

First Place

Category: Writing - Non-Fiction

Age Division: 15 and Under

A First Quadrille Practice

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For quite a while, Kathy had wanted a quadrille team with the theme of "Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band". Now there were four black horses -that with riders -boarding at her barn, and there was nothing slopping her now. After printing out the tests, she rounded everybody up one Friday night, found herself a whistle, and promptly began directing the first practice. All eager riders participating in Kathy's scheme had visions of four horses dancing in precision together, producing perfect dressage movements to music.

The results we did produce were laughable. Christina begged to practice cantering in pairs, even though her mount was refusing to trot. My mare pinned her ears at any horse that entered her personal space bubble, which extended many feet. Somehow, instead of four black horses, there were three black horses and two chestnuts. One, who had never done a lick of dressage in his life, wore a jumping saddle. Kathy, who had planned to ride Horse #1 (the fourth black horse), was on the ground, energetically instructing the first practice instead of riding in it. Trot together? Yes...until the barn's lead mare broke gait and threatened to bully her partner, a sweet, aged mare, into the corner. We did manage to successfully turn up the centerline together, but our attempt to halt and salute brought forth an exotic movement that looked like an upside-down version of "the wave" done on a line of dancing, wiggling horses.

Parents and friends, however, clapped enthusiastically at the end of this first practice. All riders finished with grins on their faces, and, despite the horses' squabbling with each other, they did not seem too unhappy either. Afterwards, I looked up quadrilles on You Tube and saw that, although there is plenty of room for improvement, we have lots of potential, and a quadrille future was not *completely* out of the question. We'll get by with a little help from our horses!