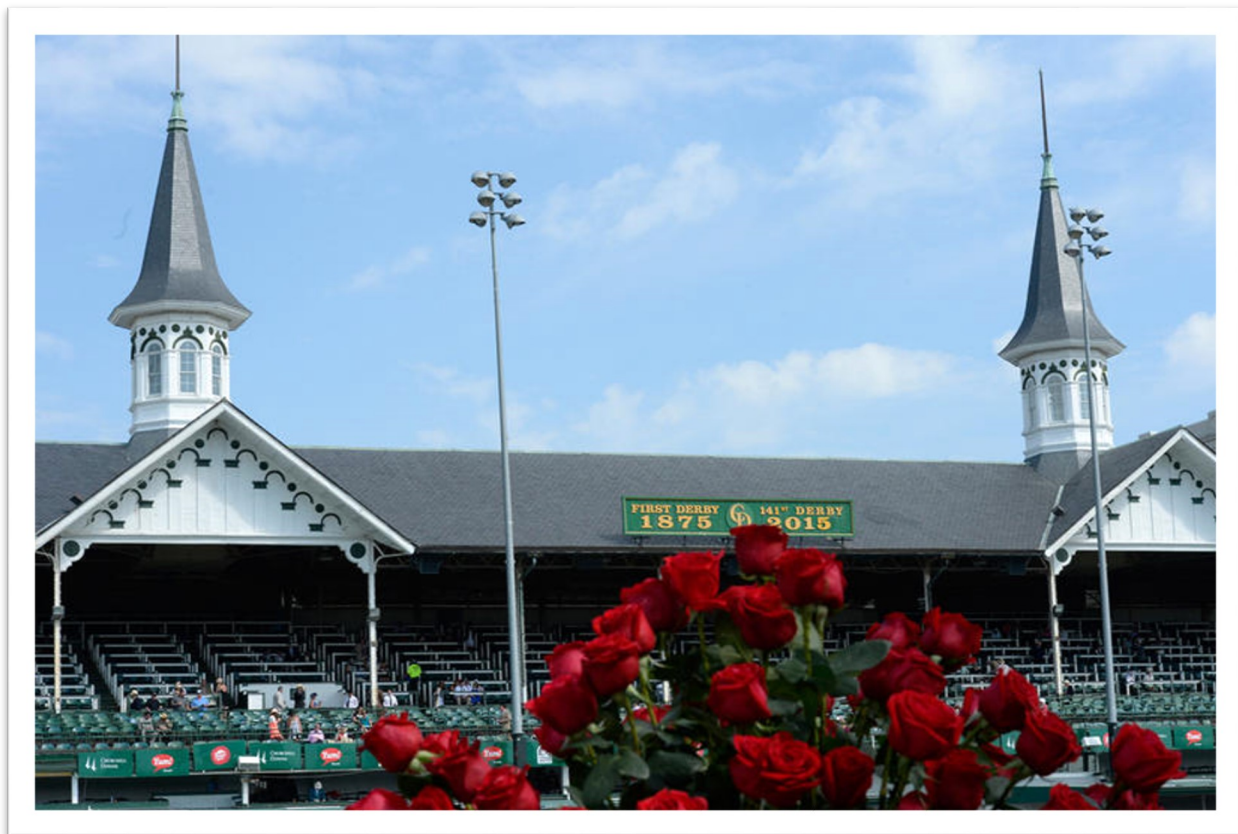
1.H.KH.2 Identify Kentucky symbols, songs and traditions

3.H.CH.1 Create and use chronological reasoning to learn about significant figures, traditions and events of diverse world communities.

3.H.CE.1 Compare diverse world communities in terms of members, customs, and traditions to the local community.

3.H.CO.1 Evaluate the effects of people, goods, and ideas that diffused from one world community into another world communities and the effects of the people, goods and ideas on these communities

3.HKH.1 Explain how world events impacts Kentucky, both in the past and today



CHURCHILL DOWNS TRADITIONS

Jockey Silks

Silks are worn by the jockeys riding horses in a race. Colors and patterns are usually representative of the owner or stable of the horse. Original patterns and colors are used to distinguish the racers from far away.

It was determined by the late 1700s that owners racing their horses had to choose a specific color and pattern and register it with the Jockey Club. Now, there are many patterns associated with famous racehorses, like the examples of previous Kentucky Derby winners shown.



Secretariat's blue and white checkered racing silks (above) have become closely related to his success, though he is not the only Kentucky Derby winner to race in them. A year before him, Riva Ridge won the 1972 Derby and both horses were from Meadow Stables in Virginia.



Funny Cide raced in the silks of Sackatoga Stable (above). The same owners teamed up again in 2020, with Derby hopeful Tiz the Law.



Seattle Slew's (above) silks included a drawing of a logging truck. He was named after the logging sloughs of Seattle, where his owners were from.

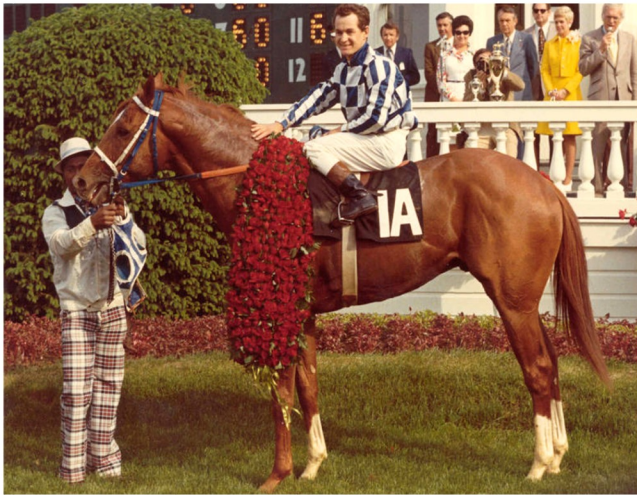
Question: If you owned a horse in the Derby, what would your silks look like?

Run For the Roses

Famously known as the “Run for the Roses”, the Kentucky Derby features a garland of red roses for the winner. Sports columnist Bill Corum first referred to the race as “the run for the roses” in 1925, and it stuck. The tradition of roses at the race started with women receiving roses at post-Derby parties growing in popularity. Meriwether Clark Lewis named the rose the official flower of the Kentucky Derby in 1904.

Winner Ben Brush was the first horse to be awarded the collar of roses in 1896. At the time, the collar was made of white and pink roses. In 1932, the roses were officially awarded as a garland

Secretariat after winning the 1973 Kentucky Derby (below)



More than 400 red roses are used to make the garland of roses. The Kroger Company has been making the garland since 1987. The company allows the assembly process to be viewed by the public at one of its local stores the evening before Derby Day.



American Pharoah receives his blanket of roses after winning the 2015 Kentucky Derby (above)

Kentucky Derby winner Ill Have Another's rose blanket (pictured below) from the 2012 running in the collections at the International Museum of the Horse.



Question: Why is the Kentucky Derby called “Run for the Roses?”

Derby Fashion and Celebrities



The fashion of the Kentucky Derby originates in the history of the elite attendance and high-profile fashion observed at horse races in Europe by Meriwether Clark Lewis Jr. He promoted the Derby as a “well-to-do” affair, and the tradition has continued over the years.

Hats were a customary addition to formal attire during the race. Lewis made the event an opportunity to show off. Clark used high class women to attract his targeted audiences to Churchill Downs. There was a lot of attention on fashion, especially women’s fashion. The Derby’s connection to the historical races in England attracted members of the British Royal Family.

The first celebrity sighting at Churchill Downs was Polish actress Helena Modjeska, who attended the 3rd running of the Kentucky Derby in 1877. Throughout the years, the Kentucky Derby has attracted people prominent in film, music, TV, politics, and fashion to Louisville. In 2007, a red carpet for VIP guests was added to the Derby Day experience.

Queen Elizabeth of England watched Street Sense win the 133rd running of the Kentucky Derby.



Seven politicians who went on to become president or were formerly the president, attended the Kentucky Derby. This included Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Jimmy Carter.



Mint Juleps

The mint julep is the official drink of the Kentucky Derby. Promotion of the drink began in 1938. Churchill Downs served souvenir julep cups in the 1930s. According to legend, the first record of a mint julep at the Kentucky Derby was in 1877. There are many different theories used to explain the origins of the drink at the Derby. According to one, a Polish actress attending an early Churchill Downs meet received a mint julep from Clark and thought it was “enamoring” and continued to order them for herself.

Churchill Downs Mint Julep Recipe

- 3oz Old Forester Mint Julep
- 0.75 oz. Simple Syrup
- 8-10 mint leaves
- 3 mint sprigs, for garnish

Add crushed ice and bourbon, crush mint leaves for a garnish.



The first mint julep glasses were very popular among people and were used to serve water. People were stealing them off the tables, so track managers began to let people keep the glasses for an additional 25 cents. In 1939, the Libbey Glass Co. and Churchill Downs came to an agreement to create an official mint julep glass, increasing the popularity of the drink.

“My Old Kentucky Home”

“My Old Kentucky Home” is the state song of Kentucky sung most famously during the post parade of the Kentucky Derby. The song was first used at Churchill Downs in 1924. “My Old Kentucky Home” was written by Stephen Foster before the Civil War. Matt Winn, known as the father of the Kentucky Derby, introduced many traditions to Churchill Downs, including the singing of the Kentucky state song. The song is now traditionally played by the University of Louisville Marching Band.

“My Old Kentucky Home”- Stephan Foster

The sun shines bright in the old Kentucky home,
Tis summer, the people are gay;
The corn-top's ripe and the meadow's in the bloom
While the birds make music all the day.
The young folks roll on the little cabin floor
All merry, all happy and bright;
By'n by hard times comes a knocking at the door
Then my old Kentucky home, Good-night!
Weep no more my lady.
Oh! Weep no more today!
We will sing one song for the old Kentucky home
For the old Kentucky home, far away.



Question: What is your favorite Kentucky Derby tradition?



Twin Spires

The twin spires have become visual symbols of Churchill Downs. This iconic landmark was created by Joseph Dominic Baldez in 1895. Baldez believed the grandstand needed a unique look. The addition of the spires included an “element of majesty”. The spires were designed as a monument that would remain forever and continue to carry Baldez’s legacy. They have become an integral part of Churchill Downs, and a popular location for visitors.

Derby Trophy

The trophy awarded to the winner of the Kentucky Derby is believed to be the only solid gold trophy associated with any major American sporting event. The trophy is almost entirely handcrafted. Since 1924, Derby winners have received gold trophies. Early Churchill Downs president, Matt Winn, began a standard design that has been used since.



Winner’s Circle

The winner of the Kentucky Derby was originally paraded around the racetrack within a circle drawn with chalk. This is where the reference “winner’s circle” originated. The winner’s circle was moved to its modern location, in the infield, in 1938. Winning horses are paraded around with the garland of roses and pictures are taken of the horses connections.



Riders Up!

The “riders up” call is used to signify when the jockeys get a leg up onto their horses in the paddock. At the Kentucky Derby, this is usually done by a guest of the race as a special honor, known as a paddock judge. This is usually a celebrity or a well-known person. At the 2019 Kentucky Derby, Cleveland Browns quarter back Baker Mayfield had the special honor.



The Triple Crown

The American Triple Crown consists of three races: the Kentucky Derby, Preakness Stakes and the Belmont Stakes. Winning all three is the one of the highest honors a racehorse can receive. Sir Barton was the first Triple Crown winner in 1919. Since then, there have been twelve more winners, most recently American Pharoah in 2015 and Justify in 2018. The other Triple Crown winners include Gallant Fox, Omaha, War Admiral, Count Fleet, Assault, Whirlaway, Citation, Secretariat, Seattle Slew, and Affirmed. Similar to the races Clark organized at Churchill Downs, the American Triple Crown races were also modeled off the British Triple Crown races.



Sir Barton (above), the first winner of what would later become the American Triple Crown.

The term “Triple Crown” was first officially used in 1930 to describe Gallant Fox’s sweep of the Kentucky Derby, Preakness and the Belmont. (Below)



American Pharoah (left) won the Triple Crown in 2015. He ended a 37 –year drought; the last horse to win before him was Affirmed in 1978.



Seattle Slew (below) won the Kentucky Derby and the Triple Crown in 1977. He became the first undefeated Triple Crown winner.

Justify (below) won the Triple Crown three years later in 2018. He became the 13th Triple Crown winner and the first undefeated winner since Seattle Slew in 1977.



Kentucky Derby Winners

Secretariat

Like Man O' War, Secretariat was given the nickname "Big Red" due to his chestnut coloring and size. He was trained by Lucien Lauren, owned by Penny Chenery, and ridden by Ron Turcotte. He raced for Meadow Stables, located in Virginia. Secretariat won the 1973 Kentucky Derby and Triple Crown. He set records in all three races that still stand today. Secretariat is one of only two horses to finish the Derby in under two minutes, the other being Monarchos in 2001. Secretariat is widely known as one of the greatest racehorses in history.



Aristides

Aristides (left) was the winner of the very first running of the Kentucky Derby in 1875. He wasn't supposed to win, but rather serve as a pace setter for another horse. He won the Derby when it was run at a mile and a half. Years later, it was shortened to a mile and a quarter. Aristides was trained by famed African American trainer, Ansel Williamson. He now has a statue dedicated in his honor in the Churchill Downs courtyard.

Funny Cide

Funny Cide (right) won the Kentucky Derby and the Preakness in 2003. Known as the "Peoples Horse", he was the first gelding to win the Derby since 1929 and the first New York bred horse to ever win. He was purchased by a group of former high school friends who traveled around in a bus to watch him race. Funny Cide can now be visited at the Kentucky Horse Park in the Hall of Champions.





Affirmed

Affirmed (left) won the 1978 Kentucky Derby and Triple Crown. He is well known for his intense rivalry with Alydar in the Derby, Preakness and Belmont. Alydar finished second to Affirmed in all of these races. Affirmed won 22 stakes races, was voted champion at two, three, and four, and was named Horse of the Year in 1978 and 1979. Affirmed concluded his career with over 2 million in earnings.

Go For Gin

Go For Gin (right) won the 1994 Kentucky Derby. Go For Gin is currently the oldest living Kentucky Derby winner in North America. He can be visited at the Kentucky Horse Park in the Hall of Champions.



Alysheba

Alysheba (left), a son of Alydar, won the Kentucky Derby in 1987. Known as “Americas Horse”, Alysheba was retired from stud duties to the Kentucky Horse Park. He was a resident of the Hall of Champions until 2009. Alysheba’s gravesite can be visited at the Kentucky Horse Park.

Only three fillies have ever won the Kentucky Derby. Regret (right) in 1915, Genuine Risk in 1980 and Winning Colors in 1988. Eight Belles famously ran second to Big Brown in the 2008 Derby. However, a filly has beaten a Derby winner in a different Triple Crown race. Rachel Alexandra beat 2009 Derby winner Mine That Bird in the Preakness, denying him a Triple Crown bid.



Calumet Farm

Calumet Farm began as a Standardbred racing facility in the 1920s, established by William Monroe Wright. It was later converted into a Thoroughbred breeding farm in 1932 by Wright's son.

Throughout the 40s and 50s, Calumet dominated the racing industry. Calumet won a record eight Kentucky Derbies, two Triple Crown winners, had eleven horses elected to the National Museum of Racing Hall of Fame, and had five horses voted for Horse of the Year. The farm experienced the greatest decade ever by a single farm in American racing history.



Calumet's famous "devil red and blue" silks were sold to a Brazilian investment group as Calumet began to see serious decline. This was due to Alydar's mysterious death in the 1980s and a trend of mismanagement. With the future of the farm in jeopardy, the large trophy collections survival was in doubt. The collection was ultimately purchased by the Kentucky Horse Park and is now at the International Museum of the Horse.

Calumet was later repurchased and after having no Kentucky Derby entries from 1990-2012, the farm has continued its legacy of breeding top level racehorses.



Calumet recorded more than 2,400 wins with total earnings over 26 million. The collection at the International Museum of the Horse displays trophies earned by a racing dynasty.

Calumet Trophy Collection

The Calumet trophy collection is the most extensive trophy collection in the history of horse racing in America. This accomplishment is one that is unlikely to ever be duplicated. The collection contains 524 gold and silver trophies, one ceramic, seven crystal trophies, and 105 silver and gold julep cups.



Question: What decade(s) did Calumet have their greatest year in racing?

Claiborne Farm

Like Calumet Farm, Claiborne Farm has produced its fair share of Kentucky Derby winners. Claiborne Farm dates back to the 1800s, when the farm was started by Richard Hancock, a former Civil War captain of the Confederate Army. Claiborne is most impressively the birthplace of ten Kentucky Derby winners. The farm also sired six of the thirteen Triple Crown winners. The farm has sired more than 300 champion racehorses.



Princequillo, whose descendants include Secretariat, A.P. Indy, Cigar, and Seattle Slew.



Omaha won the Triple Crown in 1935, he was bred by Claiborne Farm. He was a son of Triple Crown winner Gallant Fox, which made this duo the only father and son generational Triple Crown in history.



Claiborne has historically been managed by Richard Handcock and his sons, Arthur and Seth. The Handcocks brought in top sires Princequillo, Nasrullah, Mr. Prospector, and Danzig. These stallions became breed shaping sires, and their prominent bloodlines are still carried through their offspring today. Mr. Prospector and his grandson, Unbridled, sired winners of all three Triple Crown races. Other prominent stallions include Northern Dancer, Nijinsky II, Unbridled, and Bold Ruler, sire of the legendary Secretariat. Claiborne stallions have had an unparalleled impact on North American Thoroughbred breeding.



Breed shaping sire Mr. Prospector at Claiborne Farm

Question: What father/son duo made history when they both won the Triple Crown?

Significant Figures

Meriwether Clark Lewis

Founder of Churchill Downs and the Kentucky Derby (left). He believed a racetrack like the European tracks would be popular in the United States. Lewis modeled the races in the U.S off of the races he'd witnessed in Europe.



Matt Winn

One of the first presidents of Churchill Downs and the “Father of the Kentucky Derby” (right). Winn is known for introducing many traditions, particularly the singing of “My Old Kentucky Home” during the post parade.

Stephan Foster

Foster wrote “My Old Kentucky Home” in the pre-Civil War era. He now has a stakes race named in his honor that is annually run at Churchill Downs, the Stephan Foster Handicap.

John and Henry Churchill

Meriwether Clark Lewis’s uncles. They leased Lewis the land after hearing his idea to create a track. The establishment was named after them years later.



Question: If you could add something new or cool to the Derby, what would it be?

The Kentucky Derby Today

A Controversial Finish

The 2019 Kentucky Derby ended in a historic disqualification of Maximum Security, the horse that crossed the finish line first. He was disqualified for interference, and the second place finisher, Country House, was elevated to first place. At odds of 65-1, Country House became the second biggest upset winner of the Derby, after Donerail's win in 1913 at 91-1 odds. This was the first on-track disqualification in the history of the Kentucky Derby. Country House didn't race again after his Kentucky Derby win, and a different horse won each of the Triple Crown races in 2019.



Covid-19 impacts on the Kentucky Derby

The unprecedented situation we faced in the fight against the Covid-19 coronavirus has certainly altered our society. The 2020 Kentucky Derby was set to be run on May 2nd, but was postponed to September 5th due to coronavirus concerns. This was the first time the Derby was not run on the first Saturday in May since 1945, when WWII caused its postponement then. With this necessary change, the Triple Crown schedule was in doubt, and much of worldwide horseracing looked uncertain.



(Below) The official announcement of postponement of the Kentucky Derby.

**The 146th Kentucky Derby will be rescheduled
from May 2, 2020 to September 5, 2020
Updated – March 30th, 2020**

Question: What was so historic about the 2019 Kentucky Derby?

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Image List

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Page 2 (All Pictures) “History and Tradition.” History and Tradition. 2020 Kentucky Derby & Oaks. September 4th and 5th, 2020. Accessed April 2, 2020. <https://www.kentuckyderby.com/history>.

Page 3 (All Pictures) “History and Tradition.” History and Tradition. 2020 Kentucky Derby & Oaks. September 4th and 5th, 2020. Accessed April 2, 2020. <https://www.kentuckyderby.com/history>.

Page 4 All pictures taken at the museum (jockey silks)

Page 5 - “History and Tradition.” History and Tradition. 2020 Kentucky Derby & Oaks. September 4th and 5th, 2020. Accessed April 2, 2020. <https://www.kentuckyderby.com/history>.

- Picture taken at museum (rose blanket)

Page 6 (All Pictures) “History and Tradition.” History and Tradition. 2020 Kentucky Derby & Oaks. September 4th and 5th, 2020. Accessed April 2, 2020. <https://www.kentuckyderby.com/history>.

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- Picture from International Museum of the Horse (Seattle Slew)

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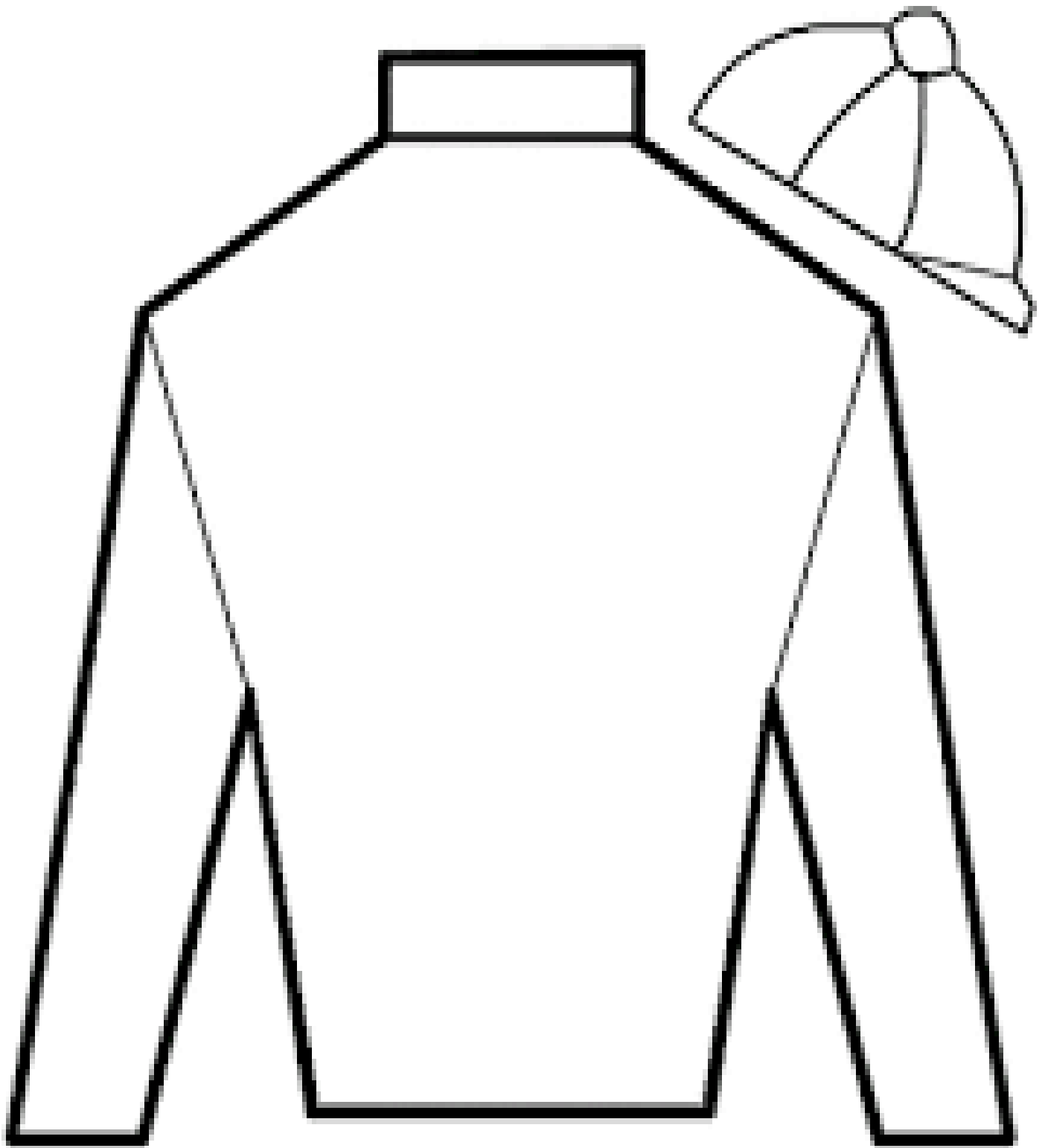
- Picture from International Museum of the Horse (Funny Cide)

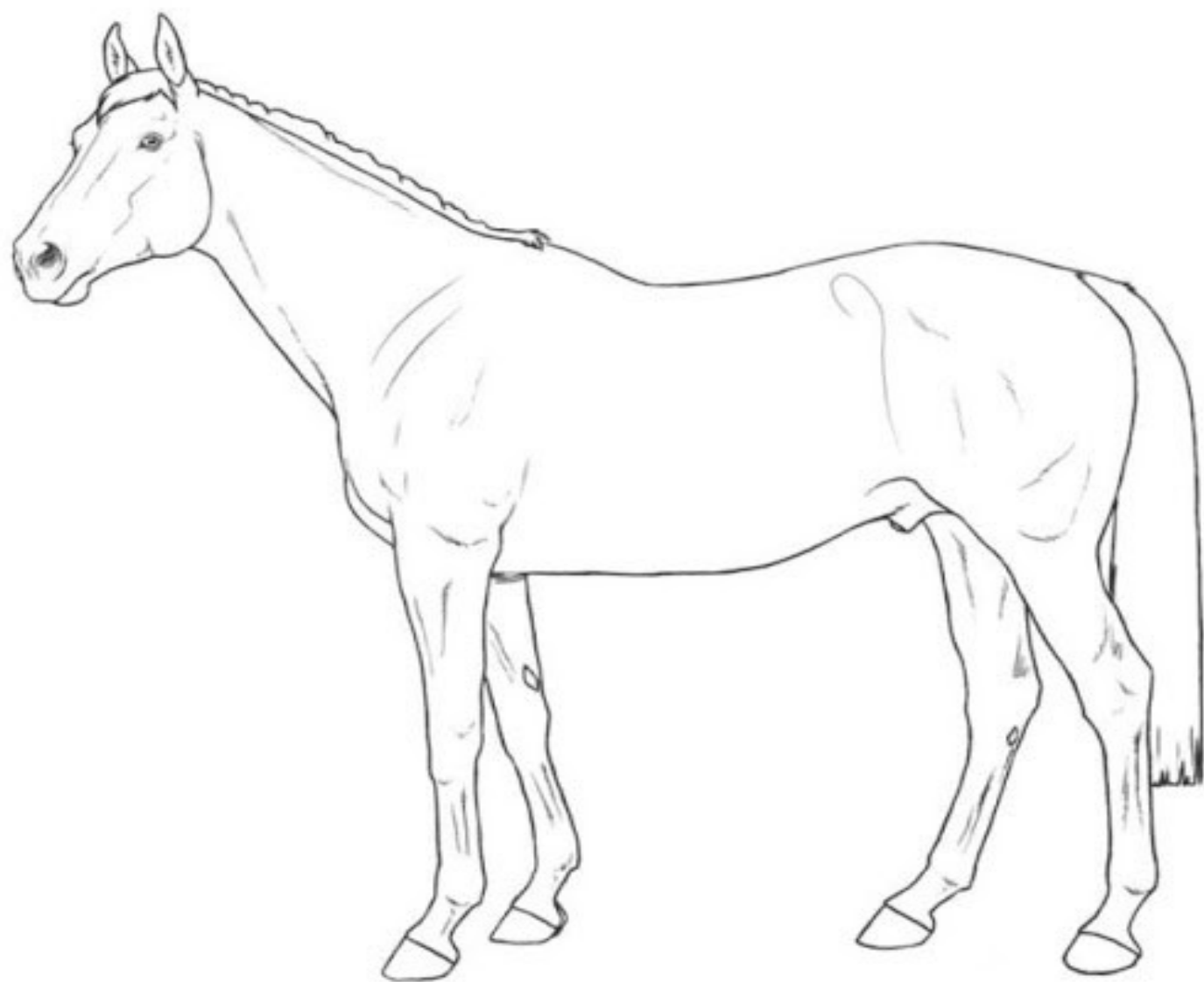
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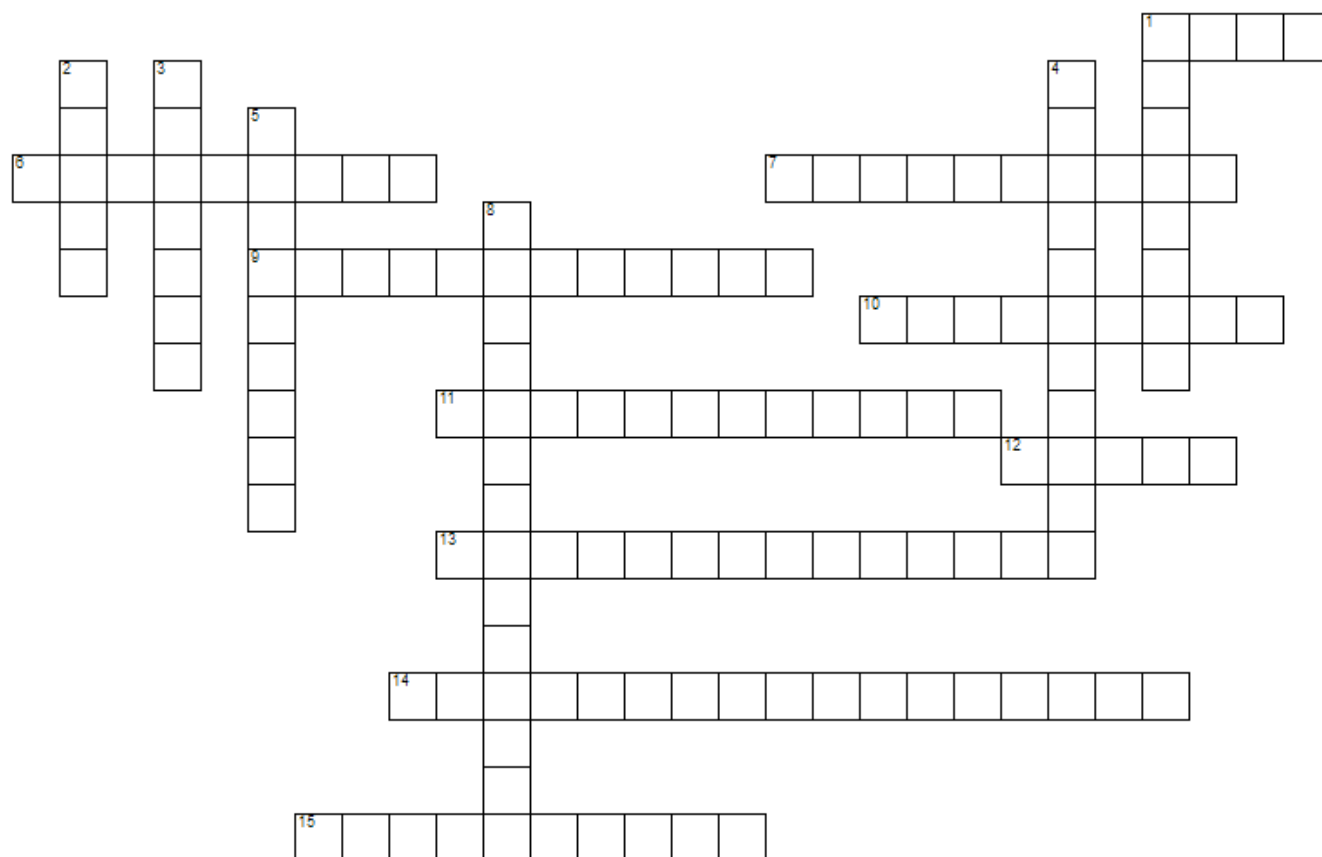
Create your own Jockey Silks

Recreate a famous Kentucky Derby winner and their silks or make your own!





The Kentucky Derby



Across

1. The Derby trophy is made of
6. The first Derby winner
7. When they win all three
9. The only breed that can race in the Derby
10. The "People's Horse" of 2003
11. 2019's controversy
12. The man started it
13. The racetrack is called
14. This song by Stephan Foster
15. The city for the race

Down

1. The oldest living Derby winner
2. The only age that can race in the Derby
3. The latest Triple Crown Winner
4. A way to tell the racers apart; full of color
5. A traditional drink for the day
8. A nickname for the Derby

Kentucky Derby Winners

T F T Z D A F N G S L D Y N A
A W E L S E L T T A E S P M N
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ARISTIDES
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GALLANTFOX
GOFORGIN
JUSTIFY
OMAHA
REGRET
SEATTLESLW
SECRETARIAT
SIRBARTON