

## **Fire Service Animals**

### **Part 1: Dalmatians**

These classroom activities are designed to provide elementary school teachers grades 3-4 with lessons that teach or reinforce selected Social Studies and English Language Arts standards using The FASNY Museum of Firefighting's online collections.

#### **Summary**

Students will explore the role of the firefighting service dog when firefighters relied on fire horses to pull apparatus to fires. Students will explore the role of the fire horse in the 1800's.

#### **Background**

How did the Dalmatian come to be associated with fire fighting? Dalmatians have been around for over five hundred years. Dalmatians have been used throughout history for serious work: as shepherds, as draft dogs, as hound dogs, as hunting dogs, as retrievers and as performing dogs. They also have what seems to be a natural calming effect on horses in working situations.

When travel was by horse and carriage, Dalmatians were used to protect horses. It was common for two Dalmatians to run next to the horses as they pulled a coach. When other dogs tried to run out and scare the horses, the Dalmatians would chase them away. Stage coach drivers used the dogs as guards to protect the team and the luggage in the coach

The Dalmatian easily adapted to the firehouse in the days of horse-drawn fire apparatus. When a firehouse had horses to pull the apparatus, it became common to keep a Dalmatian in the firehouse to guard the firehouse and horses. When the alarm came in, the Dalmatian led the way for the horse-drawn apparatus. At the scene of the fire, the Dalmatian would be watch dog for both the horse team and the fire fighting apparatus. The end of the era for Dalmatians came about with the introduction of motorized cars and fire engines. Today many firehouses in the United States still have the Dalmatian acting as companions to the firefighters and as mascots..

#### **Materials:**

- Images of fire fighting apparatus from the 1700-1800's from the online image gallery.

#### **Procedure:**

#### **Introduction**

#### **Part I – What role did the fire service dog, such as the Dalmatian, have in the 1800's?**

- **Using images from the online exhibit discuss the role of the firehouse dog in the 1800's ask the students:**

1. How did the dog, many of them Dalmatians, help firefighters at the firehouse?

2. How did they help firefighters when the fire bell rang, and the firefighters had to respond to the call with horse drawn apparatus?
3. How did they help at the scene of a fire?
4. What role does the fire service dog have today?

### **Evaluation**

Students will be able to explain the role of the firefighting service dog in drawing or writing.

### **Follow-up**

Throughout history dogs have had a special relationship with humans. Today dogs are valuable in such fields as therapy, arson investigation, search and rescue and herding to name a few. Invite a representative from an organization such as The Good Dog Foundation, or ASPCA Animal Assisted Therapy to visit the classroom, or for information on the training of service dogs in your area.

## **Part 2: Fire Horses**

### **Background**

As apparatus became heavier, and cities increased in size with taller buildings, humans could no longer haul fire apparatus to fires. Horses were used to bring apparatus to fire scenes. The era of the fire horse lasted roughly fifty years, from around 1850 to the early 1900's.

A lightweight, 1,100 pound horse was used on the hose wagons; a middleweight, 1,400 pound horse was used on the steamers, and a large, 1,700 pound horse was used to pull the hook and ladders trucks and other heavy equipment.

At first horses were stabled near the stations. When the alarm sounded, it took valuable time to unlock the barn, fetch, and harness the horses to the engine. Some firefighters did not want to relinquish their job of hauling apparatus to the scene of a fire, but before long, the horses lived at the station and the horses were accepted. The stalls were positioned behind or next to the rigs. In 1871, a "quick hitch" was developed. It basically dropped the harness onto the horses when they were in their place in front of the apparatus. At the sound of the fire alarm the team could be hitched and be on their way to a fire in under two minutes.

Fire horses required stamina, natural ability, and agility; they had to be obedient and fearless. Their training took between one and two years. Some larger cities even had a horse college where many horses were trained. When the fire bell rang in the firehouse, they had to calmly move into place and stand still while being hitched. They had to ignore the commotion. When the firehouse doors were opened they had to charge to the fire, through the streets amid carriages and pedestrians, while pulling the apparatus. At the scene, they were required to stand patiently while embers and flames surrounded them. They needed to remain calm while the firefighters fought the blaze. The horses had to do these things in all kinds of weather, and at a moment's notice. The fire departments carefully selected their horses. Stations also tried to create matched teams of horses when possible. Both stallions (male) and mares (female) were eligible to serve. Horses were cross bred to attain the best qualities of a fire horse. A horse might work at a station for four to ten years. In some cities fire horses had a vacation during the year, long before firefighters received

vacations.

It was a sad day at the fire station when a horse was declared unfit for duty. Many retired fire horses continued to work in less strenuous jobs. At times, the fire horses would forget their new roles and charge down the streets hauling a wagon after hearing a fire alarm sound. Some horses were put out to pasture when retired and sometimes firemen paid out of their own pocket to make sure that their past co-workers were well cared for at their new home.

Then, just like the Dalmatians, the fate of fire horses faded with the use of motorized fire apparatus. At the beginning of the 1900's it was economy and efficiency that dictated the change. The cost of maintaining a motorized piece of apparatus was far less than maintaining the cost of training, boarding, feeding and caring for horses. Motorized apparatus could respond to fires faster, and the savings to fire loss was considerable.

Many times, when a motorized apparatus came to replace the horse drawn vehicle, both the department and townspeople came out to see the last run of the team. There was a genuine affection for the horses and sadness when they departed.

**• Using images from the online exhibit discuss the role of fire horses in the 1800's ask the students:**

1. After an alarm sounded, fire horses could be hitched and out of the firehouse in less than 60 seconds. Is this true or false?
2. Once retired, fire horses forgot their training quickly and were easily assimilated to other jobs. Is this true or false?
3. Dalmatians were the dog of choice because they worked well with horses. Is this true or false?
4. Only female horses were chosen as fire horses as makes were considered too high strung. Is this true or false?
5. Fire horses often went to "horse colleges" where they were schooled in every facet of being a fire horse. Is this true or false?
6. Fire companies used only pure breed horses exclusively as fire horses. Is this true or false?

**Evaluation**

Students will be able to explain the role of the firefighting service horse in drawing or writing.

**Follow-up**

Contact your local 4H program coordinator and invite a representative to talk about their highly diversified 4-H Horse Program that provides horse-owning, and non-horse-owning, youth with training in basic horse science and horsemanship.

**Learning Standards for Social Studies  
NY State Standards Elementary and Intermediate**

Standard 2, Key Idea 2

Key Idea 2: Establishing timeframes, exploring different periodizations, examining themes across time and within cultures, and focusing on important turning points in world history help organize the study of world cultures and civilizations.

## **Learning Standards for English Language Arts NY State Standards**

### Standard 1—Language for Information and Understanding

Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding. As listeners and readers, students will collect data, facts, and ideas; discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and use knowledge generated from oral, written, and electronically produced texts. As speakers and writers, they will use oral and written language to acquire, interpret, apply, and transmit information.

#### Listening and Reading

##### Elementary

Key Idea 1. Listening and reading to acquire information and understanding involves collecting data, facts, and ideas; discovering relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and using knowledge from oral, written, and electronic sources.

### Standard 4—Language for Social Interaction

Students will read, write, listen, and speak for social interaction. Students will use oral and written language for effective social communication with a wide variety of people. As readers and listeners, they will use the social communications of others to enrich their understanding of people and their views.

#### Listening and Speaking

Oral communication in formal and informal settings requires the ability to talk with people of different ages, genders, and cultures, to adapt presentations to different audiences, and to reflect on how talk varies in different situations.

#### **Suggested Images:**

1855 Button Piano Box Engine

Dalmatian with Hose Wagon

Dalmatian with Steamer and Horses

Converted Steamer

Dalmatian

FF and Dalmatian Group Photo

Fire Dog

Horse and Engine

Jumper

Newsham Engine

Philadelphia Style Engine

Litho 4

Steamer and Hose Wagon