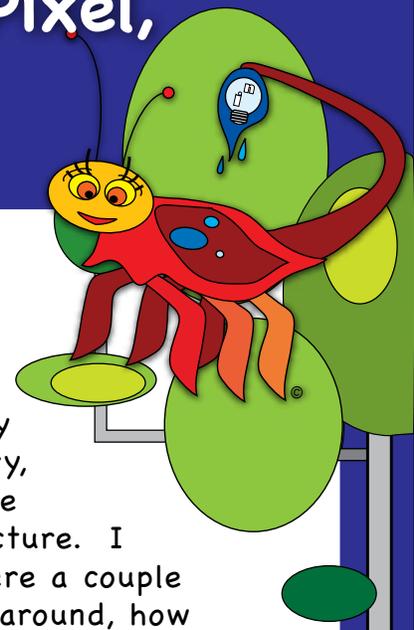




# The Adventures of Pixel, the Stowaway



## HORSES

“Hi, everybody! Pixel, the Stowaway, here with a new adventure. A couple of weeks ago, my friend Al decided to drive to Lancaster County, Pennsylvania to visit friends, and I, of course, stowed away in his camera. As we drove through some very pretty farm country, Al suddenly said, *Wow! Belgians! You don't see them very often.* He stopped the car, grabbed his camera, and jumped out to take a picture. I was kind of confused. All I could see through the camera lens were a couple of horses. I didn't see any people, and even if there were people around, how could Al tell they were from Belgium?

Well, it turns out Al was talking about the horses! They were light tan in color, and there were two of them grazing in a field. Al said that Belgians are a type of draft horse that originally came from – you guessed it, Belgium, a small country between France and Germany.



*Courtesy of Al Girdali*



*Courtesy of Al Girdali*

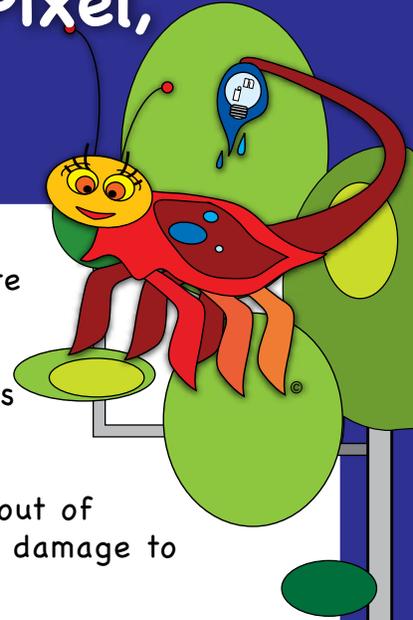
Draft horses are working horses that pull plows, wagons, and other farm equipment. Most farms have tractors to do that sort of work now, but some farmers still use horses. Belgians are one of the more common types of draft horses.

The ancestors of draft horses were the big chargers that knights rode during the Middle Ages. Horses had to be big, so they could carry a knight in armor and his weapons into battle or tournaments. A knight with all his gear weighed up to 400 pounds. Quite a weight!

When knights on horseback went out of fashion, the big horses became farm animals. I always learn so much when I travel with Al.



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Horses are measured in *hands*. A hand is 4 inches (the approximate size of the palm of an adult hand), and a horse's height is measured to the *withers*, the top of the shoulders. Belgians are up to 19 hands tall. I wonder how tall that is in feet? Percherons are the tallest draft horses. They grow up to 21 hands tall.

Draft horses are still used by loggers in some areas to move logs out of the forest. Horses don't require roads and their hooves cause less damage to the soil than truck tires or bulldozer treads.



*Courtesy of Wikipedia*

You can see draft horses if you know where to look. County and state fairs often have draft horses in the livestock exhibits. Sometimes the fairs have pulling contests where a pair, or team, of horses pull a weight, sometimes a ton or more, over a measured course. People call it pulling, but from the horse's point of view, it is really pushing on the harness that makes the wagon move.

You can see draft horses called Clydesdales on TV commercials. Clydesdales have huge hooves that look even bigger because they are covered with long hairs called feathers. Al says that draft horses are becoming more popular among some farmers since the price of gas has gotten so high. Since horses run on grass, hay, and oats which all grow in the sun, Al says they are solar powered!"



*Courtesy of Al Giraldi*

Brainstorm with your family 10 original,  
never-before-thought-of uses for a draft horse  
in contemporary society.