

Horse and Pony

KS4 Tuesday

Humanities

Role of Horses in War, Commerce and Civilization

Food

Long before people began riding horses, they were hunted for food and revered for the speed and strength. Horses feature in the cave painting found



in the Lascaux cave complex near the village of Montignac, France. The age of the paintings is estimated at around 17,000 years.

Hunters began to follow the horse herds. While the horse still remained a “wild animal,” humans and horses, in a manner of speaking, grew closer

together. Humans could attract the horse by providing ready fodder. They found that they could milk the lactating mare and serve the milk to their own families. The first known evidence of domesticated horses comes from horse dung found inside postholes of what appears to have been a stable in today’s Kazakhstan, dating to 5000 BCE. Ancient knife marks on thousands of horse bones indicate these horses were raised for meat, and perhaps milk.

Riding and Pulling

At some point, no one is sure exactly when, humans began to eye horses as more than simply food. One can imagine some adventurous herder youth climbing atop a docile-looking horse for amusement.



But whether humans used horses to pull wheeled vehicles such as chariots before they learned to ride them is not certain. Because most of these

developments occurred before writing was invented, we depend on archaeological evidence to help us understand what happened.

Horses pulling chariots are depicted in drawings from the Middle East about 4,000 years ago. The earliest evidence of humans riding horses is 5,000-year-old fossils of worn-down horse teeth that indicate a riding bit was placed in the animal's mouth. It is certainly possible that humans rode horses without bits long before that, but no physical evidence remains. Horses allowed for faster travel between communities, developing trade and commerce, and also allowed hunter-gatherers to settle in one place by toiling the soil and growing their own crops so settlements could become more permanent and flourish.



With the ability to ride the horse, and to domesticate it for food, horse-centered human cultures emerged in places like the steppes of Central Asia. Horses and riders or horse-drawn carts or chariots could cover huge distances at great speed. As trade routes developed, roads were built to move horses and chariots more quickly. Horse-mounted messengers on the Persian Empire's Royal Road in the fifth century BCE could carry a message 1,700 miles in seven days, compared with 90 days by foot.

"There is nothing in the world that travels faster than these Persian couriers," wrote the Greek historian Herodotus.

War

Humans also figured out how to use horses in warfare. The chariot was a fearsome weapon and the invention of the saddle, and then the stirrup, which first appears in China about 2,000 years ago, brought a leap forward in the effectiveness of horse-mounted warfare. Now warriors could use their hands more readily to fling spears, slash with swords, or fire arrows while



secured on horseback with a saddle, feet planted in stirrups. The Mongols, who used lightning-fast raids to conquer much of Asia in the 13th century, were famous for their horse-mounted archers.

When the stirrup arrived in Europe, it allowed European warriors to ride while armoured with metal plates forged by medieval blacksmiths — making them a kind of proto-tank. Thus was born the European knight in armour, fighting for a feudal lord to whom he swore loyalty.

The horse-loving Spaniards (the word for gentleman in Spanish is caballero, or “he who rides a horse”) reintroduced the horse to North America, with the first



expeditions to Mexico after Christopher Columbus’s voyages. Some horses quickly escaped from the Spanish conquistadors, or were stolen, and bred in the wild. Native Americans quickly saw the utility of the horse, and the Plains Indians became expert at horse riding. Early European explorers in North America gave reports of Plains Indian children too young to talk but

comfortable riding their own small mounts. Horses were even used as recently as the first world war to charge in battle, pull the cannons through the deep mud and to pull the ambulance carts to move the injured from the battle, all whilst guns fired and cannon balls rained and mustard gas put both horse and human lives at risk.



Speed and Sport



The speed at which humans could travel increased to that of a horse’s walk, trot, or gallop, a range of about 4 miles per hour to 55 miles per hour (the record gallop speed over short

distances). In addition to transforming how people travelled, lived, traded and fought, sports such as horse racing, showjumping and dressage (which comes from practicing battle manoeuvres on horseback) developed and continue to be popular activities today. Humans bred horses selectively for characteristics like manoeuvrability, speed, gentleness, and strength. A vast number of breeds, somewhere over 300, exist today, reflecting the spectrum of uses in which horses have served humans.

Therapy and Companionship

The dominance of the horse changed dramatically with the invention of the steam engine, which, not surprisingly, was measured in “horsepower.” With this new energy source in steamboats and railroads, followed by the invention of the automobile, the number of workhorses dropped significantly. Electronic communication and new forms of transportation made the horse obsolete for carrying messages. Telegraphs and railroads replaced the Pony Express, which once carried letters across the American West. Advances in the transport of information continued with the radio, telephones, television, and the Internet.

Thanks to modern technology, our messages can now travel close to the speed of light, nearly 186,000 miles (about 300,000 kilometers) per second. While the horse continues to be used for transport and farming in some regions, in the industrialized world, it is mostly ridden for recreation or kept as a pet. Humans and horses have had a relationship for millennia, and horses perhaps understand humans in ways we don't even know. Recent scientific studies have indicated that autistic children are soothed by riding and grooming horses.



The horse in the future might carry on a more subtle, more complex, and ultimately more important kind of relationship with humans than carrying heavy loads or transporting messages over long distances.

Over to You

Can you create a timeline showing the development and key events of the horse and human relationship? Use the timeline template overleaf or create your own!

<p>THRESHOLD 6 COLLECTIVE LEARNING</p> 	<p>THRESHOLD 7 AGRICULTURE</p> 	<p>THRESHOLD 8 THE MODERN REVOLUTION</p> 	<p>THRESHOLD 8 THE MODERN REVOLUTION</p> 
<p>CONTEMPLATION Human foragers hunt the horse for meat and revere it, depicting the animal in cave paintings</p>	<p>DOMESTICATION Agriculture recasts the horse as a versatile work animal, providing a major energy boost to human societies</p>	<p>CONNECTION The horse, now a major player in communication, transportation, and warfare, is reintroduced to the Americas by Spanish conquistadors</p>	<p>ACCELERATION Inventions like the steam engine and the telegraph make the horse nearly obsolete for transportation and communication, but mechanical power is measured in "horsepower"</p>

Here are 4 things to put on your timeline. You may also want to do further research on the ideas above to add more points to your timeline.

Timeline

15000 BC

10000 BC

6000 BC

3000 BC

0 AD

300 AD

600 AD

900 AD

1200 AD

1500 AD

1900 AD

2020 AD