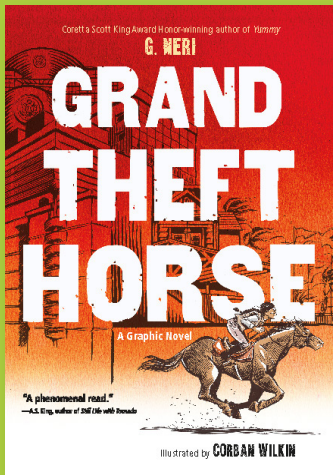


## TEACHER'S GUIDE



LEE & LOW BOOKS

# Grand Theft Horse

written by G. Neri, illustrated by Corban Wilkin

## About the Book

Genre: Graphic Biography

\*Reading Level: Grade 7

Interest Level: Grades 7-12

Guided Reading Level: Z+

Accelerated Reader® Level/

Points: N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

\*Reading level based on the Spache  
Readability Formula

**Themes:** Biography/Memoir, Breaking Gender Barriers, Animal, Conflict Resolution, Overcoming Obstacles, Poverty, Pride, Respect, Persistence/Grit, Consequences, Graphic Novel, Protest, Courage, Capitalism, Justice, Dreams & Aspirations, Nonfiction, Persistence/Grit, Law, United States History, Women's History, Empathy/Compassion, Kindness/Caring, African/African American Interest, Heroism, Teen Interest, YA interest

## SYNOPSIS

Gail Ruffu was a rookie trainer known for her unconventional methods and ability to handle dangerous horses. When she became part owner of an untamed thoroughbred named Urgent Envoy, everything changed. After Urgent Envoy showed real promise, her co-owners forced Gail to speed up training and race him too early, causing the horse to develop a hairline shin fracture. Refusing to drug the horse to keep it running, Gail lost Urgent Envoy to her partners, who pushed the horse even harder. One more race would kill him. When nobody heeded her warnings, Gail had to act.

So on Christmas Eve, she rescued her own horse. A modern-day outlaw, Gail evaded private investigators and refused to give the horse up. Blacklisted by the racing world, she learned the law at night to take on a powerful L.A. attorney determined to crush her in court. As she stood up for the humane treatment of racehorses, she also faced down the system that caused their demise.

In this gorgeous graphic biography, G. Neri, author of the acclaimed *Yummy* and *Ghetto Cowboy*, retells the life of his cousin Gail, a pioneer who challenged the horse racing world for the sake of one extraordinary horse. With illustrations by brilliant newcomer Corban Wilkin, it is a must-read for horse lovers everywhere.



## BACKGROUND

### *Afterword from Gail Ruffu*

“The path of human progress is lined with the bones of millions of horses who died along the way. We humans are indebted to these animals for their sacrifice in getting us to where we are. In small payment of that debt, I have made it my mission to advance reforms which will end some of the avoidable suffering of thousands of horses used for racing.

I grew up barrel racing and pole-bending in North Texas. During my teenage years, my parents “forced” me to move with them to Europe, where I studied dressage and stable management in Spain, England, Scotland, and Germany. In 1972, I returned to the United States, and for twenty years, I took part in dressage, jumping, competitive trail riding, and other competitions. When I entered the horse racing industry in the 1990s, I found my way to Hollywood Park, where I galloped horses as a freelance exercise-rider until I passed the California Horse Racing Board trainer exams in 1997. By then, I had seen enough to affect me for the rest of my life.

In American horse racing, twenty-four racehorses (on average) die every week on racetracks. About 3,600 horses died racing or training inside state-regulated race track enclosures over the three years leading up to 2012. Thousands more died in slaughterhouses due to injuries caused by reckless trainers and breeders. The practices of inbreeding and line breeding (selective mating within a horse’s extended family) are both widespread. Because of these practices, the modern racehorse’s bones mature more slowly and are therefore more fragile than those of the raw-boned racehorses of yesteryear. Even so, these horses often race as early as the age of two. The results are heartbreaking. One example of the nationwide decline in horse health: yearly starts for young racehorses have dropped from twelve (on average) in 1960 to fewer than seven (on average) in 2013.

Then there’s the unabated tradition of forcing yearlings and two-year-olds to perform repeated, maximum effort workouts in order to be sold for

huge prices at auction or to race for million dollar Breeders’ Cup purses, which is widely known to be destructive. Only one out of hundreds of two-year-old BC winners has ever been able to go on to win again as a BC three-year-old or older horse. This fact alone should have mandated an end to the BC two-year-old division long ago. Instead, Breeders’ Cup leadership has expanded the two-year-old division to include baby fillies. In sharp contrast, the minimum age for Olympic athletes has been raised from thirteen years old to sixteen because repeated maximum stress efforts are less destructive to more mature bodies.

The pressure to produce a winning horse has not declined. There is a huge failure rate in horse racing: between 5% percent and 17 percent of racehorses earn enough for owners to recoup their training costs. To increase the odds of winning, owners and trainers turn to drugs. The drug use is not hidden. Every edition of the Daily Racing Form lists the drugs each horse is taking before a race, showing that 95 percent of American racehorses train on powerful drugs. Those are the so-called “legal” drugs (which they’re not allowed to use on the day of the race). However, between 2009–2012, trainers at tracks in the US had been caught illegally drugging horses 3,800 times (in a system where they are not tested very often). Trainers often use chemicals designed to bulk up pigs and cattle before slaughter: cobra venom, Viagra, blood doping agents, stimulants, and cancer drugs. Meanwhile, veterinarians sometimes act as both doctors and pharmacists. The more drugs vets prescribe, the more money they make.

Virtually all the people in the racing community will tell you that they love horses. However, this community is made up of two very different groups of horse lovers. People in the first group sincerely love their animals and care deeply about their welfare. Taking care of horses is their primary motive and pay-off for being in the game. People in the second group love what horses do for them: create profit, excitement, and prestige. Unfortunately, this second group controls the sport. The first group has been unable to change horse racing because its members fear (as proven



in my case) that they will be blackballed and bullied if they fail to conform to the majority's wishes. Few true horse lovers can afford lawyers to protect them from such consequences.

After years of witnessing these horrors and waiting for change to happen, I decided to experiment with a more humane training approach. I believe the only real way to effect change is to prove a more profitable, more humane way to win. Produce racehorses that are drug-free, healthy, and profitable, then other trainers might begin to copy these winning methods. Success breeds imitators.

I choose to treat a horse as I would a child. If you wouldn't start your kid in extreme sports as a toddler, don't do it to your horse! I also choose not to do maximum-speed workouts or to race horses under thirty-six months of age. Most importantly, I refuse to drug my animals. If the British Horse Racing Authority successfully banned harmful drugs, so can members of the United States horse racing community.

Because horses cannot speak for themselves, your voice is needed as well. Both the horse racing and animal welfare industries have proven for decades that it is unable—without significant public pressure—to end those destructive traditions. Pressure must come from the true horse lovers in America who stand outside of the horse racing industry. Please act. Contact Breeders' Cup Inc. and the sponsors of races that involve two-year-old horses. Protest by email, telephone, or social media. Ask your horse-loving friends to also participate in this grassroots protest.

People in racing say ending two-year-old Breeders' Cup events are impossible. But thirty years ago, who could have imagined the banning of smoking in public places or the legalization of gay marriage? These shifts are beginning to happen in horse racing as well. Just look at champion Thoroughbred Justify, who skipped the Breeders' Cup altogether, never racing as a two-year-old, and just won the Triple Crown—a feat thought impossible until now. Proof positive that horses do not need to race as two-year-olds to become champions. I choose to

be part of the solution, not the problem. So can you." —Gail Ruffu

### Additional Graphic Novels & Young Adult Titles from Lee & Low

***I Am Alfonso Jones*** written by Tony Medina, illustrated by Stacey Robinson & John Jennings

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/i-am-alfonso-jones>

***Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside Shorty*** written by G. Neri, illustrated by Randy DuBurke

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/yummy>

***All the Stars Denied*** written by Guadalupe García McCall

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/all-the-stars-denied>

***Summer of the Mariposas*** written by Guadalupe García McCall

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/summer-of-the-mariposas>

***Killer of Enemies*** written by Joseph Bruchac  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/killer-of-enemies>

***Rebel Seoul*** written by Axie Oh

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/rebel-seoul>

***Tankborn*** written by Karen Sandler

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/tankborn>

***Perfect Liars*** written by Kimberly Reid

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/perfect-liars>



## VOCABULARY

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

### Content Specific

dressage, stewards, counsel, appeal, due process, kangaroo court, blacklisted, extortion, felon, public defender, outlaw, felony, plea, misdemeanor, indignant, proceedings, objection, sustained, overruled, sidebar, charges, hearings (legal), litigator, obstruction, breach of contract, statute of limitations, adjudicate, precedents, motions, legal proceedings, briefs, appeal, Lower Court, syndicate, brief, gallop, tack room, Triple Crown, Breeders' Cup, jockey, Thoroughbred, client, verdict

### Academic

martyr, frivolous, dispute, unorthodox, rectify, testimony, exile, fugitive, jargon, dismissal, harassment, persecution, spectacular, champion, contract, accomplish, license, authority, gambling, tragedy, euthanize, investigation, fracture, suspension, trainer, refute, slaughterhouses, advocacy

## BEFORE READING

### Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

1. Ask students what they know about horse racing. Tell students that horse racing goes back to the seventeenth century in the United States and an even longer history in the United Kingdom. Consider the class dynamics of the sport and the demographics that participate.
2. Ask students what they know about state Supreme Courts vs. federal Supreme Court. Consider creating a chart about each to examine the differences (<http://www.uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts/court-role-and-structure/comparing-federal-state-courts>).
3. Have you ever witnessed someone or something being mistreated? What emotions emerge? Do you immediately take action? Why or why not?
4. What does the word “justice” mean? What does justice mean to you? Are justice and the law the same? If so, how? If not, how are they different from each other?
5. What do students know about different forms of activism? What does it take for someone to be an activist? What have you learned about activism at school, in the media, or at home?
6. As a hook for readers, consider showing students this video of Gail with her horses created by author G. Neri, posted on Vimeo (<https://vimeo.com/280192537>).

### Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1, Craft & Structure, Strand 5, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

1. **Book Title Exploration:** Talk about the title of the book, *Grand Theft Horse*. Ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?
2. **Front Cover:** Have students look at the front cover. Spend





a few minutes flipping through the pages, noticing the illustrations. Have students read the copyright page where Neri states that *Grand Theft Horse* is a “second-hand memoir.” What is a second-hand memoir? What predictions can students make? Ask why an author and illustrator may want to tell a memoir in a graphic novel format.

3. Read the front jacket and introduction of *Grand Theft Horse*. Tell students that reading a book’s description is important, especially for memoirs. Have students discuss their impressions and compare their predictions to the front jacket and introduction.
4. Point out that Gail Ruffu identifies as Creole. Ask students what impact the identity of an author or illustrator has on students’ experience of reading. Does that change depending on the identity of the characters? Or what the story is about? Or on the identity of the reader?
5. Author/Illustrator: Introduce students to G. Neri (the author) and Corban Wilkin (the illustrator). You can find information in the “about the author” and “about the illustrator” section at the end of this guide.
6. Encourage students to stop and jot in their notebooks when they: learn new information, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or see new words.
7. Have students read the epigraph by Bob Dylan and quickly write feeling(s)/ reaction(s) in their notebook. Why do students think Neri chose that quote? Do students agree with it? Why or why not?
8. Introduce students to the main elements of a graphic novel. Spend time defining these elements and pointing to each in the book until students are able to identify them:
  - *Panel*: A distinct segment of the comic, containing a combination of image and text.
  - *Frame*: The lines and borders that contain the panels.
  - *Gutter*: The space between framed panels.

- *Speech balloon*: These enclosed words come from a specific speaker’s mouth to show dialogue between characters.
- *Thought balloon*: These enclosed words show private thoughts with a series of dots or bubbles going up to it from a specific character.
- *Caption*: These are boxes containing a variety of text elements, including scene-setting, description, etc.
- *Special-effects lettering*: This is a method of drawing attention to text; it often highlights drama or exaggeration and reinforces the impact of words such as “bang” or “wow.”
- *Foreground*: The art can be perceived as closest to the viewer within the panel.
- *Background*: Provides additional, subtextual information for the reader.

### Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- about the life of Gail Ruffu
- about the conditions of horse racing in the United States
- how Gail’s story connects to capitalism, judicial systems, and notions of justice
- the importance of advocacy and activism in legal matters
- how dynamics of race, gender, and class intersect to create conflicts in the criminal justice system

## AFTER READING

### Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite evidence with their answers.**



★“The graphic novel world isn’t full of true stories about nearly sixty-year-old, women of color who refuse to back down from wealthy, white men exploiting (and further corrupting) a corrupt system. *Grand Theft Horse* feels all the more timely and urgent because of it.”

—Booklist

★“**VERDICT:** Superb. Ruffu’s tenacity and the book’s satisfying conclusion will appeal to fans of John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell’s “March” trilogy.”

—School Library Journal

“Neri’s storytelling captures the everyday dedication and sacrifice behind Ruffu’s tale and manages to feel both potent and unpretentious.”

—Publishers Weekly

### Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3) (Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3; and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. How did Gail become interested in horses?
2. What did Gail’s dad do for a living?
3. What were the different places that Gail lived when she was growing up?
4. What are the different jobs Gail had?
5. What are the ways in which Gail’s family experienced discrimination?
6. What was the name of Gail’s first horse?
7. What time of the year did Gail “steal” Urgent Envoy?
8. How much did Gail pay for Urgent Envoy?
9. How much of Urgent Envoy did Gail own according to her contract?
10. What were the training conditions Gail and Bud Clayton agreed to during their first meeting?
11. After how many months of training was Urgent Envoy’s first race?
12. What did Gail say is rule number one in horse racing?
13. What injuries did Urgent Envoy sustain?
14. Which family members did Gail lose in the story?

15. What were Gail’s economic conditions as she was fighting for Urgent Envoy?
16. Was Urgent Envoy able to race again?
17. Was Gail able to regain her license?
18. How old is Gail at the end of the story?
19. How long did the battle over Urgent Envoy last?
20. What is Gail doing with her life currently?

### Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3; and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)  
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3; and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What is the significance of the title *Grand Theft Horse* after reading?
2. How did Gail’s parents and upbringing influence her life and relationship to horses?
3. What motivates Gail throughout the book? What motivates Clayton? Why are their motivations so different?
4. How does Gail cope with her feelings and events in her life? How do you think Gail feels as a wanted woman? How does Gail continue to fight for Urgent Envoy, despite the many obstacles that get in her way?
5. Why does Gail believe that refusing drugs and advocating for more training time will better serve horses and the horse racing industry?



6. Why do the Stewards not agree with Gail's methods? What are the reasons some people in the horse racing community are resistant to Gail's approach to training?
7. There are many moments when those in Gail's life tell her that going up against Clayton is not "worth" it for a horse. Was Urgent Envoy worth Gail's many sacrifices? What is the larger impact of Gail's case? How would you react in a similar situation?
8. On page 168 Detective Booth explains his views on the law, saying, "the law's a process. Sometimes you just have to go through it to clear your name." How is the clearing of one's name under the law impacted by race, gender, class, sexuality, etc.?
9. Why did Gail finally have criminal charges pressed against her? What was the evidence/arguments presented that led her to being found not guilty?
10. What does the statement "justice moves slowly, if at all," on page 196, mean to you? What are moments of justice and injustice that Gail experiences? Does Gail have faith in the criminal justice system?
11. What is the relationship between activism and criminal justice? Do you consider Gail an activist? Why or why not?
12. Consider Gail's feelings toward the end of the novel. Does her legal victory translate to a personal one? Is there a difference between legal justice and personal justice?
13. Why do you think the graphic novel format was used to tell this story? What do readers gain by experiencing the story visually as well as through words?
14. In graphic novels, panels are used to show the passage of time. Time, and how fast or slowly it seems to pass, is important in how panels change. Can you find a sequence where the pacing is slow, observing a character or scene? How about a sequence in which everything speeds up?
15. Why do you think the illustrator, Corban Wilkin, created the images in sepia tones (a reddish-brown color associated with photographs from the nineteenth century)? What effect does this palette have on the tone of the story? How might the story be different if the images were in color, or in black and white?

### Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

1. What do you think G. Neri's and Gail's message to the reader is? Think about possible motivations behind Neri's intentions to write the book. What do you think they wanted to tell young readers?
2. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to your own life? What do Gail's experiences, thoughts, and feelings mean to you? Have you fought for anything you believed in that was meaningful to you, like Gail?
3. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while you read *Grand Theft Horse*? Why did you make those connections?
4. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to what you have seen in the world or on the news? Why did *Grand Theft Horse* make you think of that?
5. How has reading *Grand Theft Horse* impacted your understanding of justice? What are some other ways people define justice? How would you define justice?
6. In a persuasive essay, argue whether or not Gail's actions throughout the novel should be considered extreme. Use examples from the text to justify your claims.
7. In the story, Gail is accused of breaking the law. Do you believe breaking the law or going back on an agreement can ever be justified? Why or why not?



## ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)  
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
  - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
  - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about what they think Gail's message is.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

## Social and Emotional Learning

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)  
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of *Grand Theft Horse*:

1. Gail's family experienced prejudices because of their ethnicity. How do you respond to prejudice or discrimination when you experience it yourself and/or when you see it happening to others?
2. What kinds of things did Gail sacrifice in her fight for Urgent Envoy? In what ways was she able to be patient and resilient to reach her ultimate goal?
3. Which panel in *Grand Theft Horse* best shows an emotion? Explain which emotion you think it is. How does it portray that emotion?
4. How did Gail deal with losing her trainer's license? How did people in Gail's life support her when she needed help? What did you learn from Gail's experience about dealing with economic hardship and being treated unfairly?
5. Choose an emotion that interests you: happiness, sadness, fear, anxiety, frustration, hope, perseverance and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *Grand Theft Horse*. Why did you pick that emotion?

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## INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for





extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

## English Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1-3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4-6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7-9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

1. Encourage students to read two reviews for *Grand Theft Horse* and write their own review of the novel. For ideas, check out this Book Review Template (<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/printouts/book-review-template-30200.html>) by ReadWriteThink.org. Example reviews include (<https://www.publishersweekly.com/978-1-62014-855-6>) and (<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/g-neri/grand-theft-horse/>).
2. Challenge students to explore the characters more deeply with writing tasks that require perspective-taking:
  - Write a dialogue between Gail and Urgent Envoy in which they discuss their feelings about horse racing.
  - Write a letter to Gail’s mom who passed away where Gail explains what is happening with her career.
  - Write diary entries from Gail’s perspective during one of the days leading up to her trial and during one of the days after the novel ends. Have students discuss in small groups about how the diary entries are different and reflect on how Gail’s life has changed after her battle for Urgent Envoy.
3. The rich, varied, and legal language used by G. Neri in *Grand Theft Horse* provides an opportunity for students to develop their vocabulary skills in authentic contexts. Challenge students to learn and practice using the academic and content-specific words listed in this teacher’s guide:
  - Before reading: Provide students with a list of the vocabulary words to sort into categories (e.g. very familiar, somewhat familiar, unfamiliar).
  - During reading: Have students make note of the vocabulary words as they encounter them in *Grand Theft Horse*. They can underline, highlight, or keep a log. Have students predict what the words mean based on context clues.
  - After reading: Have students work in pairs to look up the definitions of the “unfamiliar” words on their combined lists. Were their predictions correct? Post the new vocabulary words on your word wall.
4. Tell students to imagine they will be interviewing Gail Ruffu or G. Neri for a local newspaper or talk show. Assign students to read the “Introduction” and the “Afterword” and then develop a list of five interview questions they want to ask. What do they want to learn about in terms of the process, the inspiration, the issue of horse racing, and so on? Lead a class discussion, creating a combined list of questions and then narrowing that list down to ten questions. Share your students’ questions with G. Neri by contacting him through his website (<https://www.gregneri.com/contact/>). Consider encouraging students to think about how an interview with G. Neri would be different from an interview with Gail Ruffu?
5. Read Greg Neri’s interview about the inspiration behind *Grand Theft Horse* ([https://www.leeandlow.com/uploads/loaded\\_document/603/Q\\_A\\_with\\_G\\_Neri.pdf](https://www.leeandlow.com/uploads/loaded_document/603/Q_A_with_G_Neri.pdf)). What did students learn from reading this interview? How does it make them think differently about *Grand Theft Horse* after reading about Neri’s development of the graphic novel? What additional questions would they like to ask him, and why? ([https://www.leeandlow.com/uploads/loaded\\_document/603/Q\\_A\\_with\\_G\\_Neri.pdf](https://www.leeandlow.com/uploads/loaded_document/603/Q_A_with_G_Neri.pdf)).
6. Have students read this quote from the afterword: “However, this community is made



up of two very different groups of horse lovers. People in the first group sincerely love their animals and care deeply about their welfare. Taking care of horses is their primary motive and pay-off for being in the game. People in the second group love what horses do for them: create profit, excitement, and prestige. Unfortunately, this second group controls the sport.” Have students identify and the internal and external struggles and tensions between these two motivations and write about why those conflicts are happening.

### Arts/Performing Arts

*(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1-3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4-6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7-9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)*

*(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, and Range of Writing, Strand 10)*

*(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)*

1. Photocopy pages of a chapter (or chapters) in the book, selecting one with multiple panels in a plot sequence. Cut the panels apart and shuffle them so they are out of order. Place the mixed up panels into an envelope. Prepare whatever number envelopes you need to distribute them to pairs of students. After collecting their books, have students work in pairs to organize the panels in proper sequence. Prompt students to use cues and context provided by the illustrations and text, as well as their recall of the story. Walk around asking questions and giving feedback.
2. Have students create and write their own comics or graphic novels based on their own lives with the Comic Creator from [ReadWriteThink.org](http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/comic-creator-30021.html). (<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/comic-creator-30021.html>)
3. With a small group of students, make a Reader’s Theater script of *Grand Theft Horse*. (<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/readers-theatre-172.html>) Choose students to say the speaking parts of Gail, Clayton, Eleanor Ehrlich, Detective Booth, and other characters. Choose two

or three narrators to set each scene. Have students perform the story for the rest of the class. Afterward, students can reflect on the experience and what it was like to play their specific role in writing or in discussion groups. How did acting out the story differ from reading it? What did they learn from both experiences?

4. Spend time showing students examples of protest signs ([https://www.tes.com/lessons/RkJLkpdN-WN\\_g/protest-art](https://www.tes.com/lessons/RkJLkpdN-WN_g/protest-art)) and art from various causes and social movements. Provide students with time and materials to create their own sign/poster promoting ethical horse racing and/or a cause they care about. Display the signs in your classroom or hallway.
5. Ask students to write their own free verse or narrative free verse poems about a cause they care about. Encourage students to have their poems reflect their personal experiences and/or their feelings and opinions toward the topics. Have students perform their work.
6. Put students in small groups. Have them discuss reactions to the photographs at the end of the novel. Why were those particular photographs chosen? What stood out? How do they think the photographs relate to what they read in *Grand Theft Horse*?

### Social Studies/Civics

*(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1-3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4-6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7-9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)*

*(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, and Range of Writing, Strand 10)*

1. Design a lesson or unit on horse racing in the United States. Use the resources at the end of this guide to help your planning. Learning goals should highlight key aspects of the industry such as the origins; organizers; core beliefs; profits; critiques; race, gender, and class demographics; media coverage; opposition; or challenges, as well as connections to other sports industries. St. Mary’s University has an article on Early Horse Racing in America.



(<https://www.stmuhistorymedia.org/early-horse-racing-in-america/>)

2. Have students write in more detail about question #8 in Extension/Higher Level Thinking: On page 168 Detective Booth explains his views on the law, saying, “The law’s a process. Sometimes you just have to go through it to clear your name.” How is the clearing of one’s name under the law impacted by race, gender, class, sexuality, etc.? Encourage students to think about other historic examples of court cases that center women of color and how women of color continue to be affected by the court and legal system today (<https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2016/08/17/490364132/study-the-growing-disproportionate-number-of-women-of-color-in-u-s-jails>).
3. Divide students into groups of four. Assign each student to read about one of the four components in Gail Ruffu’s legal brief (Introduction, Summary of Facts, Legal Argument, and Conclusion). Have each group report back to the entire class and have a discussion about the differences and similarities between the formal legal documents and *Grand Theft Horse*. The brief can be found here: [http://www.koponairdo.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/3565/2016/06/714236-15\\_\\_Ruffu.pdf](http://www.koponairdo.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/3565/2016/06/714236-15__Ruffu.pdf).
4. Have students research a state Supreme Court case. Assign each student to write five research questions about their case. Allow online and/or library time for students to research the answers to their questions. End by having students introduce their case to the class.
5. Have students research the situational and risk factors of horse racing and present their findings in a web diagram. Who is at risk? Who profits? What can be done to prevent euthanized horses? Check out the American Jockey Club ([http://jockeyclub.com/pdfs/eid\\_7\\_year\\_tables.pdf](http://jockeyclub.com/pdfs/eid_7_year_tables.pdf)) and *The Washington Post* article about horse racing injuries (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/hundreds-of-racehorses-die-at-the-track-each-year-their-deaths-may-be-preventable/2016/07/13/1250df9e->

[3412-11e6-8ff7-7b6c1998b7a0\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.7a204d492021&noredirect=on](https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/hundreds-of-racehorses-die-at-the-track-each-year-their-deaths-may-be-preventable/2016/07/13/1250df9e-3412-11e6-8ff7-7b6c1998b7a0_story.html?utm_term=.7a204d492021&noredirect=on)). Present findings to the class in a format of students’ choosing.

6. Have students read chapter 1 of *Bullets, Badges, and Bridles: Horse Thieves and the Societies that Pursued Them* by John K. Burchill, “The Birth of Anti-Horse Thief Societies,” ([https://pelicanpub.com/content/9781455618576\\_ch1.pdf](https://pelicanpub.com/content/9781455618576_ch1.pdf).)” Have students discuss how horse theft was defined in earlier centuries. Why was horse theft more prevalent then than it is today? How does it compare to what Gail endured in *Grand Theft Horse*?

### Home-School Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

1. Ask students to create portraits of people who are their personal role models through drawing, collage, or photography. In writing, students should describe what actions and qualities they admire about this person. Students can write in prose or submit a poem or song.
2. Have students interview a parent, guardian, or adult mentor about their experiences with fighting for something they believe in. How did this person react to and handle the situation when they were faced with obstacles? What advice do they have for someone trying to take up a cause and stand up for justice?
3. If accessible, have students and families research other titles featuring horses.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**G. Neri** is the Eisner-nominated, Coretta Scott King Honor-winning author of *Yummy: the Last Days of a Southside Shorty*, which Flavorwire hailed as one of the top twenty-five essential graphic novels of all time. He has written ten books for young people, including the Lee Bennett Hopkins Promising Poet Award winner, *Chess Rumble*, his debut book. Neri's books have been translated into multiple languages in more than twenty-five countries. Neri lives on the Gulf Coast of Florida with his wife and their daughter. Visit him on the web at [gneri.com](http://gneri.com).

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**Corban Wilkin** is the recipient of the 2012 Cape/Observer/Comica Graphic Short Story Prize for his comic *But I Can't* and was nominated for the 2014 British Comics Awards in the Emerging Talent category for the graphic novel *Breaker's End*. He lives in London, England. For more information, visit [corbanwilkin.com](http://corbanwilkin.com).

## ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

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## ORDERING INFORMATION

### On the Web:

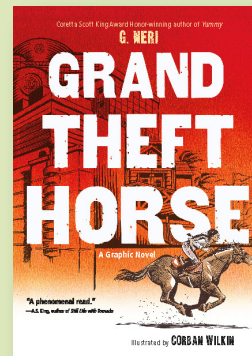
[www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering](http://www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering) (general order information)

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/grand-theft-horse> (secure online ordering)

**By Phone:** 212-779-4400 ext. 25 | **By Fax:** 212-683-1894

**By Mail:** Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

## Book Information for *Grand Theft Horse*



\$19.95, PAPERBACK

9781584302674

240 pages, 6 X 8-1/2

\*Reading Level: Grade 7

Interest Level: Grades 7–12

Guided Reading Level: z+

Accelerated Reader® Level/  
Points: N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

**THEMES:** Biography/Memoir, Breaking Gender Barriers, Animal, Conflict Resolution, Overcoming Obstacles, Poverty, Pride, Respect, Persistence/Grit, Consequences, Graphic Novel, Protest, Courage, Capitalism, Justice, Dreams & Aspirations, Nonfiction, Persistence/Grit, Law, United States History, Women's History, Empathy/Compassion, Kindness/Caring, African/African American Interest, Heroism, Teen Interest, YA interest

## RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/grand-theft-horse>

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.