

INDIAN RELAY *Chapter by Chapter Guide*



Pre-Viewing Discussion and Writing Prompts

students think about their own experiences

- 1 What kind of team sports, both in and out of school, have you played or watched? Little League, Soccer, Softball, Baseball, Basketball, Football, Volleyball, Wrestling, Hockey, Golf, Swimming, others?
- 2 While playing the sport, what did you enjoy the most? The least? Why?
- 3 While watching the sport, what did you enjoy the most? The least? Why?
- 4 What is a purpose of sports for players today?
- 5 Have you ever gone to a rodeo?
Make a list of images for each of the following:
What do you see on the track?
What do you hear?
Who do you see in the stands?
- 6 Describe one of your most exciting moments in playing or watching a team sport. Begin your writing with this phrase: “I remember . . .” and conclude with a reason why this experience remains so strong in your memory. Imagine that someday your own grandchildren will read what you’ve written.
- 7 Describe a dream you have for yourself – how or when did that dream begin?
- 8 Create a word map or cluster, with the word “pride” in the center. Cluster for 10 minutes and then write your very own definition or poem of “pride” for you. The images in your poem may differ significantly from those of your friends and neighbors.
- 9 **R.A.F.T.S. writing assignment:** Remember a time when you were proud of yourself. How did you feel? Were you proud because you had put a lot of effort or practice in ahead of this time? Write a letter to a friend about this time and explain how you felt. How do you write this without feeling like you are bragging?
(For R.A.F.T.S. information see the readwritethink Strategy Guide (International Reading Association and NCTE) available online at <http://>)
- 10 **R.A.F.T.S. writing assignment:** Write a letter from a **parent’s perspective to sons or daughters** who are joining a sports team, one in which there is an element of danger. Explain how you feel about them joining this sport, what worries you about them participating in this sport, what you hope they gain by this experience. **Write** what you hope for him or her and what you want to know about his/her experiences.

Pre-Viewing Background:

students think about the topic- Indian Relay

- 1** Have you ever heard of Indian Relays?
- 2** Has anyone in your family ever participated in an Indian Relay?
- 3** What do you think would be unique to Indian Relays?

Pre-Viewing the DVD by reading

and asking questions of the DVD cover

(The teacher will need to make photo copies of the front and back covers to distribute to students, or the teacher may scan the cover and put it into a PowerPoint slide for viewing.)

- 1** What do you learn about the DVD from looking at the front cover? The back cover?
- 2** This DVD is a documentary. What does that mean? What are the obligations of a producer of a documentary?
- 3** What do you learn about the DVD from the logos at the bottom of the back cover?
- 4** What do you learn about the DVD from the photographs on the front and back covers?
- 5** What do you learn from reading the title, *Indian Relay*? Write a definition of “relay” as you understand it. In what ways do think that an Indian relay would be different from any other relay (be sure to use the DVD cover for hints about what an Indian Relay is)? Discuss your thoughts with the rest of the students in your class.

Questions to consider while viewing the DVD Feature Film—Indian Relay

- 1** What music and instruments play in the background in different portions of the DVD? What is the effect of the choice of music on you as a viewer? What does the music make you believe or feel as you watch and listen?
- 2** What kinds of images play while a person is speaking? How do those images support what the speaker says or contradict the speaker to create irony?
- 3** Make notes of the featured speakers. Who are they and what are their backgrounds? How might their backgrounds and experiences influence what they say?
- 4** Why might the producers have selected specific individuals to speak in the DVD?
- 5** How are the teams portrayed in the video? What do you see? What don't you see? Why?
- 6** What do you notice about the races? Who is in attendance? Who is not in attendance? How are they dressed? What's missing in these pictures?

DVD Chapter Summaries and Questions for Indian Relay

Chapter 1: Horse People

This segment features the horses used in Indian Relays – how their riders prepare them by decorating them, how important they are to the Relay.

Getting at the Meaning Questions:

- 1** Leo Teton says, “We are horse people, we’re always going to have that in our blood... they’re our four-legged brother. We got to pray with them, talk with them.” Why is this an important statement to lead the video?
- 2** Why did the video start with scenes from the National Championship? Why doesn't it start with the first day of training?
- 3** Did you see differences between the three teams? Did you see similarities?

Interpretative-level Questions:

- 1 Why does Leo Totten say, "...when they run that horse around that track, you're...you're one, you're not two"?
- 2 What does "do or die time" mean?
- 3 Why do you think that Lance says, "Playtime's over and joking around is over"?
- 4 Why might the producers have selected specific individuals to speak in the DVD?
- 5 Kendall said, "Good rider's the heart and soul of a team. And Zack's a big part of it. Big part of our team, our family, he's like a son to us." How does that feeling of family contribute to training or racing?

Chapter 2: Winter and Spring

In this chapter, viewers get their first look at the teams – the differences in training and attitude. They also see the hard work needed to maintain the horses.

Getting at the Meaning Questions:

- 1 Myles says he has four horses, three mares and one gelding. What does that mean?
- 2 He also says his horses are five and six years old. Is that pertinent?
- 3 Kendall talks about the training necessary for doing well at the Relay, specifically the techniques needed and the dedication. What parts of the video show dedication? What parts show technique?
- 4 Lance says that "horses make families come together". What does that mean?
- 5 Kendall says that "this is one sport where you get to prove yourself against other tribes." Of what importance is that to individuals? To the teams? To the community?

Interpretative-level Questions:

- 1 When you look at the different ways the teams approach training, what differences do you see? Do you think these differences will be evident on Relay day?
- 2 There are many references to the children in families and community in this chapter:
 - A Why does Carol want something "constructive" or something that helps people "overcome fears"? How does participating in Relay help with these attributes?
 - B Kendall talks about his partying background and how having children helped him change. He talks about looking forward 10 or 20 years and what will benefit his children. Do you think most adults change when they have their own families? What is it he really wants to pass on?
 - C Carol also wants Myles to be a "hero" to his youngest cousins. Is being a Relay-er heroic? Who do other children look up as heroes today?

Chapter 3: 25 Lengths

This chapter gives viewers their first good look at a real Relay – the preparation of the M&M Express team, the exchanges, the atmosphere in the fairgrounds, the results.

Getting at the Meaning Questions:

- 1 The announcer says this is a 5/8ths mile track. What does this mean? Is this a standard length for a horse track? How does that compare to a car race track or a dog race track?
- 2 How long is a “length”? What does a 6 length lead mean? What does the increasing number of lengths in the lead tell you (they go from 6 to 15 to 25 lengths)?

Interpretative-level Questions:

- 1 In the beginning of this chapter, a lot of time is spent watching Kendal and Zack burning sweetgrass, sprinkling it with something, and then enveloping Zack and his clothes in the smoke. Clearly, this is a ritual. What is the importance of this ritual? What other types of rituals do you see at the beginning of other sporting events?
- 2 During a typical race, the audience watches the rider, but this video spends a lot of time with the other team members. Watch what they do...how important is their performance to the success of the rider? Look at their faces...how does their intensity compare to the rider's?
- 3 What is the significance of the rider announcing that the teams are competing on Mother's Day?

Chapter 4: What happened?

We get to see another race that pits M&M Express against the Tissidimit team. From the excitement of winning, Zack is plunged twelve days later into a life or death drama after an accident.

Getting at the Meaning Questions:

- 1 What is the extent of the injuries?
- 2 What does this mean for his Relay future?

Interpretative-level Questions:

- 1 We get a taste of how music plays a supporting role in Indian Relay itself (as opposed to being part of the documentary itself).
 - A. Why is Lance singing during the horse-shoeing? Is it more for the horse, more for him, for both of them?
 - B. During the handshakes and congratulations, you can hear drumming in the background. What do you think is going on? Is it part of the ceremony, is it background, is it celebratory?

- 2** During the hospital scenes, family surrounds the hospital bed.
- A.** Do you see Zack reacting differently when family is around as opposed to when the doctor is present?
 - B.** Are there times in your life that are easier when surrounded by family? Are there times when it is easier without family around?

Chapter 5: Character

While the title of this chapter is “character”, this is not just about the teams. It also showcases some of the cultural background of Indian Relays...parades, pre-race instructions, and how teams choose to portray themselves and their horses. There are also many examples of how much work it is taking care of the horses – carrying water and feed, grooming, and tending to medical needs.

Getting at the Meaning Questions:

- 1** In this segment, viewers get to see some more of the behind-the-scenes work at one race.
- A.** Why are they putting dirt on the horse’s back?
 - B.** There are scenes of several horses falling, some on the riders. In what ways does this show how easily a rider could get hurt?
 - C.** How does this segment portray both the highs and lows of Indian Relay?

Interpretative-level Questions:

- 1** Think about the parade at Browning...
- A.** In what ways does this remind you of every parade you have ever seen?
 - B.** In what ways is this unique?
 - C.** If you are from Browning, is this a “typical” parade or is there something special about this one?
- 2** At the race...
- A.** How did you react to the horses falling?
 - B.** If you were a PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) member, what arguments would you make for changing Indian Relays?
 - C.** If you wanted to refute PETA-type concerns, what would be your arguments for keeping Indian Relays the same?
- 3** Carol Murray says, “When things are going good, you know everybody is all happy and seeming like they’re pulling together, but when they’re not winning, you know, they still have to have the character to get up and, and take care of the horses, and take care of themselves.”
- A.** What do you see as “character-building” in this segment?
 - B.** How do you think the presence of animals contributes to “character building”?
 - C.** The training period is so long and involves every aspect of taking care of riders and horses. How does this intensity contribute to long-term “character building”?
 - D.** In what ways was the dedication of this race to Zack Rock by his brother Luke Rock (the winner) an example of “character” – of Luke, of Zack?

Chapter 6: Competitive sport

There are many examples of the competitive spirit in this segment – from Zack continuing to ride – with a safety vest – to Myles’ revelation at the end that this is a competitive sport and that winning is the motivation for many teams. Pay close attention to the disqualification of the M&M Express team – see how Kendal walks over to find out what happened, listen to Maria say that “we” got disqualified, watch faces afterward.

Getting at the Meaning Questions:

- 1** Carol Murray says, “If you can’t keep your self-worth together, you’ll fail...and your team will dissolve”
In what ways is it ironic that she is talking about self-worth in reference to a team dissolving.
- 2** Myles Murray says, “I kinda thought everyone did it just to have fun, but now I know everyone does it to win.”
 - A. Is this a turning point for him?
 - B. In your opinion, why did he think this was mostly just for fun? How do you think he will change his training routine to prepare for the next year?

Interpretative-level Questions:

- 1** Lance Tissidimit says, “Little tiny things cause us big problems”
Watch the Tissidimit exchange and analyze what went wrong – this is a team, even though we focus on the rider. Look at how a mishandling of the horses on the exchange disqualified the entire team.
- 2** Lance also says “Brush it off...hold it in – that anger – will make you sick.”
In your opinion, is this the best way to approach this? What might be other ways?
- 3** We overhear Maria (Kendall’s wife) saying- “we got disqualified”.
 - A. How does her use of the term “we” show her involvement?
 - B. Have you ever been on a team where something went wrong? How did your team handle that? What did your coach do?

Chapter 7: Road to Nationals

The participants are getting ready for the final, most important, race of the season.

Getting at the Meaning Questions:

- 1** Have you ever heard the phrase “the calm before the storm”?
 - A. How does this segment show this?
 - B. How do the landscape segments set the stage for what is to come?
 - C. How do the pieces with the participants show you that something big is coming?

Interpretative-level Questions:

- 1 The filmmaker wants to tell a story. In this case, he is getting the viewer ready for the Nationals.
 - A. Why do you think the filmmaker decided to start this chapter with the hay field and the free-running horses? How does that set the stage for this chapter?
 - B. Can you feel the pressure building as you watch the teams start on the road to the Nationals?
 - C. Are you surprised that they are still training—what types of training do you see? Does this reflect nerves?

Chapter 8: Early Heats

Both M&M and Murray teams win early heats, but Tissidimit has an accident that takes “Punkin” Colby out of riding. Lance will substitute, even though he hasn’t trained as a rider and hasn’t done it for quite a while.

Getting at the Meaning Questions:

- 1 What did Myles mean when he said, “today I got smoked?”
- 2 Why does Carol Murray worry that their team “weren’t accepting their own personal responsibility”?
- 3 When Kendal Old Horn says, “I mean you want every exchange to be picture perfect you know and it’s tough but, that’s the way we roll”, what does he mean by “picture perfect”? Can you rephrase “that’s the way we roll”?

Interpretative-level Questions:

- 1 What does Myles’ belief in his inimskin mean to him? Do you think it actually affects his performance? Some people might compare the inimskin to a good luck charm – how are they similar, how are they different?
- 2 Why is it important to Myles that there are non-Natives in the stands?
- 3 The M&M Express team spends one evening practicing after they have a rather disastrous exchange...do you think they did this because they needed the practice, to assure themselves that they had the technique perfected, just to be active and calm their own nerves? Why? Have you been in similar circumstances – how did you react?

Chapter 9: Championships

This is the National Finals race day – both the consolation and championship rides. All of the featured teams participate and the filmmaker provides heightened interest by cutting into the race at strategic points.

Getting at the Meaning Questions:

- 1 Lance Tissidimit said, "... here I am riding horses. It's all I can think about right now. Is my knees going to hold up? Am I going to sprain my ankle? I don't want to come up injured or anything like that. 'Cause I like my knees. I like who I am right now. Walking straight."
 - A. What does he mean by "I like my knees"?
 - B. Is he at more or less risk than Punkin to get hurt? Why?

Interpretative-level Questions:

- 1 Lance Tissidimit, after a third place finish in the consolation round, says, "I never expected that I was going to ride. And that's even better." And then he laughs. What makes this situation seem "even better" to him?
- 2 As you watch this segment, do you find yourself looking at techniques? Have you seen enough races that you know what to look for in the exchange, mount, start?
- 3 Do you have a preference for one of the featured teams? What did the filmmaker do to make you have a preference?
- 4 What was left out of the DVD you are watching? In any film, there are hours of tape that get left on the cutting room floor – what was missing? What would have made the story more complete?
- 5 Why did the filmmaker cut away to Kendall, Carol, and Lance during the race? Did you pay more attention to what they were saying because of that technique?

Chapter 10: The #1 Thing

This is the aftermath of the race...and looking forward to the future.

Getting at the Meaning Questions:

- 1 Why does Kendall say that "pride" is the number 1 thing? When you think back over the entire Indian Relay video, what are other examples of "pride" being the motivator – above competition, training, and even family in some cases?
- 2 At the end of good videos, viewers often have questions. What are the questions you want answered now?

Interpretative-level Questions:

- 1 How does the Murray team – with Myles at the head – look toward the next year of competition? In your opinion, will they continue?
- 2 How is the Tissidimit team looking toward the future?
- 3 What about the M&M Express team?

- 4** The last statement in the video is from Kendall Old Horn. “It’s our competitive nature that puts us into this sport, and then it’s our pride that keeps us in it and keeps us going. And the number one thing over everything is the pride of our tribes, the pride of our nations, why teams work so hard to do so good.”
- A. How do you define “pride”?
- B. Is it important to Kendall that he gets to compete with other Nations? Is that similar to how athletes feel in the Olympics?

Who are the featured speakers and what is the value of their contribution to the DVD and to the story?

Extension Activities and Discussion Questions:

- 1** Who—what audience(s)—do you think did the producers of this DVD have in mind? (age level, ethnic background or heritage, gender) Explain your answer.
- 2** What was the purpose of this DVD or what may the producers have wanted to persuade, inform, or inspire in their viewers?
- 3** Having watched the DVD and having participated in the writing and discussion activities, how have your beliefs, your knowledge, your understandings of yourself and others changed or stayed the same? Why?
- 4** The title is Indian Relay. Having watched the DVD, can you describe what make this relay unique?
- 5** Consider what’s missing in the DVD. Who don’t you see and whose voices and stories don’t you hear? Why? How might the story change if they were there?
- 6** Before watching the DVD, you wrote or discussed the purpose of team sports for players today. How is the experience for the Relayers similar or different from your ideas about sports today?
- 7** How do you explain the teamwork and training that make for a successful Indian Relay team?
- 8** How is the experience for the Relayers similar or different from your experiences in team sports? What are the advantages or disadvantages of each?
- 9** Compare your “picture” of Indian Relay today with the images of horse races you might have seen in the past.
- 10** Imagine that you are at an Indian Relay...
What do you hear?
Who do you see watching the race?
What are they doing?
Why are they here? Four or five different reasons

- 11 After viewing this DVD and after considering your own life and the expectations of those around you, what do you think success looks like? Who decides?
- 12 Of all the speakers or persons featured in the DVD, whom do you admire the most? Write a letter to that person and tell him/her how you feel and why.

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