RACING SILKS

A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY LESSON ON DESIGN FOR K – 12TH
WHAT ARE RACING SILKS?

Silks are the uniform that a jockey wears during a race. The colorful jackets help the race commentator and the fans identify the horses on the track.
WHO DECIDES WHAT THE SILKS LOOK LIKE?

• The horse owner designs the silks.
• Jockeys change their silks each race to reflect the owner of the horse they will be riding.
• When you see two of the same silks in one race, that means that both of the horses belong to the same owner.
• Each silks design is registered with the Jockey Club so that no two owners have the same silks. This ensures that each design is unique.
A FEW JOCKEY CLUB DESIGN RULES

• It costs $100 per year to register your silks. You must renew the registration annually. Colors are renewable on December 31st of the year they are registered.

• Front and back of silks must be identical, except for the seam design.

• Navy blue is NOT an available color.

• A maximum of two colors is allowed on the jacket and two on the sleeves for a maximum of four colors.

• You may have an acceptable emblem or up to three initials on the ball, yoke, circle or braces design. You may have one initial on the opposite shoulder of the sash, box frame or diamond design.
COLORS AND PATTERNS

Silks can be made up of a wide variety of colors and shapes, with patterns like circles, stars, squares, and triangles. We know colors and patterns mean things, and sometimes horse owners draw inspirations for their design from their childhood, surroundings, favorite things, and careers.
High above the Great Hall in the Kentucky Derby Museum, you will see 13 banners suspended that represent the silks of 13 very special horses.

- Can you guess what they were able to accomplish?
MEANING BEHIND THE COLORS AND PATTERNS

1948 Citation-Calumet Farm

• Warren Wright’s Calumet Farm silks were one of the most recognized in racing history
  • 8 Derby winners wore them
  • 2 of the 8 went on to win the Triple Crown
  • 1941 Whirlaway & 1948 Citation

• Silks colors reflect the colors on the can of the baking powder that made the Wright family fortune
1978 Affirmed-Harbor View Farm

• Owner Lou Wolfson’s farm was in Florida, a state known for its large population of coastal flamingoes
• Silks colors reflect the natural colors of the flamingo: pink, white and black
• Affirmed was the 1978 Triple Crown Winner
  • Only 13 horses have won the Triple Crown
MEANING BEHIND THE COLORS AND PATTERNS

2007 Street Sense-Jim Tafel

- Owner Jim Tafel’s horse racing silks inspired his son to use the same colors for his car racing business
2005 Giacomo-Jerry & Anne Moss

- The Moss family’s interest in meditation and Eastern spirituality led to their color selection
- Teal=color of the heart chakra (green) + divinity (white)
- Pink=color of protection (red) + divinity (white)
- The pink band design represents a ring of protection for the jockey
1998 Real Quiet-Mike Pegram

- Owner Mike Pegram made his money by owning McDonald’s franchises. He used his own initials on the design
- Silks colors reflect the colors of McDonald’s which are red and yellow
• Look around the room. Do you see any colors or shapes in the room that can inspire you?
• What would you name your Derby horse?
  – Can you associate any colors or shapes with that name?
• What colors and shapes are important to you, your family, your friends, or your culture?
• Silks colors can remind you of important people or things in life.
  – What is your mom’s favorite color?
  – What color is the house you live in?
• The colors and shapes you choose for your silks can represent shared cultural meaning.
  – What are the colors and shapes on your country’s flag?
  – What is your favorite holiday?
Writing Prompt Challenge: Imagine you are submitting your silks to the Jockey Club for approval. Write a one page description that explains your design and color selections. Be creative!

Core Academic Standards:


(Art) VA:Re7.2.K, VA:Pr7.1.1, VA:Cr1.2.1, VA:Cr1.1.2, VA:Cr1.1.3, VA:Re7.2.3, VA:Re7.2.4, VA:Pr7.1.5, VA:Pr7.1.6, VA:Re8.1.7, VA:Pr7.1.8