

7 The Palio

Summary

A teenager takes us to see this famous race in Siena where we are introduced to the rider, Alberto, and his horse, Zodiac, as they prepare for the event. We see the competition and find out what happens to Alberto and Zodiac in the race.

Background

The word **palio** comes from the Latin *pallium* meaning 'covering'. It refers to a cloth given to the winner of the horse race in Siena.

Before you watch

1 Answer the question.

- Ask the class: *Can you name any famous horse races?*
- Elicit students' answers and write them on the board.

Suggested answers

the Gazi Race in Turkey, the Kentucky Derby in the USA, the Grande Prêmio in Brasil

While you watch

2 Watch and complete.

- Write the following gapped sentences on the board:
 - 1 The Palio takes place in _____.
 - 2 The Palio is _____ years old.
 - 3 _____ riders take part.
 - 4 Alberto's horse is called _____.
 - 5 The race lasts _____ seconds.
- Tell students they are going to watch the first part of a video about a famous Italian horse race.
- Play the video up to 02.16.
- Students watch and complete the sentences.
- Check answers with the class.

Answers

1 Siena 2 700 3 10 4 Zodiac 5 90

3 What happens next? Watch and check.

- Put students into pairs and ask them to guess what will happen next in the video, e.g. *I think Alberto and Zodiac will win the race.*
- Ask some pairs to tell the class their ideas.
- Play the recording for students to check.
- Find out if any pairs correctly predicted what happened next in the video.

After you watch

4 Work with a partner. Answer the questions.

- Put students into pairs to answer the following questions:
 - a Would you like to see the Palio? Why? Why not?
 - b Would you like to ride in the Palio? Why? Why not?
- Ask some students to report back to the class on their partner's ideas.

At home

5 Write a description of an important sports event from your country.

- Tell students to write about a famous sports event in their country.
- Brainstorm information that students could include in their descriptions, e.g. the name of the event, when it began, where it takes place and why it is important.
- Collect and check students' work in the next lesson.

6 Find out about another famous sporting events.

- Ask students to find out about when the following sports events started, where and when they take place, and anything else about the events that interests them:
 - a Wimbledon
 - b The Super Bowl
 - c The Tour de France
- They can share what they find out with a partner at the beginning of the next class.

Background

Wimbledon is the oldest tennis tournament in the world.

It started in London in 1877. The tournament takes place every year over two weeks in late June and early July.

The Super Bowl is the final game at the end of the football season in the United States. It started in 1920. It is usually played on the first Sunday in February and is watched by millions of Americans on TV.

The Tour de France is an annual bicycle race that takes place mostly in France but also occasionally passes through nearby countries. It usually takes place in July. It first started in 1903.



The Palio

A few weeks ago, I went to Siena, in the north of Italy, to see a very special event called the Palio. There were 60,000 people there! The Palio is a very old tradition in Siena. It started about 700 years ago, in the Middle Ages. So what is the Palio exactly? Well, it's a horse race! Ten riders from ten different areas of the city compete in the race. Everyone supports the rider from their area of Siena. This is Alberto.

He's from the area of Lupa in Siena, like my grandparents. He and his horse, Zodiac, trained every day for a year for this race. The race is only 90 seconds, but it's not easy. The track is a difficult shape, and it's dangerous for the horses and the riders.

On the day of the race, there was a big parade. Lots of people celebrated the tradition of the Palio together. People dressed up in clothes from the Middle Ages and played traditional music. The parade finished at the track in Siena's central square. Everybody was excited. We waited for the race to begin.

And then they were off! The crowd shouted ... and the horses ran! They all ran very fast. Then something terrible happened. One of the riders fell right in front of Alberto and Zodiac. So they fell, too. Everyone was OK. But in the end, Antonio Russo and his horse won. The people from his area ran onto the track and celebrated. They sang and carried their prize home. It was a banner, a symbol of their good luck. You really *must* go to the Palio one day. It's a wonderful celebration and a great tradition!