

Shelty and the Race

Carmel Brudenell

Edgardo Silva, Illustrator

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A pony learns the importance of hard work and perseverance, even when all hope seems lost, in the inspiring picture book Shelty and the Race.

A Shetland pony must give the best performance of her life to be crowned the fastest racehorse in Carmel Brudenell's picture book *Shelty and the Race*.

Shelty is a fast pony and the pride of her owner Tilly Boo, even though she is smaller than some of the other ponies. Seeing her potential, Tilly Boo and her mother enroll Shelty in the Shetland Pony Jumping Race, leading to weeks of vigorous training.

With themes of the importance of hard work and perseverance, even when all hope seems lost, the story focuses on Shelty's refusal to give up after a bad start to the much-anticipated race. Her determination to win is evident in the grit of her teeth as she races to catch up with a mean and bigger pony, Little Scott. Meanwhile, Tilly Boo is constant in urging her to be faster.

Surprises are few in this text, whose primary appeals are its warm colors and consistent formatting. The illustrations focus on the competitive spirits of the horses, with Little Scott's hostile expression remaining the same throughout the story. But while the illustrations capture other changes in facial expressions, too little distinction is drawn between expressions of excitement and anger. The conclusion is undermined by the fact that it is unclear whether the other racers are happy for the winner or upset. And the illustrations do not always complement the narration: a boy in a wheelchair appears in an illustration early in the story, but there's no textual explanation of who he is in relation to Shelty.

In the heartening picture book *Shelty and the Race*, a pony learns that there are rewards for working hard and refusing to give up.

GABRIELLA HARRISON (August 7, 2024)

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