



Secretariat



Synopsis

With the death of her mother, housewife and mother Penny Chenery agrees to take over her ailing father's Virginia-based Meadow Stables despite her lack of horse-racing knowledge. Against all odds, Chenery — with the help of veteran trainer Lucien Laurin — manages to navigate the male-dominated business, ultimately fostering the first Triple Crown winner in twenty-five years.

Discussion Questions

- When Penny's mother died she stayed at her family's Virginia home to look after the family business despite having no formal background in horseracing. How do you think she became so successful so quickly?
- Penny hoped that Lucien Laurin would come out of retirement to help her train her horse. At first he resisted. Why did he change his mind?
- As the horse was growing up, they called him Big Red. When they began to race him in respectable races he was forced to have a more respectable name. What does the name Secretariat mean? Why do you think they chose this name? Do you think the name Secretariat fits the horse? Why?
- While there was stress on Penny's family relationships because she was back and forth between her homes in Colorado and Virginia, her family remained intact. What are some of the reasons you attribute to the fact that the bonds between her and her children, and her and her husband were still strong at the end of the film?
- What do you believe was behind Penny's desire to succeed? At one point in the film Penny realized that they could sell everything from her parent's estate and pay off what they owed on the farm, but she was not willing. She wanted to win. Why do you think that was? Have you ever felt a similar drive to succeed? Why were you so driven?

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Activities

- Research the history of the Triple Crown races. What other horses won the entire Triple Crown? Which ones came close? How did the other winner's times compare to Secretariat's? If you enjoyed watching the races in the film, you can still find many of these races online at YouTube.
- Watch the Kentucky Derby on television. This race, which takes place every spring in Louisville, KY, is the most famous in the United States. Observe the rituals and the clothes. You may particularly enjoy all the hats -- think about making a hat of your own to wear while watching the Derby on TV.
- Secretariat was not the first name chosen by his owners. In fact, many names were rejected before everyone settled on Secretariat. Learn about the naming process of race horses.
- Penny got involved in a business that was completely male-dominated. Today it's not unlikely to have women in almost any profession. It's easy to forget how different it was for women just a few decades ago. Interview the oldest woman in your family about what life was like for women when she was growing up.



Get Involved

- Horses have been an important animal in our country's history and have been used for much more than just sport. Oftentimes horses are used as therapy for people with many different types of disabilities. This is also referred to as "Adaptive Riding" or "Equestrian Therapy". Find an adaptive riding center near you and find out if they are in need of volunteers, especially for care of the horses.
- Penny was exposed to her family's business from an early age. She was pushed by her father to get a good education as well. Do you know or understand what your parents do? Or if you're a parent, does your child know or understand what you do? Shadow or become a shadow for a child/parent day at work.

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