



The Princess and the Foal

Written by Stacy Gregg
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"I'm going to be a champion too," Haya says. "I'm going to be a champion horse rider. One day I will ride in the King's Cup!" (p. 48)

Riding in the illustrious, but brutal King's Cup has not traditionally been available to women, much less 12-year-old girls. Haya knows how to ride, and she knows her horse Bree, and believes that together they can accomplish the tasks needed to be champions. Will Haya ride? Will she become a champion? *The Princess and the Foal* is a story of a girl and her love of horses, but in particular one horse that came to her when it was just

three days old. This story, however, starts long before Haya takes responsibility for Bree. It begins when she is just 3 years old, with the death of her mother, Her Royal Highness Queen Alia, wife of King Hussein of Jordan. Based on the actual events that resulted in Princess Haya leading the team to the King's Cup at the age of twelve, this text presents readers with the life of one of the most prominent women in the Middle East. It won the Children's Choice Junior Award in the United Kingdom.

The Princess and the Foal is a fascinating story of a determined young girl who is not only an avid equestrienne, but a formidable presence in the royal palace. Haya is not anything like current stereotypes of women from the Middle East, which allows readers to question their own ideas of how people live across the world. Readers will gain an understanding of Haya's life as well as her relationship with her father and young brother. Centered predominantly on Haya's growth as an equestrienne, the book is a nice introduction to the country of Jordan, to a real world princess, and the reality of what it takes to care for a horse. This account of Haya's life is an inspiration to young readers to not give up on their dreams, yet they must realize that those dreams are often born out of hard work as well as guidance and encouragement from others.

A story that would engage younger adolescents, the book could be read as a fairy tale, but the facts of Haya's incredible experience in the King's Cup are well-documented, as are other facts of her early life. It would make a great companion to *National Velvet* (Enid Bagnold, 1999; 2013), *Black Beauty* (Anna Sewell, 2009), *Shadow Horse* (Alison Hart, 2001), and *Horses with a Mission: Extraordinary True Stories of Equine Service* (Allen Anderson & Linda Anderson, 2009) all of which address the equine aspect of Haya's story. It could also be used in a text set such as *Princess Academy* (Shannon Hale, 2007), *The Princess Diaries*

(Meg Cabot, 2008), *The Royal Diaries series* by various authors (2011), including Kathryn Lasky and Carolyn Meyer, or *The Twelve Dancing Princesses series* by Jessica Day George (2009-2013) as a way of examining the images of princesses in literature.

Stacy Gregg loves horses and owns one herself. She was born and lives in New Zealand and has published the Pony Club Secrets and the Pony Club Rival series. She has another book, *The Island of the Lost Horses*, coming out soon. More information about Stacy can be found at her website (<http://stacygregg.co.uk/>).

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