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# Equestrian Culture in France from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century

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*Past & Present*, Volume 199, Issue 1, 1 May 2008, Pages 113–145,

<https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtn001>

**Published:** 03 July 2008

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Thirty years ago, at the outset of her striking talk on the history of the horse, given as the Stenton Lecture at the University of Reading, Joan Thirsk cited Montaigne. In her lecture, which was devoted to the study of England rather than France, she argued that the three forces listed in her subtitle —

namely, service, pleasure and power — were at work in the early modern period, justifying the study of a topic only rarely examined on either side of the English Channel. First, there was the need throughout society for the performance of numerous horse-related services; second, there was the pleasure produced by activities such as hunting, dressage, the schooling of horses and (slightly later) horse racing; and third, there was the way that power was expressed in war. The place of the horse in the English economy, in...

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