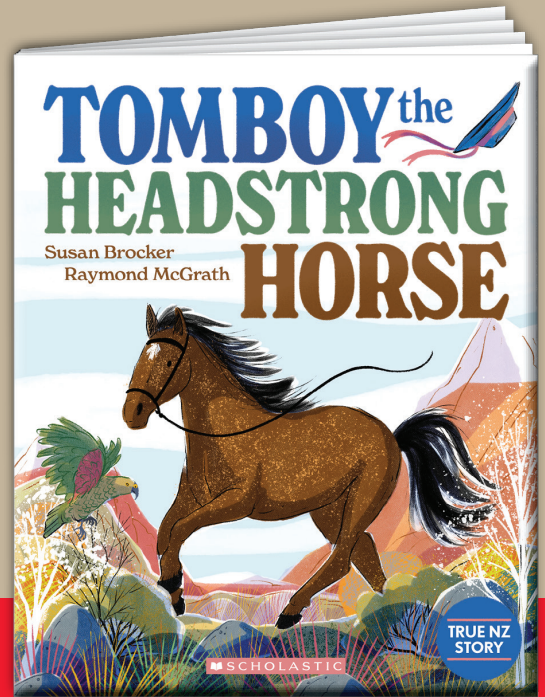


Tomboy the Headstrong Horse

By Susan Brocker

Illustrated by Raymond McGrath

• Reading • Writing • Art • Social Studies



Synopsis

A true New Zealand story of a horse and the brave woman who rode him through the Southern Alps in 1866.

This is the adventurous tale of Tomboy, a strong-willed horse who tested his rider, Caroline Chevalier, as they crossed rivers, climbed mountains, and camped deep in the bush. Caroline was the first European woman to make this rugged journey and she kept a diary while her husband, artist Nicholas Chevalier, sketched their travels.

Together, they faced storms, near-misses, and the untamed beauty of the land, led by a headstrong horse with a kind heart.

About the Author

Susan Brocker has written over 50 fiction and non-fiction books for older children and teens, which have been published worldwide. She has a history degree and a love of social history that is reflected in her books. Susan also has a close affinity with animals. She lives with her husband and many pets in a lovely old villa on a small farm near Tauranga. Other Scholastic titles by Susan include *1914 Riding into War*, *Ice and Caged* for older readers and picture books based on true NZ animal tales: *Bess the Brave War Horse*, *Friday the Rebel Dog*, *Mrs Chippy the Cat*, *Pelorus Jack the Dolphin Guide* and *Watson the Detective Dog*.

About the Illustrator

Raymond McGrath is an award-winning animation director, illustrator, designer and writer who has been working in children's television and advertising for many years. As well as illustrating books for other authors, such as the award-winning *The Little Ghost Who Lost Her Boo!* and Susan Brocker's true-life animal stories, he has written and illustrated several books himself, including *That's What Dragons Do* and the Big Little Blue series. Raymond lives in rural Auckland with his wife and four children, some cats and a Labrador.

Writing and Illustration Style

Tomboy the Headstrong Horse is a 32-page picture book for children aged 3+. Susan Brocker's passion for horses is evident in this heart-warming true story, featuring the headstrong and wilful horse Tomboy. With descriptive, figurative language, Susan takes the reader on the arduous, action-packed journey that the spirited adventurers and their four trusty horses undertake. The text is in the third person past tense and is set in the New Spirit font. The story also features smatterings of present-tense dialogue to give insight into the relationship between Tomboy and Caroline and Nicholas Chevalier. At the end of the book, Susan then writes non-fiction background information about the two explorers, the route they took in the South Island and the purpose of the trip.

Raymond McGrath is a talented, award-winning illustrator. His illustrations are made using traditional drawing and digital colouring techniques with Adobe Photoshop. They are a mix of vignettes, single pages and double pages. Raymond could easily have drawn the immense and striking natural world of the South Island with the traditional shades of browns and greens, but instead, he uses a rich palette of unconventional and fresh, unexpected colours. He celebrates the rocks, hills, mountains, trees, rivers and beaches with beautiful orange, yellow, coral, red, mustard, blue and purple tones.

Shared Learning and Discussion Points

Read the story aloud and have students read alongside you or follow along as you read. Use some of the questions provided to help promote discussions. Asking questions is an important reading skill that often needs to be taught. Model how to ask open-ended questions that require more than 'yes' or 'no' answers. These questions require the students to think more deeply. Answering questions about the characters, the settings and the main details demonstrates how students comprehend what they're reading. Encourage them to think about how their lives are different to the lives of these early explorers in 1866.

ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

Look at the front cover and read the blurb on the back cover.

- What does the word 'headstrong' mean? Do you know an animal that's headstrong? Could a person be headstrong?
- Do you like reading true stories? What do you think this true story might be about?
- Have you seen the green bird on the front cover before? Note the red colour under its wings. What's it called? Where do these birds live?
- Look at the hat blowing through the air. Who do you think owns it?
- If Caroline is the first European woman to journey across New Zealand's rugged South Island, when do you think this story might be set?
- On the back cover, one person is leading two of the horses. What can horses be used for?

COMPREHENSION:

- Why does Tomboy bolt from the campsite? (p.2)
- Why is Caroline wearing a long skirt? Is this garment practical to wear on an expedition? (p.2)
- Why are the explorers staying in tents? How do they carry the tents and other supplies? (p.2)
- When Tomboy neighs and gallops off into the bush, what do you think he's thinking? (p.2)
- On a map of New Zealand, find the Southern Alps and the West Coast. What do you notice about the terrain in those areas? Can you imagine riding that far on horseback? Why or why not? (p.4)
- What personality traits do you need if you're going to be the first to do something, such as the first people to explore the remote wilderness, the first to travel to space or the first to venture deep into the ocean? Could you do something like that? Explain your answer. (p.4)
- What difficulties do you think the explorers face in the remote wilderness? Why do they need to document it with diaries and drawings? (p.4)
- Was your prediction about why Tomboy ran off correct? How would a headstrong horse feel being pinned down by heavy packs and a rider? (p.7)
- What prevents Tomboy escaping further than he does? (p.7)
- The author says 'Vines curled around him like sticky spider webs'. This is a simile, which is a phrase that compares two different things using the words 'like' and 'as'. What other things could the author have compared the trapping, curling vines with? (p.7)
- What does the word 'hapless' mean? What other word could you use here to describe the fly? (p.7)
- What does the word 'nickered' mean? If you don't know, where could you find out? (p.7)



- What chores do you think the assistant would do? (p.8)
- Have you ever seen or eaten damper? It's made from just water and flour and cooked in the coals of a campfire. Many settlers in New Zealand cooked damper. Why do you think the food that the explorers and settlers eat is plain and simple? (p.8)
- Everyone thought Caroline was crazy attempting such a trip. Back in 1866, women didn't do such things. They stayed at home, cooked and cleaned and looked after their children. Why do you think Caroline didn't listen to their opinions? What's your opinion about Caroline? (p.9)
- Have you ever done something that people thought you were crazy to do? How did it turn out? (p.9)
- Why does Caroline use a clear pool to fix her hair? Why couldn't she carry a mirror on her journey? (p.10)
- The author says 'moss hung from trees like long grey beards'. This simile compares moss with beards using the word 'like'. What other simile could she use to describe the hanging moss? (p.10)
- Why is it dangerous for a horse to be spooked? (p.10)
- Tomboy might have seen or felt the fairy-like creatures that Māori called 'patupaiarehe'. Do you think Caroline is spooked by the thought of the patupaiarehe? Why or why not? (p.10)
- A rider needs to be able to trust his or her horse. Do you think Caroline trusts Tomboy? Explain your answer. (p.11)
- Tomboy stops and waits for Caroline. Do you think Tomboy trusts her? Why or why not? (p.11)
- What is a summit? Have you ever been on a summit? (p.12)
- Teamwork is important on an expedition into unfamiliar territory. How does Caroline display incredible teamwork? (p.12)
- Do you think explorers like Caroline and Nicholas feel like giving up at times? Why or why not? Would you like to go on an expedition like this? Explain your answer. (p.12)
- New Zealand doesn't have poisonous or dangerous animals, such as crocodiles or snakes. So what is dangerous for Caroline and Nicholas on the expedition? (p.13)
- What do you think of their camping spot? What happens if it rains a great deal and the river rises? What do you think the horses think about the island? (p.14)
- The group carries kerosene for the lamps and tents to sleep in. What else would they need to carry for a trip this long? (p.14)
- How comfortable do you think a bed made from bracken fern would be? (p.14)
- What is a billy? How can you find out if you don't know? (p.14)
- What kind of personality does the weka have? (p.14)
- Would you rather sleep outside in a tent or in a shabby, grubby building? Explain your answer. (p.16)
- Why do the rats hang around the grubby kitchen? Do you think the rats would bother the travellers as much in the outdoors? Why or why not? (p.16)
- When Tomboy whinnies, how do you think he's feeling? (p.16)
- What kind of floor is an earthen one? (p.16)
- If a river is given the name 'little devil', would you be worried about crossing it? What makes a river dangerous? Explain your answer. (p.18)
- Horses can cross rivers, but rocky rapids aren't a place a horse would naturally choose to cross. How do you think Caroline gives Tomboy the confidence to carry on? Has someone you know given you the confidence to try something that you didn't want to do? How did it work out? (p.20)
- Caroline and Nicholas ride on horseback to cross the river rather than walk across it. What helps a horse cross a strong raging river? Do you think the other horses also help Tomboy? How? (p.20)
- Would you go back or ride past if you came across the horse-drawn coach? (p.22)
- If they'd met the coach at the start of the trip, how might Tomboy have reacted? (p.22)
- The packhorse bolts when thunder strikes. Do you have an animal that's scared of thunder and lightning? How do they react? (p.25)
- The author says 'the dark rollers looked like threshing taniwha'. Can you come up with another simile to describe the huge waves? (p.25)
- What do you look like if you are 'bedraggled'? (p.25)
- What is a gold rush? (p.26)
- Gold miners spent months digging in the riverbeds, searching for gold and seeking their fortunes. Have you heard the word 'digger' before? Where have you heard it? (p.26)
- Why is building a road in these areas an amazing achievement? How would they make such a thing without the machines that we use today? (pp.28–29)
- Is bounding near Tomboy's feet and hooves dangerous for the kea? Why or why not? (p.29)
- Why can trees not grow on very high summits? (p.29)
- Does the name 'Devil's Punchbowl Falls' conjure up a waterfall that is gentle or powerful? Explain your answer. (p.31)
- Do you think Caroline is proud of how Tomboy doesn't react to the deafening sound of the waterfall? Why or why not? (p.31)
- Why might the trait of being headstrong have been so useful to Tomboy? (p.32)
- Would you find it hard to say goodbye to Tomboy? Why or why not? (p.32)



Activities

ACTIVITY 1: TRAVEL WRITER

Caroline Chevalier wrote about her travels in a journal. Sometimes people back in the 1800s were given a grant to travel through an area to draw, paint and write about the landscape and lifestyle. It was hoped that the work of artists and other creative people would encourage people to leave their homelands, such as Great Britain, to settle in isolated and remote countries, such as New Zealand. Imagine you've been given a grant to write about your journey on horseback across the Southern Alps to the West Coast and back again. Travel writers often provide handy tips about different areas. Write a list of all the things that people might want to know about. Try to appeal to the senses of the readers, such as the smells, sounds and sights of the area. Remember, because a grant is given, it's unlikely the people giving it would want anything negative listed. Use the book to help you write the list. This could be a teacher-led class activity.

ACTIVITY 2: ARTISTIC STYLE

In 1866, Nicholas Chevalier creates drawings and watercolour paintings as he travels around the South Island. Raymond McGrath's artwork uses stunning colours and is full of stylised landscapes. His artwork is different to the more realistic, detailed watercolour style of Nicholas Chevalier, but both men see similar landscapes, flora and fauna through different eyes. Making art is very personal and the same scene can be interpreted many different ways. Take a scene from the book that you like and recreate it using paints in your own artistic style. Display your finished artwork on the classroom walls.

ACTIVITY 3: MY DIARY ENTRY

Caroline keeps a personal diary as she and her headstrong horse Tomboy bond during the treacherous trip. Writing a diary is very different to writing a travel article. Since it's a personal diary, it might only ever be read by you. It can contain both positive and negative thoughts. Create a diary entry for a day. It might be when Tomboy bolts from the campsite, crossing the Taipō or resting in Hokitika. Write in the first person past tense. Talk about the events of the day in chronological order (or about only one event of the day) and how you felt at the time. Remember to put a date at the top of your diary entry. Work in pairs or groups, then share your diaries with the rest of the class.

ACTIVITY 4: HORSE WORDS

There are a number of words and terms throughout the story that relate to horses. On page 2, we read the words 'halter', 'hooves', 'neighed' and 'galloped'. Re-read the story again, noting down all the words that relate to horses. Then create a glossary that lists the words and explains what each of the words mean. A glossary is an alphabetical list of words and their meanings that relate to a certain subject. For example, **halter**: a rope or strap that fits over a horse's nose and behind its ear, used to lead or tie the horse. Explain to the students that they can use dictionaries to help them write their glossaries but encourage them to use their own words. Provide teacher assistance where necessary. Have the students work in pairs or groups.

ACTIVITY 5: DANGEROUS JOURNEY

Pretend you're a settler on the coach being pulled by the four horses. Travelling by coach on these rough tracks was very uncomfortable and slow, not to mention dangerous! Write a postcard to a friend or family member back home, describing the coach journey. It could be a dramatic retelling explaining the dangers of the trip, such as *The coach ride can be dangerous. One passenger looked out of the window to get a better view of the mountains. Suddenly, the coach nearly rode over a sheer rock face. The passenger fainted in her seat!* People these days don't usually write postcards to friends and family. They send texts or emails instead. Back in 1866, however, postcards and letters were often the only form of communication. On the front of the postcard, draw a picture of the scenery. On the back, draw a stamp in the top right-hand corner. Below that, write the name and address of the person you are writing to. You could also write the date at the top left-hand side. Below that, write a greeting (such as *Dear David; Hello Maria*). Write a short message to the recipient underneath. Work in groups, then share your postcards with the rest of the class. If the students need more support, you could create the postcard as a shared class session, writing it on a large sheet of paper or the board.

ACTIVITY 6: A FOND FAREWELL

On page 32, Caroline bids farewell to Tomboy because she's heading back to England with her husband soon. Write a conversation that Caroline has with Tomboy. Put her words into speech bubbles. Tomboy could have his replies in thought bubbles. Write what he's thinking about Caroline and her leaving him. Share your work with a friend.

Written by Janine Scott



teacher toolkit

 SCHOLASTIC