

Teachers' Notes for 'Totally Horse Mad'

By Kathy Helidoniotis

The *Horse Mad* series can be enjoyed by readers 8 years and up. Their appeal is to horse lovers and beyond. Teachers are finding that the *Horse Mad* books are increasingly popular with reluctant readers. The stories are engaging page-turners packed with adventure and horse-related information. They are also stories with depth, addressing issues not commonly found in "horsy" books.

1. Outline
2. Themes
3. Classroom ideas.

1. Outline

I had a great idea. Maybe I could buy Princess. Then she'd really be mine, not just a horse I rode once a week ... I made up my mind. If it was the last thing I did, I was going to get my very own horse.

The only things that stand between Ashleigh Miller and the horse of her dreams are a whole lot of dollars that she doesn't have, parents who don't know one end of a horse from another and a city backyard the size of a shoebox.

Ashleigh can't believe it when her parents announce that she will really have a horse of her own, but at a price she could never have imagined. She will have to say goodbye to her best friend, Jenna, South Beach Stables and her favourite horse, Princess. Ashleigh and her family are leaving the city and heading for Shady Creek, a small country town. And that's where the adventures in this *Horse Mad* series really begin.

2. Themes

- friendship
- family life
- achieving goals
- conflict
- conflict resolution
- bullying
- financial hardship
- change and adapting to change
- relationship breakdown
- animal care
- sport
- loving horses

3. Classroom Ideas

- Write a letter to one of the characters in *Totally Horse Mad*.
- Write a letter to the author about your feelings toward the book.
- Compose a song based on *Totally Horse Mad*.
- Make a poster advertising the book.
- List similarities and differences between you and a character in *Totally Horse Mad*.
- Describe one setting in the novel using all five senses.
- Create a hanging mobile with pictures of things that relate to *Totally Horse Mad*.
- Choose your ten favourite quotes from the characters in the story and explain who said them and why you liked them.
- Write a different ending to *Totally Horse Mad*.
- Look up and define 15 new words you found in *Totally Horse Mad*.
- Make a recipe of something that was mentioned in the book.
- Turn *Totally Horse Mad* into a 10 page picture book and illustrate it.
- Design another book cover.
- As the main character on the *Totally Horse Mad* cover, write interior monologue to explain what you are thinking, what has led to this incident and what will happen next. Compare with the author's version in the book.
- Design a cover for the CD ROM or DVD version of *Totally Horse Mad*.
- Select an incident from the novel and write a newspaper article.
- Create a profile of your favourite *Totally Horse Mad* character. Create a profile of your favourite horse!
- Create a *Totally Horse Mad* showbag by filling it with a range of interesting material related to the novel.
- Create a *Totally Horse Mad* board game.
- Write a series of interview questions for a *Totally Horse Mad* character. What answers would they give?