



KINGS LANDING

# A HISTORY LESSON ON DRAFT HORSES



ELEMENTARY & MIDDLE SCHOOL

## OBJECTIVES

- Learn about draft horses and the role they played on a farm and in logging camps
- Learn about the evolution of farming technology and how this impacted draft horses
- Learn about R. H. Nicholson and how horses are represented in his art
- Examine and respond to works of art
- Discuss subject matter depicted in works of art
- Use an art media to draw, paint or colour

## GRADE LEVEL(S)

- This lesson is intended for Elementary aged-children, but creative students of all ages may enjoy the activity.
- This is dependent on your student as some children have very fine motor skills at a young age and others have a natural interest in art and history. Please fully read this lesson and adapt it to the child's level.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- Art supplies to either paint, draw and/or colour; i.e. paper, paint, brushes, pencil, eraser
- A pet (if you do not have a pet, you can borrow one from a friend or use the internet)

## OPTIONAL MATERIALS

- Camera

## LESSON

We usually think about horses as pets, but before cars, people used horses to get around. Before tractors, horses were used to plow farm fields for crops. Horses did a lot of important jobs. Today, we are going to learn about “draft horses.” These are the big horses. Just over 100 years ago, draft horses were used on farms, in mines, for logging and for construction. They even pulled the fire wagon when the alarm sounded. Today, many people keep horses as pets, but some draft horses still work side-by-side with humans.



*Canada's last fire horses, Doll and Bill, with driver Hugh O'Neill, Fredericton, 36 February 1938. Photograph courtesy of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, P2-7.*

Draft horses are also called heavy horses or workhorses. They are the largest horse breeds. The word “draft” means “the action or act of pulling something along.” That is what these horses were bred for; hard tasks like plowing fields and to pull heavy loads. A draft horse can weigh 1,600 pounds or more, are tall and muscular. They have a shorter back and strong hind legs. The shape of their body is ideal for pulling. They are strong, have a natural curiosity and willingness to learn.

They are so big and powerful that when they run, the ground shakes!



*Lumber and driving operations on Kedgwick River, man unloading logs from horse-drawn sled. Photograph courtesy of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, P2-7.*

### **HORSE POWER LOGGING**

When Canada was settled by Europeans, many families relied on jobs at logging camps during the winter months when their farms were buried under snow. They spent the winters working in the lumber camps deep in the woods cutting down trees and using workhorses and oxen. The logging camps hired farmers and their draft horses to pull the logs out of the forest. They left the logs by the river to wait for the spring log drive.

When spring arrived, they returned home to their families and to work on their farms. Over the years, newer machines were invented to make logging easier and draft horses were no longer needed. By the 1930s, machines took over logging and horse power was almost lost.

Recently, horse power logging has made a bit of a comeback. We are now aware of the damage that large, modern logging machines cause to the forests. The weight of the machines presses down on the soil making it harder and more difficult for plants to grow and animals to dig. The big machines are noisy, and they destroy wildlife habitat. Today, many small tree lot owners prefer to use horse loggers because it causes less damage and noise. Draft horses do not need specially made logging roads and they are better for the environment. They work quietly, do not burn gas and leave only hoof prints in the ground.

## HORSE POWER FARMING

It used to be that grains, fruits and vegetables were grown by sowing seeds by hand and using hand tools to harvest the crops. It was hard and slow work. New inventions for farm machines in the late 1800s made farming easier. Farmers started growing and harvesting more food. They used horse power to run machines like the harrows, steel plows, mowers, binders and combines. The newer machines helped with planting and harvesting but were heavy. Farmers needed the strongest and largest draft horses to power them.



*Horse-drawn binder (cuts wheat, oats, etc., and binds the stocks).  
Photograph courtesy of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick,  
P5-100.*

The number of draft horses in Canada began to drop after the 1930s as farmers replaced them with the newest farm machines that used gasoline. This caused many draft horse breeds to almost disappear because no one used them anymore. They were replaced by tractors and other types of gas-powered equipment everywhere except on Amish and Mennonite farms. The Amish and Mennonites have never stopped using draft horses and they still travel by horse and buggy today. Together, with horse breeders, the Amish and Mennonites have worked to save draft horse breeds from disappearing altogether.

## PERCHERONS AND BELGIANS

There are many draft horse breeds. Each are a little different, but they are all strong and patient. Popular draft horses in North America include the Percheron and Belgian. People still use these horses for pulling carriages and sleighs, as well as logging and plowing large gardens.

We use several draft horses at Kings Landing including Percherons and Belgians. At Kings Landing, they pull wagons and carts and help us with the farms. Let's learn a little about Ben, Pat, Prince and Zeus.



*Prince*

Prince and Zeus are Percheron draft horses. The Percheron came from La Perche in France. This breed arrived in North America in 1839. Percherons have historically been used as both freight and farm horses. They are smart, strong, have a good work ethic and a lot of energy. They are usually grey or black.



*Zeus*



*Ben*

Ben and Pat are Belgian draft horses. The Belgian came from the Brabant region in Belgium. The first Belgians arrived in Canada in 1902. Belgians are one of the strongest and largest draft horses often weighing over 1,600 pounds. They are smart, strong, hard working and patient. The most common colours are roan, black, bay and chestnut.



*Pat with his owner.*

Draft horses are naturally gentle and intelligent. They make good companions and are often used for riding, parades and dressage. [To see what dressage looks like, check out this video <https://youtu.be/cDKWnCNpmQA>.]

Today, draft horses are still used on small farms and by small logging companies, but most can be seen at agricultural fairs or at pulling competitions. We are reminded of their impressive strength and beauty when we see teams working at Kings Landing. Take a look at the examples below of how Zeus, Ben, Prince and Pat help out at Kings Landing.



*Zeus works in one of the gardens at Kings Landing at the Joslin Farm directed by his owner.*



*Ben and Prince wait for guests to board the wagon so they can bring them to their next stop.*



*Pat pulls a wagon during the fall with another Kings Landing horse named Budd.*

## ACTIVITY

One of the ways that we learn about horses in the past is from photographs that people took and paintings that artists created. In these we can see them working or posing with people. One artist that painted horses working in lumber camps was Randolph H. Nicholson (1909-1989). His paintings tell us about how important horses were for logging operations and the type of jobs they did.

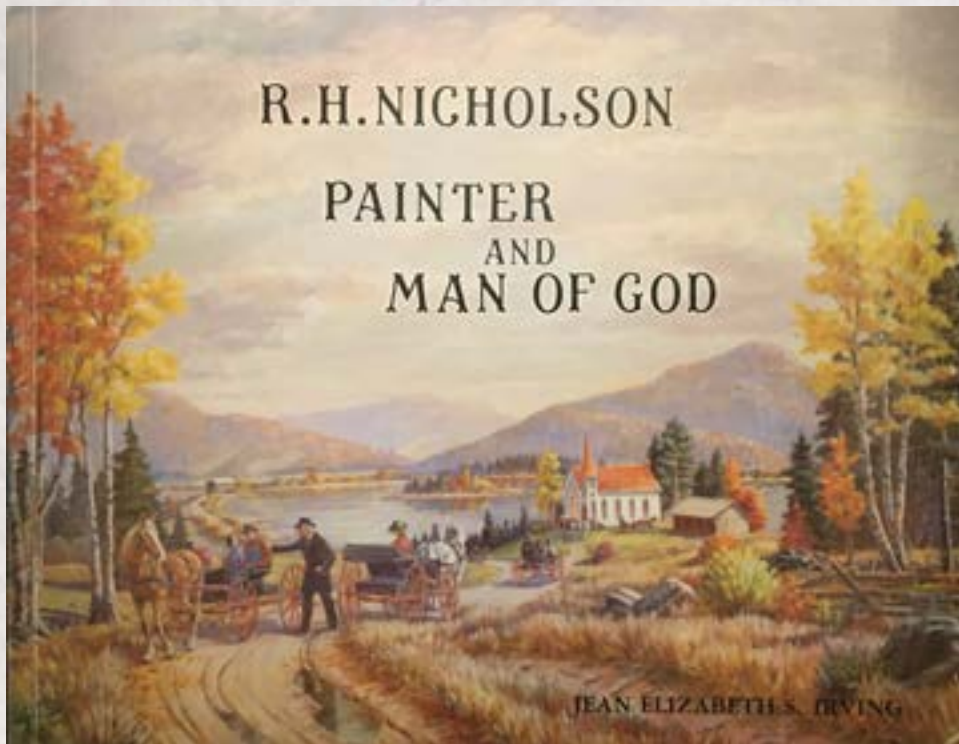
Randolph Nicholson was from Riceville, New Brunswick. He had 6 sisters and 1 brother. By the time he was fourteen, both his parents had died, and Randolph started to work in the lumber camps during the winters. He spent 6 years working cutting down trees! In later years, he shared his memories with others through his paintings.

Look at the paintings below and on the next page by Randolph. What do they tell you about the work that horses did in the logging camps?









*Cover image of the book featuring Randolph Nicholson's paintings shown in this lesson. Image courtesy of AbeBooks.com.*

If you want to see more paintings by Randolph, they were published in a book in 1983 by Jean Elizabeth Irving. The book is cited on the last page and can be found in many research institutions and libraries.

### **TIME TO GET CREATIVE**

Now that you explored Randolph's paintings of horses, create a work of art yourself that tells us about the animals in your life. Do you have a pet or does someone you know have a pet? What do they do? Do you know an animal that has a job? What types of jobs do animals do today?

Photograph, paint or draw pictures of the animal(s) in your life and what they do.

If you wish, you can share your work with us. We would love to see them! To share your works of art, you can email [jenna.fitch@gnb.ca](mailto:jenna.fitch@gnb.ca) or tag us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) @KingsLandingNB. Happy creating!

## SOURCES

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