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THE INSPIRATIONAL TRUE STORY OF MICHELLE PAYNE



RIDE
LIKE A
GIRL
NEVER GIVE UP

<http://www.metromagazine.com.au>

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© ATOM 2019 ISBN: 978-1-76061-312-9



AUSTRALIAN TEACHERS OF MEDIA

A STUDY GUIDE BY
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As a little girl, Michelle Payne (Teresa Palmer) dreams of the impossible: winning the Melbourne Cup – horse racing’s toughest two-mile race. The youngest of ten children, Michelle is raised by single father Paddy (Sam Neill).

She leaves school at 15 to become a jockey and after early failures she finds her feet, but a family tragedy, followed by her own near fatal horse fall all but ends the dream. But with the love of her dad and her brother Stevie, Michelle will not give up. Against all the medical advice, and the protests of her siblings, she rides on and meets the Prince of Penzance. Together they overcome impossible odds for a shot at the dream: a ride in the 2015 Melbourne Cup, at odds of 100 to 1.

The rest is history.

Ride Like A Girl (2019)
directed by Rachel Griffiths
is the incredible true story of
Michelle Payne.

Visit the *Ride Like A Girl* official
website for more information:
<https://www.transmissionfilms.com.au/films/ride-like-a-girl>



Run time:
98 minutes

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» CURRICULUM LINKS

Ride Like a Girl is a real-world story of triumph and empowerment. The film provides a portrait of Michelle Payne and her ambitions as a jockey. The story told by the documentary is inspirational given Michelle's commitment to her goals, no matter what the obstacles.

As a curriculum resource, the film expands and enriches students' understanding of human experiences. Students can discuss how individuals with commitment and vision such as Michelle can make a difference in their life, in their chosen field and in the lives of others. *Ride Like a Girl* also offers students the opportunity to develop a knowledge and understanding of the challenges of embracing sport as a participant.

In particular, the film endorses gender equality and the need for level playing fields, and encourages conversations about gender roles and stereotypes. Michelle's story offers students the opportunity to develop a knowledge and understanding of how societal expectations may limit the situation of girls and women and the importance of gender empowerment.

This study guide to accompany *Ride Like a Girl* has been written for primary students in Years 5 – 6 and secondary students in Years 7 – 10. It provides information and suggestion for learning activities in English, Health and Physical Education and Media Arts.

Teachers are advised to consult the Australian curriculum online at <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/> and curriculum outlines relevant to their state or territory.

Activities in this study guide provide opportunities for English and Media Arts students to make a close reading of *Ride Like a Girl* from a film as text perspective. In doing so, students will:

- describe the structure, content and aesthetic qualities of *Ride Like a Girl*;
- engage in detailed analysis of *Ride Like a*

Girl;

- analyse the representation of ideas and attitudes in *Ride Like a Girl* to consider how the text represents the world and human experience;
- develop and justify their own interpretations of *Ride Like a Girl*;
- create a wide range of texts, make presentations and contribute actively to class and small group discussions.

Teachers may need to adapt some of the language used in the study guide to match the literacy levels of their students.

Ride Like a Girl can also be used to support the teaching of Pastoral Care programs at Years 5 – 10.

The empowering nature of the story told by *Ride Like a Girl* makes it a relevant resource for student welfare programs. It is important for students to be provided with strategies to support their learning about themselves and others. In this context, the film provides opportunities for students to:

- manage their emotions and behaviour;
- persevere in overcoming obstacles;
- set personal and academic goals;
- develop self-discipline, resilience, adaptability and initiative.

The study guide activities promote student engagement and active participation via individual reflection, class discussions, and small group and team work. The activities do not have to be undertaken in the sequence in which they appear in the guide and it is unnecessary for students to complete all the activities to appreciate the film. Multiple activities are provided to allow teachers to select those which will best suit the demands of the subject and the needs of the students.

Teachers should preview *Ride Like a Girl* before using the film as a curriculum resource.



» MICHELLE PAYNE

Michelle Payne is a sportswoman whose remarkable story has raised Australia's spirits.

The first ever female jockey to win the Melbourne Cup, she made 'the race that stops a nation' a race that inspired one. Her graciousness in the face of untold triumph and tragedy is now a beacon for many people.

The youngest daughter of the ten children of Paddy and Mary Payne, Michelle grew up on a farm at Miners Rest, a locality near Ballarat in central Victoria. Mary died in a motor vehicle accident when Michelle was only six months old, leaving Paddy to raise the children as a single father. From when she was five-years-old she was determined to win the Cup and never wavered from that goal. She and Stevie watched the movie *Phar Lap* more than 300 times, planning their win.

Michelle entered racing aged 15, the eighth of the Payne children to do so.

In March 2004, Michelle fell heavily at a race in Sandown

Racecourse in Melbourne, fracturing her skull and bruising her brain. Against her family's advice, she was determined to continue and she gradually rebuilt her career, starting to win some major races. She met the Prince of Penzance and genuinely believed that it was a great horse and could win a Cup. She navigated the Prince through numerous important wins, including the Toorak Handicap and the Moonee Valley Cup, which was a qualifier for the entry into the Cup.

On the first Tuesday in November 2015, Michelle Payne rode Prince of Penzance, at odds of 100 to 1, to win the 2015 Melbourne Cup, becoming the first woman jockey to win Australia's most prestigious horse race.

Michelle won the Don Award 2016 for Most Inspirational Australian Athlete from the Sport Australia Hall of Fame. Most recently, in 2017 she received the Longines Ladies Awards, celebrating women who have consistently achieved at the highest level within the equestrian world.

Michelle will be written into our history books as that rare kind of icon – one who lives with gratitude and humility.

» INITIAL IMPRESSIONS

Teachers may choose to begin an analysis of *Ride Like a Girl* by discussing students' answers to the following prompts.

- Did you enjoy *Ride Like a Girl*? Was it what you expected? Did the film surprise you in any way? What questions do you have about *Ride Like a Girl*? Would you recommend *Ride Like a Girl* to others?
- What moments of *Ride Like a Girl* did you find inspiring? What do you admire about Michelle Payne? Why is it important to tell the stories of people like Michelle Payne? Do you think *Ride Like a Girl* will inspire girls and women to participate in sport?
- Use the thinking strategy 'Think, Pair, Share' to establish the central concerns of *Ride Like a Girl*.
- The meaning of the film's title is another starting point for an analysis of *Ride Like a Girl*. Ask students to make connections between the title and the story told by the film.

» VIEWING CHART

Michelle Payne is the protagonist of *Ride Like a Girl*. Use the viewing chart to make notes about the film's portrayal of Michelle.

Michelle Payne

Commitment

Obstacles

Achievements

What to do:

MICHELLE PAYNE: Identify moments in the film that portray Michelle's personal characteristics.

COMMITMENT: Identify moments in the film that portray Michelle's commitment to her priorities.

OBSTACLES: Identify moments in the film that portray the obstacles and setbacks that Michelle experiences.

ACHIEVEMENTS: Identify moments in the film that portray Michelle's achievements.

» ANALYSING KEY SCENES

Working as a class, make a list of key scenes.

Working in a small group, compile a detailed analysis of the use of story and production elements in one of the film's key scenes.

Story elements

- the opening, development and resolution of the narrative
- cause and effect
- establishment and development of and relationships between characters
- point/s of view from which the narrative is presented
- the function of setting in the narrative
- the relationship between multiple storylines
- the structuring of time and its impact on narrative progression

Production elements

- camera techniques, technologies and qualities for film
- lighting
- mise-en-scene
- acting
- sound
- editing of vision and sound

Use PowerPoint or Google Slides to present your scene analysis to the class. Limit your presentation to five slides. Your presentation should use words and images. You may incorporate audio and video clips.

» ANALYSING CHARACTERS

Make a list of the main and minor characters of *Ride Like a Girl*.

Write a detailed profile for each of the main characters. Your profiles should offer a description of each character's:

- Appearance
- Personality
- Motivations, fears and desires
- Role/Function in the narrative
- Relationship to other characters

Draw a mind map that shows Michelle's relationships with the other characters. Begin your mind map by placing Michelle's name in a circle in the middle of your page. Then use arrows and words to explain Michelle's relationships with the other characters.



» CLOSE ANALYSIS

A true story

Michelle Payne was just six months old when her mother Mary died in a car accident, leaving her father Paddy a single father to ten children. *Ride Like a Girl* uses archive photographs and film to introduce the Payne family.

- The key idea explored in this sequence is the importance of family. Drawing on the archive family photographs and film, write a description of the Payne family.
- How do the archive family photographs and film introduce Michelle Payne to the audience?
- 'Stevie and I were the little kids, so we'd always get left out, most of the time but we still had a lot of fun.' – Michelle

Ride Like a Girl portrays the bond between Michelle and her brother Stevie. What do we learn about their bond in this sequence of the film? As you watch *Ride Like a Girl* make notes about the siblings' relationship. Use these notes to write an analysis of this relationship.

- The Payne family is one of Australia's best-known racing families. Paddy Payne has spent his life training horses and eight of the ten Payne children became jockeys. Your task is to research the racing career of a member of the Payne family. Present your findings as a profile that would appear in a publication about horse racing.

‘I just wanna win the Melbourne Cup’

Prince of Penzance moves into place in the starting barrier. Michelle reaches inside her jockey silks and then pulls out a wedding ring on a chain. As she holds it tightly, she asks her mum and sister Brigid to stay with her. She tucks the wedding ring back inside her silks, pulls her goggles over her eyes, reassures Prince of Penzance and smiles to herself.

- Why do you think the director Rachel Griffiths decided to begin the film with Michelle about to ride Prince of Penzance in the 2015 Melbourne Cup?
- A symbol is a thing that represents or stands for something else beyond it. The thing is often a material object that is used to represent an idea. Mary Payne’s

wedding ring carries a symbolic meaning. What other symbols can be added to this list? As you watch *Ride Like a Girl*, make a list of the different symbols that are used to tell the story, portray characters and establish the key ideas and issues of the film.



‘If we truly believe, then miracles can happen.’

The Payne family tumble into the old ambulance that has been converted into the family vehicle and head to church. They arrive late. Having taken their place in a pew, some members of the family settle into listening to Father Keane’s sermon, while others remain distracted.

- How does this sequence portray the Payne family?
- ‘We pray that through faith we will survive all trials. Prayer is our path to hope. If we truly believe, then miracles can happen like a longshot at Race 6 at Randwick getting up and paying at 40 to 1 as it did last Saturday. God be praised!’ – Father Keane

The Payne family’s Catholic faith is depicted in this sequence. As you watch *Ride Like a Girl*, make notes about the way the family’s Catholic faith is portrayed. How does the director Rachel Griffiths show faith to be an important part of the life of the Payne family? What connections do you think Griffiths wants the audience to make between faith and adversity?



Christmas

It is Christmas Day. While lunch is being prepared, the Payne children are staging mock horse races on a mown circle between the house and stables. Cathy is calling the race using a megaphone, while Stevie and Michelle and Andrew and Patrick re-enact a race between Canny Boy and Let's Elope. Bernadette is watching the race through binoculars.

- 'Let's Elope has spotted the gap and is making a break from Canny Boy who doesn't seem to be able to handle the weight.' – Cathy
Explain the significance of the pretend horse race.
- Aside from being funny, what does the shot of Wilbur eating Therese's salad suggest about life in the Payne household?
- How does the depiction of Christmas lunch add to the audience's understanding of the Payne family? Are your family's celebrations just as chaotic?

Paddy has barely finished saying grace when Brigid starts complaining about the discrimination that she is experiencing as a female jockey. The gender imbalance in the racing industry, particularly the inequities experienced by female jockeys is explored in *Ride Like a Girl* through the portrayal of Michelle and her sisters' careers.

- 'Four wins I've had for Ginger Hern. The moment Sapphire Rose gets Group 2, I'm off, for a bloke.' – Brigid
Why does Brigid want her father to speak to Ginger? Why won't he agree to her request? Why is Patrick told that eating the potatoes isn't worth the risk? Explain the significance of Therese's claim, 'Work twice as hard

and get half the rides,' and Michelle's claim that Brigid is a better jockey than Patrick.

While their older siblings bicker and their father listens to the radio, Stevie and Michelle sit under the dining table eating pudding and watching *Phar Lap* on the television.

- *Phar Lap* (1983), an Australian feature film directed by Simon Wincer, is the true story of the legendary Australian racehorse Phar Lap and his strapper Tommy Woodcock.
Use the Internet to research the film and its popularity with Australian audiences at the time of its release. Share your findings with the class.
If you have time, watch *Phar Lap*. What does the film have in common with *Ride Like a Girl*?

When Michelle gets the blame for taking the pudding and is then told it is her turn to wash the dishes, she storms out of the house. When Paddy spies her heading down the path dragging a shovel, he asks her where she is going.

- How does Paddy respond to Michelle's reply 'I'm going to dig up Mum'? What does this scene tell the audience about Michelle and Paddy's relationship?
- The Payne family property is a key setting of the film. As you watch *Ride Like a Girl* make notes about the property, including the house and stables. Use these notes to write an analysis of the significance of this setting.

'Can't anyone sleep in in this house?'

Unwilling to put up with Stevie's snoring, Michelle gets a good night's sleep in the stables. Paddy discovers her the next morning, enjoying a sleep in. Cathy is not so lucky. Stevie is already up and not only watching *Phar Lap* but re-enacting the drama. Margaret is loudly calling out the race scratchings as she records them on the kitchen whiteboard. Therese, Bernadette and Brigid are arguing about the ownership of a crop. Andrew sits in the 'sick chair' with a swollen ankle that he has no one else to blame for but himself.

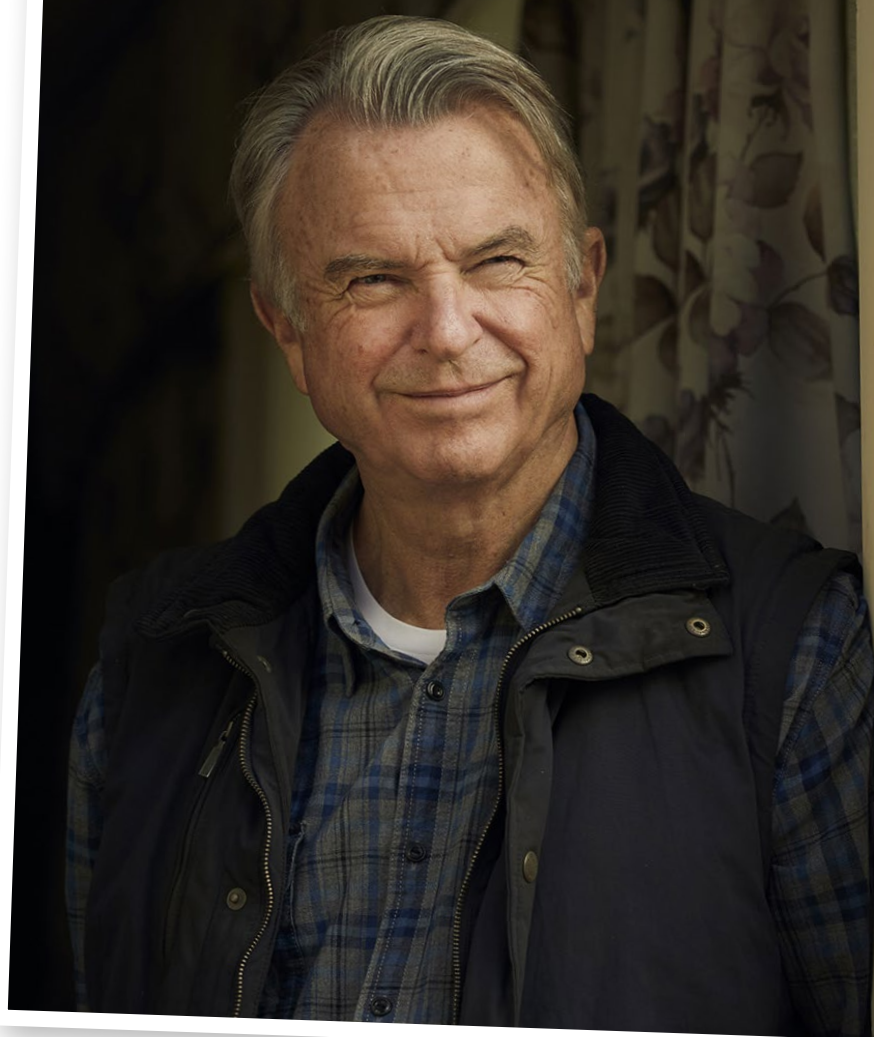
- What does this scene suggest about the way horse racing shapes Payne family life?

‘It’s history at Ballarat today.’

In this sequence set at Ballarat Turf Club, the track announcer acknowledges the significance of Race 4, given five of the Payne siblings have mounts in the race. Michelle watches the race through binoculars, providing a running commentary. Brigid places first, Patrick second and Therese third. Andrew comes in last.

Watch a news report about the actual race online at < <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TuGHPW3sUgs>>.

- Stevie: Andrew come last.
Paddy: Well, I hope J. Pender was watching. A few more races like that and Patrick will get a run at the Melbourne Cup.
Michelle: But Brigid won.
Stevie: Girls don’t ride the Melbourne Cup.
What comment does this conversation make about gender stereotypes in the horse racing industry during the time period depicted in the film?



‘Make your own choice’

In a scene, set ten years later, Michelle, now a Year 9 student at Loreto College is being dropped at school. Paddy and Stevie are about to leave when Sister Dominique runs in front of the wagon. Sister Dominique is worried about how often Michelle is asking to be excused from class to go to the toilet. Paddy is not perturbed by Sister Dominique’s suggestion that Michelle may have an eating disorder. Having raised a family of jockeys, in his opinion Michelle’s appetite is nothing to be worried about.

In the scene that follows, Sister Dominique determined to

find out what Michelle is up to, opens the door of a toilet cubicle to discover Michelle listening to a race call.

- Sister Dominique: Five Payne girls I’ve lost, and all for what? So they could sit on the back of a quadruped for five dollars an hour?
Michelle: Six seventy-five.
Sister Dominique: That’s it. you don’t have to follow your sisters. Commit to your education. Make your own choice.
How does this exchange foreshadow what Michelle’s choice will be? How does the scene that follows confirm Michelle’s choice?

‘The only thing that matters is the odds you give yourself.’

On the eve of his start in the 1991 Melbourne Cup, Paddy gives a nervous Patrick some advice, telling his son, ‘The only thing that matters is the odds you give yourself.’ Unobserved by her father and brother, Michelle listens to their conversation.

- What does Paddy mean when he tells Patrick, ‘The only thing that matters is the odds you give yourself’? Do you agree with Paddy’s advice? Why or why not?
- ‘I’ve got my money on you.’ – Michelle
Explain the significance of Michelle’s show of support. How do you show support for your family and your friends in similar situations?

In the scene that follows, Michelle’s class assemble in a classroom to watch the running of the Melbourne Cup and cheer on Patrick and Sunshine Sally.

- Write a detailed analysis of this sequence. How does Griffiths convey the excitement of the occasion, the suspense of the race and the disappointment that follows Patrick’s loss? In your analysis, comment on Paddy’s understanding of the race and how it should be run. Explain the significance of his observation – ‘Anyway, if you can go from first to last, no reason you can’t go from last to first.’

'Always walk the track'

Michelle's training as a jockey begins in earnest. Paddy educates his daughter about the importance of walking the track and knowing how to read the turf. Michelle listens attentively as her father explains, 'A horse gallops with his lungs, he perseveres with his heart, and he wins with his character. it's not just about speed, it's about patience.' Later, father and daughter sit in the grandstand, where Paddy's lessons continue.

- 'You're all bunched in, you can't breathe. You think it's all done and then the horses all start fatiguing at different times and suddenly, a gap opens. And that's God talking to you and you'd better listen to God because he will close that gap quicker than you can say your mother's name.' – Paddy
'If you don't take the gap, they'll say you're a coward because you're a girl.' – Therese
'It's all about strength.' – Patrick
'You've gotta keep enough petrol in the tank for the last hundred.' – Andrew
'Okay, you don't rely on the whip. You push up the neck with the heel of your hands.' – Cathy
'And if you take the gap and lose, they'll say you're reckless and lacking in technique because you're a girl.' – Therese
What do these scenes depicting Michelle's apprenticeship suggest about the role that Paddy and Michelle's siblings play in her training to be a jockey?
How willing are you to listen to the advice of your family and friends when you are learning a new skill?

'Michelle come last, Dad.'

Michelle arrives at a country race track for her first start.

- How does the director Rachel Griffiths expose that horse racing is a man's world?
- Write an analysis of the montage of short scenes depicting Michelle's first few starts. Your analysis should comment on the acting of Sam Neill and Stevie Payne in these scenes.

In a scene set in the wagon on the way home from yet another disappointing start, Michelle shares her frustration:

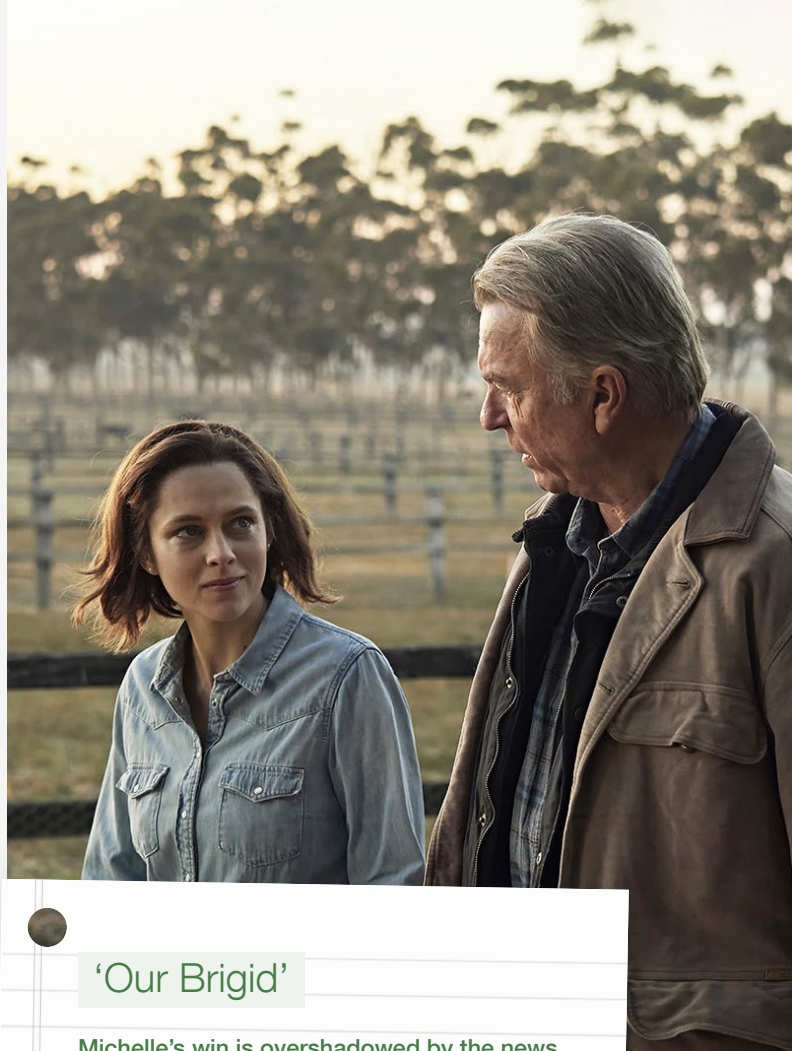
Michelle: I saw the gap.

Stevie: How come you didn't take it?

Michelle: I couldn't. The gap was moving faster than my horse.

Paddy suggests that it might be best for Michelle to give up and to go back to school.

- Does Paddy actually believe that Michelle doesn't 'have it in [her]'? How does Michelle prove Paddy wrong in her next start at Ballarat Turf Club?



'Our Brigid'

Michelle's win is overshadowed by the news of Brigid's fall during trackwork. At Brigid's funeral, Paddy's eulogy acknowledges his daughter's achievements.

- 'Beloved daughter, sister, and jockey. She was just the second woman in the state to ride professionally. She didn't just break down barriers, she knocked them right over.' Explain the significance of Paddy's eulogy. Use the Internet to research Brigid Payne's career. What did Brigid achieve during her career? How did her achievements benefit her sisters and other female jockeys?

'Patience little girl'

In a sequence set two years later, Michelle tells Paddy that she wants to ride with Ginger Hern. Paddy tells Michelle that she has a year of her apprenticeship to serve and is not ready to ride for other trainers. Michelle is adamant that she is ready and cites the example of her siblings riding for other trainers to strengthen her case.

- 'I'm lucky if I get a ride a month. You've only got Chattanooga and Percival's Pride left, Dad. How am I supposed to get race fit when you've only got two horses?' – Michelle
Explain Paddy's refusal to agree to Michelle's request. How does Michelle respond? From your perspective, is her response justified?

‘Hi, I’m Michelle Payne.’

Jockeys move about on horses in the predawn light at Caulfield Racecourse. Michelle looks around and smiles as jockeys on horses move past her. She makes her way to the tower, where a group of trainers are watching the track work.

- ‘Hi, I’m Michelle Payne. Ah, I’m a jockey. I’m available for track work. I’ll just be outside if anyone needs me. What does this scene suggest about Michelle’s courage? How does the director depict the trainers? How do the scenes that follow depict Michelle’s determination and resilience? What comment does this scene and the scenes that follow make about gender discrimination in the horse racing industry, particularly the significant bias against female jockeys? Michelle and Paddy still aren’t talking. Having learned from Cathy that Michelle is struggling, Paddy appeals to Joan to become Michelle’s manager, despite her lack of experience at managing anyone’s career.
- Why does Paddy want Joan to look out for Michelle?

Cathy shows Michelle her engagement ring and tells her that she is retiring now that she is marrying fellow jockey Kerrin McEvoy.

- What reasons does Cathy give to Michelle to explain her decision to retire? What does Michelle’s response suggest about her view of Cathy’s decision?

‘Off and racing’

Michelle convinces Wombat that Bairdy wants her to take one of his horses around the track again. Her daring behaviour pays a dividend. Instead of Joan calling the trainers, the trainers start calling Joan.

- What do Joan’s phone conversations suggest about the way the trainers view Michelle? What does the dialogue of the trainers watching Michelle ride trackwork reveal about the way they view Michelle?
- How does the director convey Michelle’s excitement to be ‘off and racing’?



A Group 1

Michelle and Joan are shopping for Cathy’s wedding. Michelle is complaining about not being offered a Group 1 start when Joan’s mobile phone rings. Peter Summers wants Michelle to ride Krasky at Moonee Valley.

- What happens when Michelle calls home to tell Paddy her good news?

On race day, Michelle learns that it is not Paddy but Cathy who has brought Stevie to Moonee Valley to watch the race. Paddy, who has stayed at home, listens to the call of

the race on the radio and she watches the race on TV.

- Explain the significance of Michelle walking the track. How does Griffiths convey that Paddy is still invested in Michelle’s career?
- What does the footage of the race and Michelle’s interactions with Damien Oliver during and after the race suggest about the discrimination that Michelle had to contend with as she endeavoured to do her job? How does Griffiths portray Michelle’s strengths in this sequence?



Three kilos? No way.

Rusty wants Michelle to ride Vladivostok in a Group 1 race at Sandown Racecourse. Michelle will need to weigh in at 50 kilograms. Despite Joan's protests that Michelle cannot lose three kilograms in time for the race, Michelle takes the ride.

- What is handicapping? Why does a jockey have to be weighed before a race? Why do jockeys have to be weighed after a race? Why do trainers prefer a jockey to be as close to the allocated weight as possible? What happens if a jockey weighs in heavy or light after a race?
Recommended link: <https://www.racingvictoria.com.au/the-sport/racing/handicapping>
- How does the director portray Michelle's weight loss regime? What comment does this scene make about the pressures that Michelle faces in pursuing her career? Why does she put her health and wellbeing at risk?

Cathy and Kerrin are married. The Payne family celebrate but despite the joy of the occasion, and the added good news of Stevie being offered a job as a strapper with Darren Weir, Paddy refuses to acknowledge Michelle.

- Michelle: I finally have a chance to ride a good horse. I've spent a year riding all the hacks. Group 1s always get pulled off for the blokes.
Andrew: No, no, no. Every apprentice gets pulled off rides, Stinky. I was pulled off, what ten times?
Michelle: Try a hundred!
Andrew: He'll come round, Shell.
Michelle: No, he won't. He's stubborn and selfish. He only thinks about himself.
Andrew: Right, so you must take after mum, then?

Michelle: He only wanted me to stick around to help him run this place.

Andrew: You really think that's why? Maybe he didn't want to lose another one of his girls.

Explain the significance of the conversation. Does Andrew understand the opposition that Michelle faces as a female jockey? Why does Michelle think Paddy disapproves of her choices? Why does Andrew think Paddy disapproves of Michelle's choices?

'Dad, Dad! She had a fall!'

Having made correct weight, Michelle rides Vladivostok to a win. She makes it past the finish post, only for the horse to have a heavy fall. Michelle tumbles from the saddle and lands heavily on the track. Paddy and Stevie watch the accident unfold on the television.

- What is the meaning of the term correct weight? Describe Michelle's reaction when she learns that she has made correct weight.
- Write a detailed analysis of the way that Griffiths uses production elements to portray the drama of the race and the fall.

The action shifts to a hospital corridor, where the Payne family gather and wait for news. Dr Aziz cannot make any promises given the extent of Michelle's injuries.

- Paddy: I was selfish, I know that. but I was right. If only I hadn't let her go.
Father Keane: Stop kicking yourself, Paddy. You've done a grand job under impossible circumstances. Why does Paddy kick the bin? What does Paddy's conversation with Father Keane reveal about his regrets?
Explain the significance of Paddy winding the jewellery chain around Michelle's hand; Stevie brushing Michelle's hair and Andrew's reading *Best Bets* to Michelle as she lies in her hospital bed.

Michelle begins occupational therapy. When she struggles to spell her own name and can't quite answer the therapist's question about how many fingers she is holding up, Paddy intervenes.

- Paddy: Who won the 1983 Melbourne Cup?
Michelle: Kiwi.
Paddy: Jockey?
Michelle: Jimmy 'Pumper' Cassidy.
Paddy: 1930?
Michelle: Phar Lap.
Paddy: Colours?
Michelle: Crimson, black white sleeves.
Paddy: See, you've got to ask some questions that she might at least be interested in.
How does this scene signal Paddy and Michelle's reconciliation?

When can I ride again?

Michelle returns home to live with Paddy and Stevie as she continues to recover from the fall.

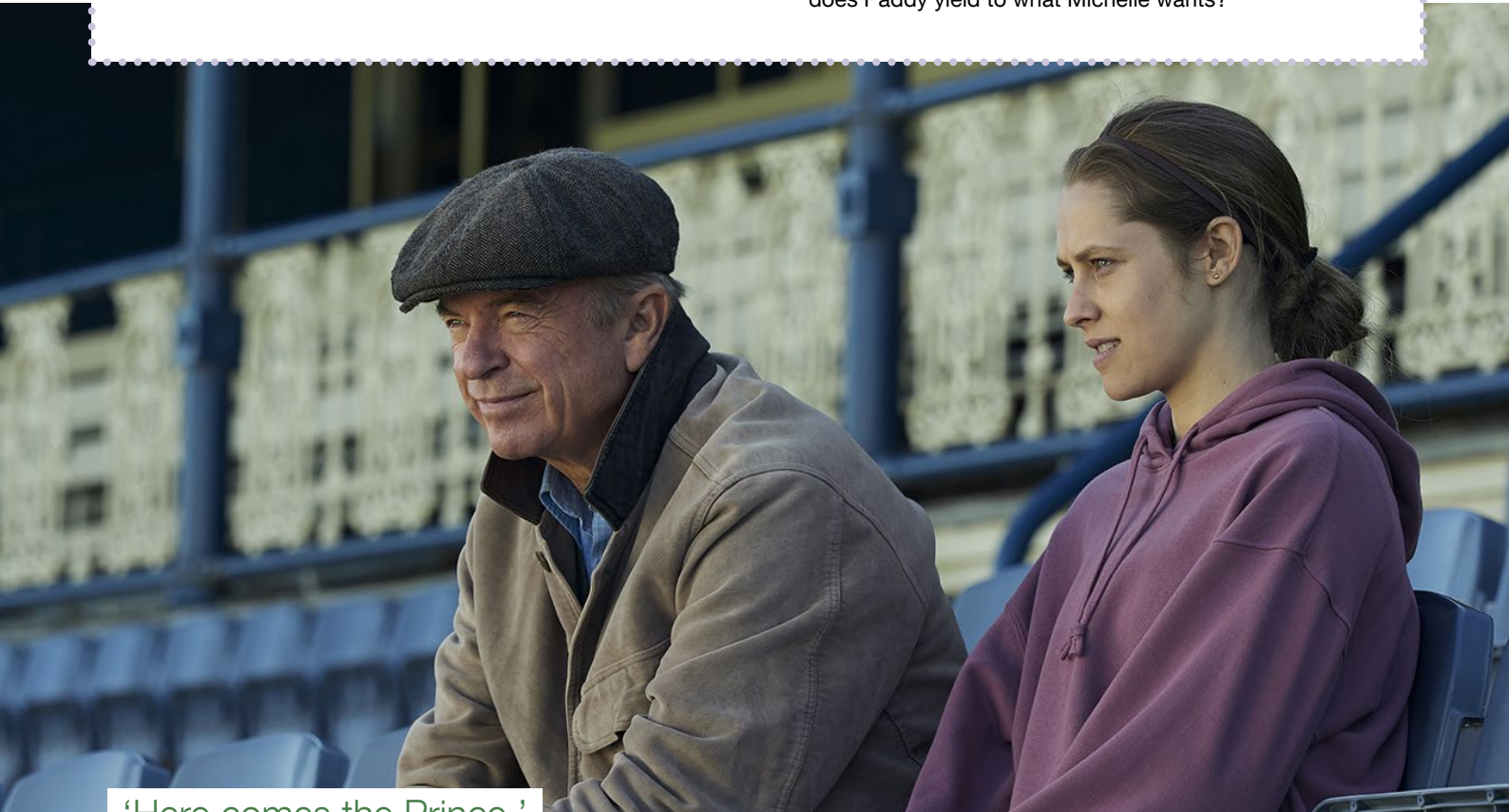
- What does the scene depicting Michelle's attempt to make a cup of tea suggest about the extent of her injuries? What does this scene suggest about Michelle's determination?

In a scene that follows, Dr Aziz commends Michelle on the progress she is making but cautions her that another injury to the head could be fatal.

- When Michelle asks Dr Aziz, 'When can I ride again?', he laughs. Why does Dr Aziz think Michelle is joking?
- Explain the significance of Michelle's decision to climb onto Wilbur.

The Payne family gather to discuss Michelle's return to racing. Cathy tells Michelle that she is out of her mind. Her advice is to 'Get married. Go travelling. Have kids.' Joan is just as hesitant to see Michelle start riding again – 'There's a reason they call it the most dangerous sport on earth.' For Joan, the thought that she may book a ride for Michelle that ends in an accident is more than she can bear. Maree questions Michelle about the worst-case scenarios, 'Who's going to look after you if you're permanently brain-damaged? Paralysed? Dad can't.'

- 'So, what do you want me to do? Go back to being the youngest of ten, doing as I'm told by everybody else?' – Michelle
Who wants Michelle to stop racing and why? Why is Michelle adamant that she will return to racing? Why does Paddy yield to what Michelle wants?



'Here comes the Prince.'

- 3200 rides
361 wins
7 falls
16 broken bones later
Why do you think the director Rachel Griffiths included this set of statistics before the telling of the Prince of Penzance chapter of Michelle's story?

Michelle has just dropped Stevie at Darren Weir's stables. As she is leaving, she notices Prince of Penzance and can't resist Darren's invitation to take him down to the beach.

- 'His name is Prince of Penzance. He's had more medical issues than you.' – Darren

'I will do whatever it takes. I will drive every day to Warrnambool. I have to ride that horse.' – Michelle
Why does Michelle insist that she must ride Prince of Penzance? How does Darren Weir respond to her insistence? How does Griffiths use the scenes set at the stables and on the nearby beach to establish the connection between horse and rider? How do the footage and the calling of the races that follow confirm the connection between Michelle and Prince of Penzance?

- Owner #1: You managed him beautifully in the final four hundred, Shell.
Owner #2: He sure runs well for you.
Explain the significance of the owners' praise in terms of what happens next?



Suspended for twenty meets

'We're now looking at the Moonee Valley Cup, a qualifying race for the Melbourne Cup and opinion is the favourite Prince of Penzance, Michelle Payne. Four runs back from a spell. He's had his issues with injuries but he might be a chance here. This distance looks ideal for him.' – Race caller

- Write a detailed analysis of the use of archive and dramatised footage to depict the race.

Prince of Penzance draws away from the pack and wins the race. Moments later, a protest is lodged.

- Define the following terms: protest; steward; suspension, meet; tribunal; and upheld.
- 'Don't antagonise them. We need this win if he's going to get a run in the Melbourne Cup. Just keep your cool.' – Darren

Why is there a protest? Does Michelle keep her cool? What do the owners see when they watch the footage of the ride? Why do the stewards suspend Michelle for twenty meets? Why does Michelle think that their decision is unfair? Why does Michelle protest about Darren's decision to let Prince of Penzance be ridden by another jockey? How does Darren regard Michelle's protest?

'I am not dead yet.'

Paddy is rushed to hospital. He has had a heart attack but is in a stable condition. Later that night, Michelle and Stevie lie awake in the bunk beds they have slept in since they were children.

- Stevie: Michelle?
Michelle: Yeah?
Stevie: What will happen if dad goes away?
What will happen to me then?
What does this scene reveal about the way that loss and grief have shaped the lives of Michelle and Stevie? What does this scene reveal about Michelle and Stevie's understanding of love and loyalty?

When Michelle answers the ringing phone, she is devastated when Therese breaks the news that Paddy is gone.

- 'Stewards and doctors, they know stuff all. Go fight for your prince, love.
What were you thinking and feeling as you watched Michelle sink to the ground thinking her father was dead? Were you just as surprised and relieved as Michelle when Paddy walked through the door?



'He's mine.'

Darren Weir meets with the owners of Prince of Penzance in a city restaurant to discuss what jockey will ride the horse in the Melbourne Cup. An impatient Michelle waits outside for the verdict.

- 'She was the one who qualified your horse for the Melbourne Cup, by taking risks. So why not take one on her?' – Darren
'We've put thousands into this broken horse's medical bills.' – Owner #1
'Six years old. It's a miracle he's racing.' – Owner #3
'This is our last chance to make something back.' – Owner #3
'And if he doesn't end up in the top ten that's money we'll never see again.' – Owner #1
'Face facts. No woman jockey's never even come close to winning the Melbourne Cup.' – Owner #1
'Bottom line, she's too reckless.' – Owner #2

Imagine you are one of the owners of Prince of Penzance, having listened to everyone's opinion of whether or not Michelle should ride the horse in the Melbourne Cup, offer your argument why she should or shouldn't be given the ride.

- Michelle: I've ridden him in almost every race. I get that horse and he gets me.
Owner #1: The Cup is a hard race. You need strength.
Michelle: I'll tell you what you need. You think it's all about strength. It is about so much more than that. You need to understand your horse. You need the skill to read the field and most of all you need to be patient. And if you all think differently, then ... well then, you're all a bunch of bloody idiots.
Write an analysis of Teresa Palmer's acting in this sequence. How does she portray Michelle's character strengths?

Barrier 1

Michelle, Darren and Stevie arrive at the Melbourne Cup barrier draw.

- What are barrier positions? Why are some barrier positions regarded to be better than others? What is a barrier draw?
- Why does Michelle tell Stevie, 'If you get barrier 18, just put it back!'?

Paddy watches the barrier draw on TV. He laughs along with Stevie when Stevie picks barrier 1.

- Why did Michelle want Stevie to choose barrier 1 or 2?
- Use the Internet to research Melbourne Cup barrier statistics. Based on your research, which barrier is historically regarded to be the best barrier? Which barrier is historically regarded to be the worst barrier?

'Go to sleep.'

The night before the Melbourne Cup, Michelle can't sleep.

- 'The only thing that matters is the odds you give yourself.' – Paddy (voiceover)
Explain the significance of Michelle's recollection of Paddy's words of wisdom.
- What does Stevie's text message telling Michelle to go to sleep suggest about the relationship between brother and sister?

The big race

Working in a small group, write a detailed analysis of the portrayal of the 2015 Melbourne Cup. Your analysis should reference the scenes set before, during and after the race, beginning with the scene set at 4 am when Darren and Stevie discuss Prince of Penzance's chances and ending with Michelle in the female jockeys' room after the race. How does the director Rachel Griffiths convey the theatre and the emotion of the race?

'You went a bit early'

When Michelle arrives home, she puts the replica of the Melbourne Cup trophy that she has been given as the winning jockey with all the other winning trophies.

- Why does Paddy move the trophy to sit next to the photos of Mary and Brigid?
- Paddy: You went a bit early.
Michelle: Couldn't wait.
Paddy: You never could.
Why is this conversation and the scene that follows in which Michelle and Paddy head to the bottom paddock to move Andrew's horses, an appropriate way to end the portrayal of Michelle and Paddy's relationship?



Making history

Michelle Payne was the first female to win the Melbourne Cup in its 155-year history. In the closing sequence of the film, the director Rachel Griffiths draws on archive footage to portray Michelle's triumph.

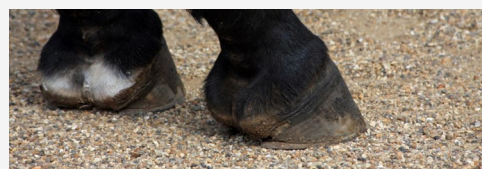
- How did Michelle Payne make history? Explain the significance of Michelle's win in the Melbourne Cup not only for her but for other girls and women.
- 'I put in all the effort I could. I galloped him every gallop he had and did everything I could to stay on him because I thought he had what it takes to run a race in the Melbourne Cup. And I just wanna say that everyone else can get stuffed because they think women aren't strong enough, but we just beat the world.
Why do you think Griffiths decided to include this footage in the closing sequence of *Ride Like a Girl*?

Since Michelle's win in the Melbourne Cup, Michelle and Stevie have bought a farm and are now training racehorses together.

- 'Our family's so blessed to have Stevie and to share that experience with him who we've been so close our whole lives. It's just funny to think two little kids that used to run around together on the main stage beating all the horses that come from around the world. It is absolutely incredible.
How does this claim, used as it is to end the film, position the audience to view the Michelle Payne story?

» MAKING *RIDE LIKE A GIRL*

- In the *Ride Like a Girl* press kit, Rachel Griffiths refers to the film as 'a kind of feminist coming-of-age sports film'. Spend time as a class discussing the significance of this label.
- Who do you think is the likely audience of *Ride Like a Girl*? Why?
- *Ride Like a Girl* draws on archive photographs and film to tell the story. Write an analysis of how this material is used in the film.
- How is the camera used to convey the drama of the races that are featured in the film?
- Did you recognise any of the soundtrack songs? Working as a class, discuss how music complements the narrative, establishes key ideas and issues, shapes an understanding of the characters, creates mood and evokes particular emotional responses.
- Why do you think *Ride Like a Girl* begins with the explanation that 'No animals were harmed in the making of this film'?
- Gender Matters is a Screen Australia initiative to address the gender imbalance within the Australian screen industry. in lead creative roles across the screen sector. *Ride Like a Girl* is part of the Brilliant Stories component of the initiative. Learn about this initiative online at <<https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/fact-finders/reports-and-key-issues/reports-and-discussion-papers/gender-matters>>. Why do you think it is important to address gender diversity in the screen industry?
- In an interview included in the *Ride Like a Girl* press kit, Griffiths recounts how having watched Michelle Payne win the Melbourne Cup she immediately started Googling her name. Five minutes later, she texted the film's producer Richard Keddie telling him 'We have to make this movie'. Given the chance whose story would you make into a film? Why?



» EXTENDED RESPONSES

The following topics can be used as the focus for text responses, class forums and debates.

- '*Ride Like a Girl* is a story of triumph over adversity.' Discuss.
- A heroine is defined as a woman admired for her courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities. Why do you think Michelle Payne can be called a heroine?
- Interviewer: What sort of jockey would you like to be?
Michelle: I just wanna win the Melbourne Cup.
'*Ride Like a Girl* endorses the importance of having an ambition in life.' Discuss.
- 'In *Ride Like a Girl*, Michelle Payne takes on a man's world and wins.' Discuss.
- '*Ride Like a Girl* endorses that you should dare to dream.' Discuss.

» REVIEWING *RIDE LIKE A GIRL*

Locate a review of *Ride Like a Girl* that has been published online. Print a copy of the review. As you read the review place a tick next to the statements with which you agree and a cross next to the statements with which you disagree. Use a question mark to indicate those statements that you find confusing or feel uncertain about. Complete a detailed analysis of one of the reviews that you have located. Your response should address the following questions:

- What is the purpose of the review?
- Who is the intended audience of the review?
- What views are expressed about *Ride Like a Girl*?
- What evidence is provided to support these views?
- What values and assumptions inform the reviewer's views?
- Do you agree with the reviewer's interpretation of *Ride Like a Girl*?

Drawing on your annotations, write a 350-word commentary that evaluates the review.

Write a review of *Ride Like a Girl*. Spend some time researching the qualities of a review before you begin. You will need to decide on the type of publication that will feature your review. Use vocabulary and adopt a tone that best suits the publication that you have chosen. Your review should offer information about the film and your evaluation of the film's worth. Your review should begin with a title. Below the title, you should provide the name of the film and a rating. Mention the key members of the production team by name. Mention the genre. You will need to name the subject of the film and provide your reader with a synopsis of what happens in the film. After the synopsis, go into detail about what you thought of the film. What did you like? Why? What didn't you like? Why? You will need to mention the actors by name. You should comment on how the filmmaker has portrayed the subject of the film. You should comment on how the filmmaker has used production elements. Download an appropriate image from the Internet to include in your review. Don't forget to devise an attention-demanding title for your review.



» PROJECTS

Project 1

Gender equity and empowerment

Gender equity is achieved when all people have full access to the rights and opportunities a society has to offer, regardless of gender.

- Does society limit you and tell you what you should or shouldn't be?
- What is inequality? What is gender inequality?
- What is empowerment? What is gender empowerment?
- How has Michelle Payne's participation in sport allowed her to achieve her potential? How can Michelle's story encourage others, particularly other girls and women, to feel empowered?

The #LIKEAGIRL social experiment started a conversation to boost confidence by changing the meaning of 'like a girl' from an insult to a total compliment. The campaign, initiated by American company Always, aims to empower girls everywhere by encouraging them to smash limitations and be unstoppable, and to use the video clips to initiate discussions about what it means to do things #LIKEAGIRL.

Recommended link: <https://always.com/en-us/about-us/our-epic-battle-like-a-girl>

- Why is the film titled *Ride Like a Girl*?
- Your task is to create a class activism campaign that uses a hashtag to address the gender inequality experienced by girls.

Project 2

A level playing field

- What is the meaning of the idiom 'a level playing field'?

Sport is a means for girls and women to achieve equality and opportunity in society. The benefits that come from participating in sport include a strong sense of identity, increased confidence, improved health, and enhanced academic success. Girls' and women's participation in sports can challenge gender stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes, creating more inclusive environments in sport and in life.

- Is sport a man's world? Are male and female athletes treated differently by society? Are female athletes subject to stereotyping? Does women's get the recognition it deserves? Is Australian sporting culture gender inclusive? Is Australian sporting culture sexist? Is it easy for Australian women athletes to pursue success? Hold a class Q & A session to discuss students' answers to these questions.

Ride Like a Girl promotes the importance of gender equality in sport. During her career, Michelle Payne has achieved excellence as a jockey. She proved to herself and the rest of the world that it is possible for women to perform as well as men in a very physically demanding sport. Her success on the racetrack, particularly her Melbourne Cup win, narrowed the gap between people's perceptions of male and female capabilities.

- Your task is to make an annotated timeline about gender equality in a selected sport. The design of your timeline should reflect the sport that you have selected. Your timeline should include text and images. If you use software to construct your timeline, you may include audio-visual content.
- Why is female participation in sport important? What may

stop girls and women participating in sport? Working as a class, list the practical, personal, biological, social and cultural factors that may be barriers to participation. Drawing on key scenes from *Ride Like a Girl*, describe how Michelle Payne has challenged and changed the way that people perceive women's participation in sport.

- To inspire means to fill someone with the urge or ability to do or feel something.

Throughout sports history, there have been many sportswomen who have inspired others. Make a list of those sportswomen who have made it possible for others to achieve their dreams.

Working as a class, make a slides presentation that honours these women and their achievements. How have these women's achievements addressed gender inequality in sport?

You will need to make decisions about the features of the presentation, including its overall design and the layout of the slides. Every student will need to contribute to the slides presentation. Appoint two editors to coordinate the project. When you have finished, ask your school librarian for permission to play the slides presentation during a

lunchtime. Working with the librarian, organise a display of fiction and non-fiction books and films about sporting achievement to coincide with the launch of the slides presentation.

- Media coverage can assist in providing a sport with a profile. The way a sport or athlete is portrayed by the media can also impact on credibility. How does the Australian media portray women's sport? Begin your search for an answer to this question by auditing the television and radio guides to determine what types of women's sports are broadcast. Spend time watching the sports reports that feature on television news bulletins. Listen to the sports reports that feature on radio news bulletins. Visit the websites of Australia's daily newspapers, and also the websites of periodicals about sport. What images of sportswomen are commonly presented to readers, viewers and listeners? How much space and time do newspapers, magazines, television and radio devote to netball? Do these reports provide a balanced coverage of men's and women's sports? What role can the media play in creating a more inclusive sporting culture?

Project 3

The Melbourne Cup

'For 150 years the Melbourne Cup has been the holy grail of horse racing, chased by royalty and business tycoons the world over. It is the toughest two-mile horse race in the world. Every jockey dreams of riding in the Cup.' – *Ride Like a Girl*

Use the Internet to research the history of the Melbourne Cup. Use the thinking strategy '5Ws and 1H' to organise your research.

Recommended links:

National Museum of Australia

<https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/melbourne-cup>

<https://www.nma.gov.au/explore/collection/highlights/1866-melbourne-cup>

<https://www.nma.gov.au/av/flemington/>

Races.com.au

<https://www.races.com.au/melbourne-cup/melbourne-cup-history/>

State Library of Victoria

<https://www.slv.vic.gov.au/search-discover/galleries/melbournes-cup>

Drawing on your research, complete the following tasks:

- Compile an infographic about the Melbourne Cup.
- Why is the Melbourne Cup known as 'the race that stops the nation'?
- Do you think the Melbourne Cup is still relevant?

SELF-EXPRESSION TASK 1

- Do life dreams come true? Imagine a line across the room. One end is 'YES' and one end is 'NO'. Stand on the part of the line that reflects your answer to this question: Be ready to share and justify your answer.
- What is your life dream? Why is this dream important to you? How are you working towards achieving this dream? What do you think you will need to succeed? Who encourages and supports your dream? What are the barriers and obstacles to achieving your dream? Do you ever feel discouraged about the possibility of achieving your dream? Write a letter to yourself about your dream n life. Use the questions to help you scaffold your response.

SELF-EXPRESSION TASK 2

Ride Like a Girl is not just Michelle's story it is the story of the Payne family. Your task is to make a very short film about your family.

Having decided whether your film is a narrative or a documentary, you will need to:

1. Write a script.
2. Draw a storyboard.
3. Compile a shot list.

Before you begin filming, make sure that you are familiar with the equipment, that the actors are well-rehearsed and that the lighting is appropriate. After filming, use online software to edit the footage. During editing, add the opening and closing credits. If you are using music in your film, make sure that you have followed copyright guidelines. When the films are finished, organise a very short film festival.

» CREDITS

Rachel Griffiths – Director | Producer

One of Australia's most prolific thespians, Rachel Griffiths makes her directorial debut with *Ride Like A Girl*. She is an Academy Award Nominated and multi-award-winning actress. After a successful career on the Australian stage, Griffiths burst onto the international scene in 1994 with P.J. Hogan's much-loved feature film *Muriel's Wedding*. Her film credits since then include *My Best Friend's Wedding* alongside Julia Roberts, *The Rookie*, *The Hard Word* with Guy Pearce, *Blow*, *Step Up*, *Burning Man*, *Ned Kelly*, *Patrick*, *Saving Mr Banks* with Tom Hanks, *Beautiful Kate*, *Hilary & Jackie* in a performance which earned her an Academy Award Nomination, and *Mammal*, which premiered at Sundance Film Festival 2016. Most recently Griffiths starred alongside Hugo Weaving in Mel Gibson's *Hacksaw Ridge* to critical acclaim.

In television, Griffiths earned a Golden Globe for her portrayal of Brenda in the critically acclaimed and long-running HBO series *Six Feet Under*. She also received an Emmy Award Nomination for her role in fellow US series *Brothers & Sisters*. Other television credits include the HBO/NBC series *Camp* and the Julian Assange biopic *Underground*, which screened at the Toronto International Film Festival, *Paper Giants: Magazine Wars* and *Deadline Gallipoli* for Foxtel alongside Sam Worthington, Hugh Dancy and Charles Dance. In 2017 she starred alongside Guy Pearce in ABC's *When We Rise*. She can most recently be seen in Subtext Picture's four-part miniseries *Dead Lucky*.

CREDITS	
Director	Rachel Griffiths
Writers	Andrew Knight, Elise McCredie
Producers	Richard Keddie, Susie Montague, Rachel Griffiths
Director of Photography	Martin McGrath ACS
Editors	Maria Papoutsis, Jill Bilcock ACE ASE
Production Designer	Carrie Kennedy
Composer	David Hirschfelder
Costume Designer	Cappi Ireland
Hair and Makeup Designer	Chiara Tripodi

CAST	
Michelle Payne	Teresa Palmer
Paddy Payne	Sam Neill
Therese	Brooke Satchwell
Brigid	Anneliese Apps
Maree	Zara Zoe
Margaret	Katie Castles
Young Stevie	Gryffin Morrison
Young Michelle	Summer North
Young Patrick	Mitch Goring
Young Bernadette	Joanna Halliday
Young Andrew	Charles Russell
Young Cathy	Lucia Schwerdt
Father Keane	Maeliosa Stafford
Joan Sadler	Genevieve Morris
Sister Mary	Anne Phelan
Stevie Payne	Himself
Cathy	Sophia Forrest
Sister Dominique	Magda Szubanski
Patrick	Aaron Glenane
Andrew	Henry Nixon
Bernadette	Veronica Thomas
Bairdy	Mick Molloy
Garry Small	Jacob Warner
Damien Oliver	Daniel Schmitt
Kerrin McEvoy	Jason Benbow
Jason Patton	Thomas Saddler
Darren Weir	Sullivan Stapleton
Rusty	Chris Reys
Brett Prebble	Ryan Maloney
Dr Aziz	Sami Shah
Maddie	Madeleine Raymond
Trevor Smart	Shane Bourne
Frankie Dettori	Bobby El-issa



This study guide was produced by ATOM.

(© ATOM 2019)

ISBN: 978-1-76061-312-9

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