



Changing life stories

# Craze of the Month: Tour de France

July 2018

## What is the Tour de France?

The Tour de France is an annual large-scale cycling event which takes place over three weeks. Starting on 7 July, 2018 marks the 105<sup>th</sup> Tour de France. Although the route changes each year, the format of the race stays the same: it features time trials, a ride through the Pyrenees and the Alps and finishes on the Champs-Élysées in Paris. Competitors participate in teams and the race covers around 3,500 kilometres.

## How can the Tour de France be used to teach literacy?

Utilising popular trends is a great way to engage children with literacy and learning. Our research shows that children who enjoy writing are seven times more likely to write above the level expected for their age compared with children who do not enjoy writing. Similarly, children and young people who write outside school daily are five times more likely to be writing above the expected level for their age compared with young people who never write outside school<sup>1</sup>.

Our **Craze of the Month** taps into current trends to improve outcomes in literacy and make literacy engaging and relevant. The activities featured here relate to the English programmes of study from the national curriculum in England<sup>2</sup>.

## Using the Tour de France in the classroom

The Tour de France offers a number of engaging and interactive opportunities to promote learning and literacy, bringing sport and cycling into the classroom. Students can develop a range of literacy skills covering reading, writing, speaking and listening. They can be used on a cross-curricular basis, as starter and plenary tasks, for homework and extensions or in form-time sessions. The activities are designed to be adaptable for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. You can print off the activities page and put it on your staff room noticeboard to share these ideas with colleagues.

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<sup>1</sup> Clark, C. (2016). [Children's and Young People's Writing in 2015](#). Findings from the National Literacy Trust's annual survey. London: National Literacy Trust.

<sup>2</sup> DfE (2013). The National Curriculum in England. Key Stage 1 and 2 framework document.

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## Activities

### Activity one: cycling commentators

Explore how commentators give live updates and keep listeners hooked when watching events. Ask students to create their own written commentaries, either describing one part of this year's race in detail or using a previous Tour de France event that they've researched. Ask students to consider how language can be used dramatically and engagingly.

Example sentence starters:

- *Look! Here comes cyclist Chris Froome, who speedily decides to...*
- *Can you believe the drama on the final bend? The leading team have suddenly...*
- *And now, as the first cyclists approach the final hill, we can see that...*

Challenge students to use techniques such as commands and rhetorical questions.

**Optional extras:** This activity develops verbal presentation skills as well as writing. Invite students to deliver their commentaries to the class as if they were live on air.

### Activity two: the travellers' guide to the Tour de France

Use the Tour de France as an inspiration for creating travel guides. Since the event ends on the Champs-Élysées, discuss why tourists like to visit Paris and explain the key features of travel journals, such as detail, persuasive techniques and descriptive language. Students can then write their own travel guides. This offers cross-curricular opportunities, such as learning about the history of the event and geographical features. Students could include:

- *What key facts about the Tour de France do tourists need to know?*
- *What other tourist attractions are nearby? How can students describe these in detail?*
- *Where can visitors go for food drink in Paris? What accommodation can they stay in?*

**Optional extras:** Students could research key phrases in French and include these in their booklets to encourage further cross-curricular learning.

### Activity three: cycling calculations

The Tour de France is a great opportunity to introduce some fun cross-curricular links with maths as well as language. Promote literacy through numbers by setting students some engaging Tour de France problem-solving tasks. Some suggestions:

- *Mark Cavendish can cycle at 60km/h. How many days would it take him to complete the entire 3,430km route at that speed?*
- *158 racers approached the final bend, 3 crashed. If you were one of the cyclists, what is the probability that you crashed? Did everyone have the same probability of crashing?*
- *On a flat time trial, cyclist Geraint Thomas pedals at 45 km/h and covers the time trial distance in 15 minutes. On a hilly time trial, Geraint covers the same distance in 25 minutes. How fast does he cycle on a hilly time trial?*

**Optional extras:** Ask students to create their own problem solving sheets about the Tour de France, researching facts and figures to make their worksheets detailed and interesting.

## Recommended reading inspired by Tour de France

Students who are interested in the Tour de France might like to try some of these books, which feature sporting heroes, action-packed adventures and inspirational stories.

Young adult/adult fiction:

- *Racing California* by Janet Nichols Lynch
- *The White Bicycle* by Beverley Brenna
- *I Am the Cheese* by Robert Cormier
- *Piglettes* by Clementine Beauvais

Fiction for younger readers:

- *Flying Fergus* (series) by Sir Chris Hoy
- *Along a Long Road* by Frank Viva
- *New Red Bike!* by James E Ransome
- *The Best Bike Ride Ever* by James Proimos
- *Eric's Big Day: A Bicycle Race Unlike Any Other* by Rod Waters

Non-fiction:

- *Between the Lines* by Victoria Pendleton
- *Richard Mitchelson's Grand Tour* by Richard Mitchelson
- *Wheels of Change: How Women Rode the Bicycle to Freedom* by Sue Macy
- *A History of Cycling in 100 Objects* by Suze Clemitson

## Further resources

The BBC have produced a range of resources in relation to the Tour de France:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/french/mafrance/html/tour\\_de\\_france/activity.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/french/mafrance/html/tour_de_france/activity.shtml).

The resources are free to download and can be adapted for primary and secondary students.

For parents who are interested in using their children's favourite TV shows, hobbies and games as learning opportunities, have a look at the National Literacy Trust's Words for Life resources, which provide further ideas to help encourage children to read and write for pleasure: <http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/7-11>.

