



## Evaluating Conformation

### Time

This lesson can be taught in one, 88 minute period.

### Vocab

**Balance-**Visually, from a side view, a horse's body can be broken down into four equal parts: The neck should be proportional to the shoulder, back, and hip.

**Structure-** A horse's skeletal frame is in the proper shape and alignment.

**Muscling-** A stock-type horse should have well developed muscle mass and tone.

**Quality-** A horse's appearance should be gender appropriate, with mares having more refined features than stallions.

**Breed Character-** A horse's physical appearance should match that which is determined by its breed organization.

**Travel-** How a horse tracks as it moves.

### Careers

Judge, Breeder, Trainer

### Essential Question

How do I evaluate the physical conformation of a horse?

### Activating Strategy

**Spot the Differences:** Compare two images and circle as many differences as you can. Explain that judging horses is like this type of game. In your mind, you will have a picture of the ideal horse, and when judging the class, you spot the differences in the horses presented to you.

### Teaching Strategies

Introduce concept of judging as comparing an object to an ideal. Have students complete "Spot the Differences 1." Compare notes with a partner. (10 min)

Next explain that judging horse is simple. In your mind, you will have an image of the ideal horse. We will use the Quarter Horse as the basis for judging, because it is the most popular breed of horse in America, and is the basis for many other stock-type breeds. Pass out "Spot the Differences 2," and have the students circle all the differences they see. As a group, discuss these differences. (15 min)

Following this discussion, have students write down the definitions for balance, structure, muscling, quality, breed character, and travel. Then show the first half of the John Pipkin video, "How to Judge Halter Horses." This will provide examples of the terms. (45 min)

### Summarizing

Now pass out Page 1 of the "Conformation Clinic." Have students refer back to the picture of the ideal Quarter Horse. Working with a partner, circle as many differences as you can see in each of the three horses to be evaluated. After eight minutes, count the number of differences found in each horse. Now place the class, with the horse having the fewest number of differences in first. Turn in a notebook card with your group names and your final placings. (12 min.)

Pass out Page 2 of the Conformation Clinic to let the students see how the class should have been placed. Answer any questions the students may have. (6 min.)

## **Evaluating Conformation**

### **Evaluation**

Use a Hormel card to score the placings. C-A-B, would be the same as 3-1-2-4, with cuts of 4-2-1. (We have added a nonexistent horse 4 with a cut of 1 whom every kid will have right.)

### **Materials**

Spot the Differences 1 & 2 Handouts

*How to Judge Halter Horses* [CEV Video].

Note: This video on halter horses covers all factors used to evaluate equine conformation including: balance, structure, muscling, quality, breed character and travel. John Pipkin explains each factor in graphics to give the most clear, visual pictures possible. A practice class and critique follow his discussion. Run time is 48 minutes

Conformation Clinic, from *Horse & Rider* magazine.