

SPECIAL LESSON 19

TEXAS ALMANAC TEACHERS GUIDE

Assault: King of the Turf

- *From the Texas Almanac 2016–2017*

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

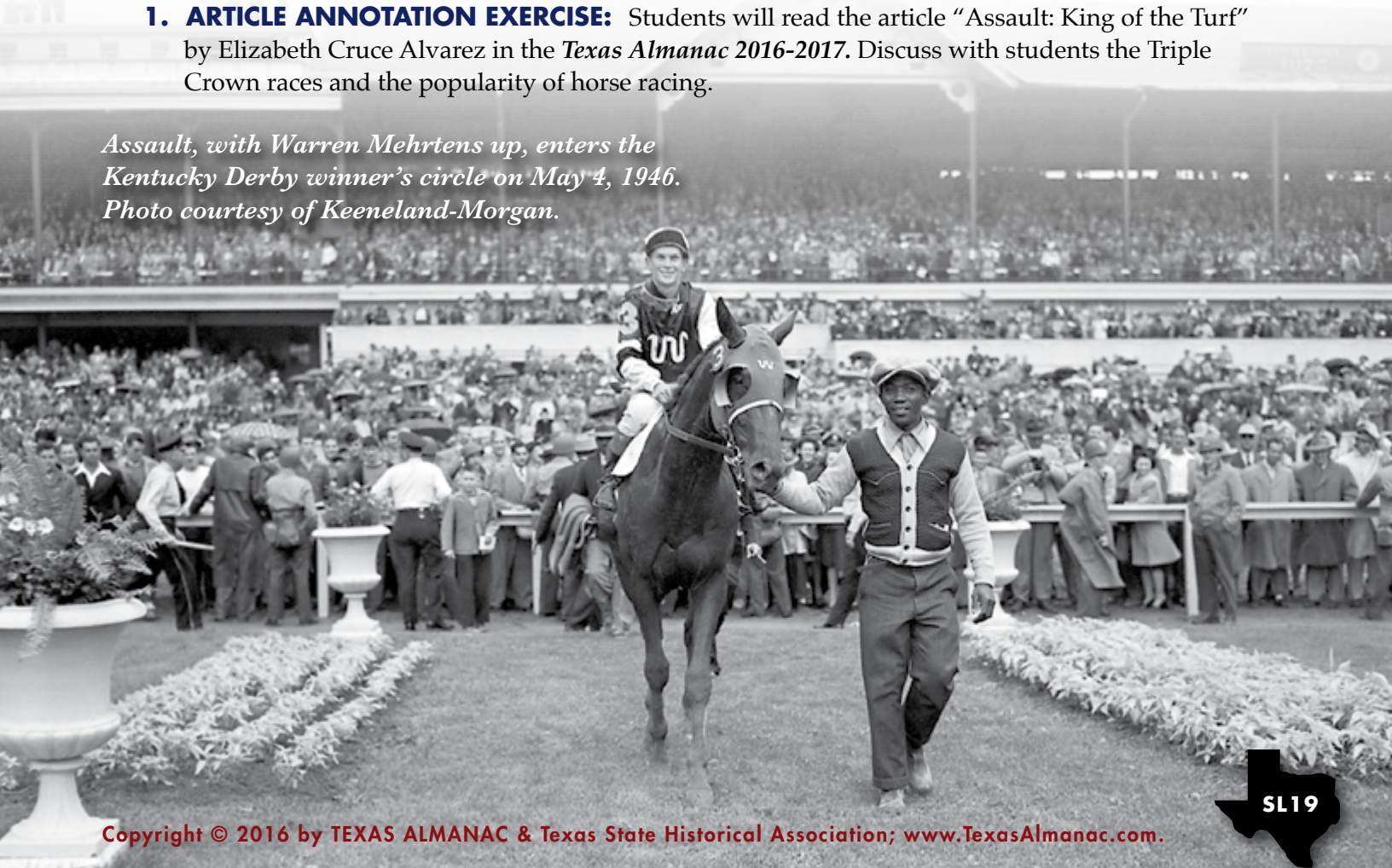
Students should know the following to successfully take part in these activities:

- A basic understanding of the sport of horse racing and the Triple Crown. If students do not, please provide a brief explanation before reading the article. A general definition can be found at Encyclopedia Britannica here: <http://www.britannica.com/sports/Triple-Crown-American-horse-racing>
- Ability to conduct independent research using the resources available to them. They should also have a basic understanding of how to check the reliability and accuracy of information taken from websites, newspaper articles, and books.
- Ability to look at their classroom textbooks' indexes or work cited pages to identify the different resources used in the textbook.

INSTRUCTIONAL SUGGESTIONS

1. **ARTICLE ANNOTATION EXERCISE:** Students will read the article "Assault: King of the Turf" by Elizabeth Cruce Alvarez in the *Texas Almanac 2016-2017*. Discuss with students the Triple Crown races and the popularity of horse racing.

Assault, with Warren Mehrtens up, enters the Kentucky Derby winner's circle on May 4, 1946.
Photo courtesy of Keeneland-Morgan.



SOCIAL STUDIES TEKS

4 - 4, 5, 12, 21, 22

7 - 6, 7, 12, 13, 21, 22

8 - 2, 10, 11, 12, 23, 29

STAAR

4, 7 - Writing - 1, 2, 3

4, 7, 8 - Reading - 1, 2, 3

8 - Social Studies - 2, 4

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Students will then complete the 2-page **Triple Crown Questions Student Activity Sheet**. They may need to look up definitions of key terms on the Internet, in their textbooks, or in books at their library. Potential Internet sources are listed, below.

RELATED RESOURCES:

Brasada — <http://texasalmanac.com/topics/history/origins-camino-real-texas>

Land Surveying — <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/sxs01>

Horse Shoeing — <http://www.equisearch.com/article/history-of-horseshoes-17802>

Quarter Horses — <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/tcq01>

Thoroughbred Horses — <http://www.ansi.okstate.edu/breeds/horses/thoroughbred/>

- 2. RANCH RESEARCH:** Many people assume that ranching only involves raising cattle, but, as the Texas Almanac article shows, there is a lot more that goes on at a ranch. Raising and training a Triple-Crown winner is one of many King Ranch accomplishments. King Ranch and many other Texas ranches have numerous interests that keep them busy.

Have each student research one of the famous Texas ranches (King, XIT, Waggoner, JA, Matador, YO, and Four Sixes) and create a visual presentation showing some of the activities taking place on at these ranches now, as well as historically. The presentation can be a poster or a digital (PowerPoint) project and should answer the questions on the **Ranching Research Student Activity Sheet**.

RELATED RESOURCES:

Ranching (general) — <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/azr02>

King Ranch — <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/apk01>

Waggoner Ranch — <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/apw01>

JA Ranch — <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/apj01>

XIT Ranch — <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/apx01>

Four Sixes Ranch — <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/apf01>

Early Ranches in Texas — <http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/st-plains/images/he14.html>

- 3. COLORING ACTIVITY:** In your classroom, display copies of the **Triple Crown Winners' Racing Silks mini-poster**. Using the **My Thoroughbred and Racing Silks Student Activity Sheet**, students will name and color their race horse and design their racing silks. Display all of the students' finished activity sheets around your classroom to show the many variations that are possible.

*Assault, far right, beat Lord Boswell in the Preakness by a neck.
Keeneland-Morgan photo.*



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STUDENT ACTIVITY

Triple Crown Questions

DIRECTIONS: Complete the following 2-page worksheet using the article “Assault: King of the Turf” from the *Texas Almanac 2016–2017*. Read each quotation from the article, which are in the shaded boxes. Then, answer the question about that quotation. You should use your textbooks and outside research to define key terms or to explain concepts in the article.

It is fitting that the most coveted prize of the “Sport of Kings” — the Triple Crown of Thoroughbred Racing — was won 70 years ago by a King Ranch horse.

1. Why does the author say that this is “fitting”?

But Assault’s victory in 1946 is not just remarkable because he was born and bred in the *brasada*, the brush country of South Texas, instead of the lush bluegrass of Kentucky.

2. Explain what the “brasada” is like. Where did the word come from?

Assault’s injury came when he was not even a year old. The frisky colt was running in the rugged King Ranch pastures and stepped on a surveyor’s stake that was inadvertently left behind.

3. What is a surveyor’s stake? Why would it have been in the pasture?

The hoof, however, was deformed and the wall was too thin for a shoe nail. Ranch blacksmith John Dern devised a shoe with a metal tip that turned up, clung to the hoof’s front, holding it in place.

4. Why are shoes so important for horses? What would have happened if Assault could not be shod?

Triple Crown Questions *(continued)*

5. Provide a one sentence summary of Assault's performance at each of the Triple Crown races.

On May 4, the 72nd running of the Kentucky Derby in front of a record 100,000 spectators, the favorites were Lord Boswell, ridden by Eddie Arcaro, and Spy Song, with Johnny Longden as jockey. For most of the race, Assault trailed both competitors. But when they entered the stretch, Assault and Mehrtens found an opening on the inside rail, took the lead, and pulled away. Assault won the Kentucky Derby by 8 lengths, which is a record he shares with three other horses, one of which was a fellow Triple Crown champion (Whirlaway, 1941).

On May 11 at the Preakness, Assault fell to the back of the pack but broke out and gained the lead. The surge for the lead cost Assault, and he began to tire as Lord Boswell closed in. It was down to the wire, but Assault hung on and won by a neck.

The Belmont Stakes, the final leg of the Triple Crown quest, was run June 1 with a field of seven horses. Assault stumbled out of the gate, and Mehrtens was nearly thrown. Although they recovered, Assault stayed to the rear. When he entered the homestretch of the mile-and-a-half track, Assault had moved up to third. Then in a burst of speed, he passed the leader, Natchez, and won by three lengths.

Assault never sired a *thoroughbred* offspring, although it is recorded with the American Quarter Horse Association that he sired two *quarter horse* fillies.

6. Define the two terms in italics. How are they different?

Ranching Research

1. What is the name of the ranch, where in Texas is it located, when was it founded, and by whom?
2. Provide a brief history of the ranch.
3. What is the primary industry or business of the ranch? Has this changed over time?
4. What are some interesting facts about this ranch?

My Thoroughbred and Racing Silks

Horse's Name: _____

Horse's Color: _____

Colors of Silks: _____



THOROUGHBRED COLORS

These are the standard colors for thoroughbred horses. All may include white markings.

Bay: Yellow-tan to bright auburn, with black mane, tail, and lower legs.

Black: Solid black, may have white markings.

Chestnut: Red-yellow to golden-yellow.

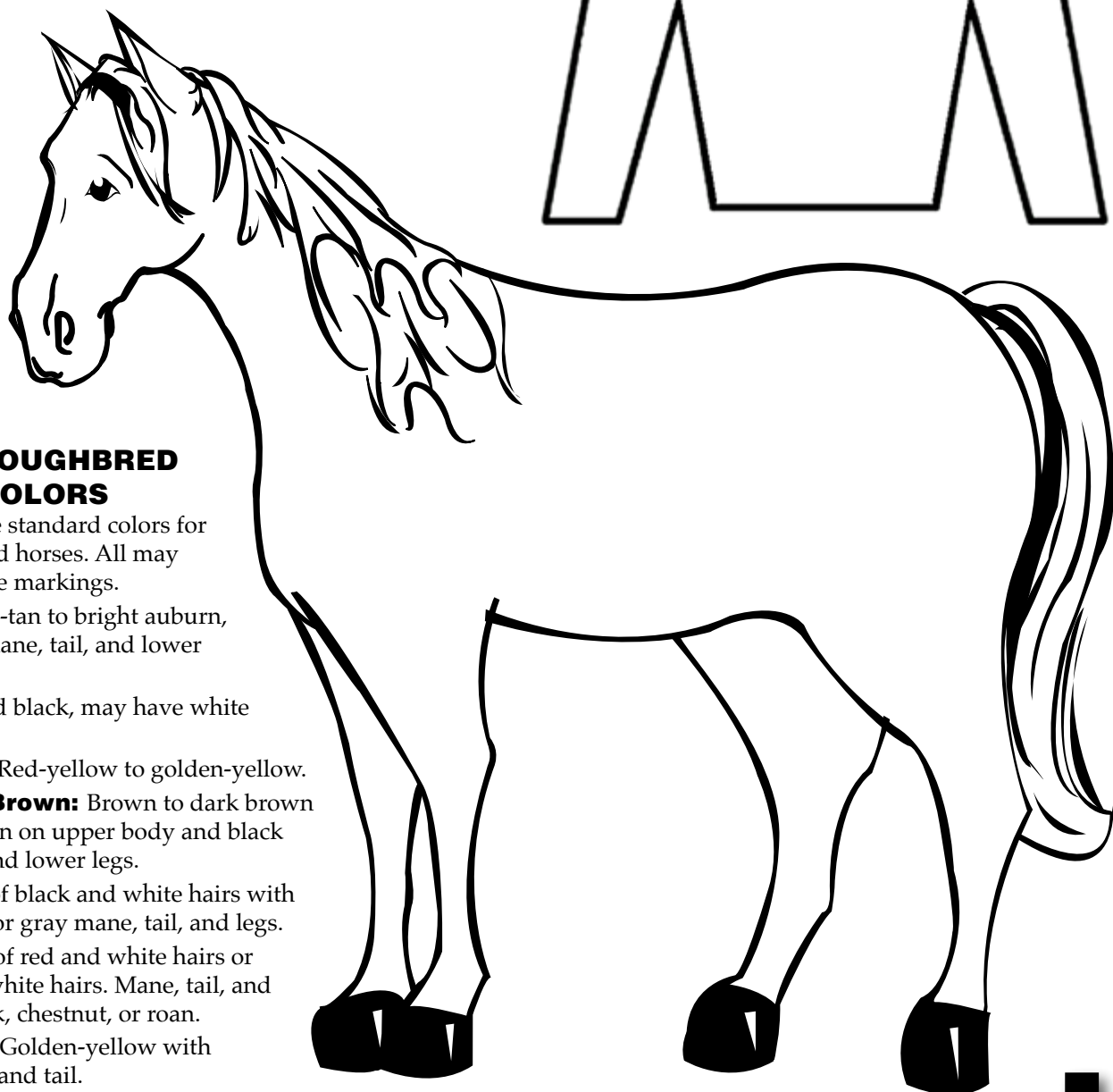
Dark Bay/Brown: Brown to dark brown with some tan on upper body and black mane, tail, and lower legs.

Gray: Mix of black and white hairs with either black or gray mane, tail, and legs.

Roan: Mix of red and white hairs or brown and white hairs. Mane, tail, and legs are black, chestnut, or roan.

Palomino: Golden-yellow with flaxen mane and tail.

White: Solid white.



Triple Crown Winners' Racing Silks



SIR BARTON
1919



GALLANT FOX
1930



OMAHA
1935



WAR ADMIRAL
1937



WHIRLAWAY
1941



COUNT FLEET
1943



ASSAULT
1946



CITATION
1948



SECRETARIAT
1973



SEATTLE SLEW
1977



AFFIRMED
1978



AMERICAN
PHAROAH
2015

Illustration courtesy of Belmont Stakes.

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T E X A S A L M A N A C P O S T E R

All About Assault

NAME: Assault was named by Robert Kleberg's wife, Helen; a name that possibly reflected the nation's mood of war and patriotism in the mid-1940s. In those days, there also was a penchant for one-word names.

NICKNAMES: "The Club-Footed Comet," "The Horse with Three Legs and a Heart," "Texas Flier," and "Texas Terror."

RACE EARNINGS:
\$675,470.

RACE RECORD: 42 starts, 18 wins, 6 seconds, 7 thirds.



RANKING: No. 33 out of the top 100 U.S. racehorses of the 20th century, as ranked by *Blood-Horse* magazine.

SILKS: King Ranch racing silks are brown and white with the Running W.

SIZE: 15.1–15.2 hands and around 1,000 pounds or less.

Assault with Eddie Arcaro up. Keeneland-Morgan photo.

P E D I G R E E

BOLD VENTURE chestnut 1933	ST. GERMANS bay 1921	SWYNFORD brown, 1907	JOHN O'GAUNT bay, 1901
		HAMOAZE bay, 1911	CANTERBURY PILGRIM chestnut, 1893
	POSSIBLE chestnut 1920	ULTIMUS chestnut, 1906	TORPOINT bay, 1900
			MAID OF THE MIST bay, 1906
		LIDA FLUSH chestnut, 1910	COMMANDO black/brown, 1898
			RUNNING STREAM chestnut, 1898
IGUAL chestnut 1937	EQUIPOISE chestnut 1928	PENNANT chestnut, 1911	ROYAL FLUSH III chestnut, 1893
			LIDA H chestnut, 1888
		SWINGING chestnut, 1922	PETER PAN bay, 1904
			ROYAL ROSE bay, 1894
	INCANDESCENT bay 1931	CHICLE bay, 1913	BROOMSTICK bay, 1901
			BALANCOIRE II bay, 1911
		MASDA chestnut, 1915	SPEARMINT bay, 1903
			LADY HAMBURG II brown, 1908
			FAIR PLAY chestnut 1905
			MAHUBAH bay, 1910