

Like Homo sapien, the Equus ferus callabus is unique – that is to say, like humans, Appaloosa horses are one of a kind. No horse is quite like the Appaloosa, whether it be color or personality. By default, the Appaloosa breed itself is set off into its own unique category of horses. Other horses may have characteristics of these equines, but no other breed has all three: spots or speckling on the body, mottled skin around the muzzle and eyes, and striped hooves (regardless of whether or not there is white on the leg). By the same token, no two Appaloosas have the same coat pattern; the color pattern on an Appaloosa is as unique to that individual horse as a fingerprint is to a human.

For example, my Appaloosa is like no other horse I have ever met. Hank is always willing to give me his all, but he is also not afraid to challenge me. He never fails to make me laugh, and he is always there when I need him. Throughout my almost ten years of riding I have never seen another horse like Hank, both in color and personality. In fact, I have only seen a small handful of horses that even remotely look like him: a large, red-roan Appaloosa with a grayish-white body and sienna brown points. Recently, spectators at shows we attend have been asking what breed Hank is - they too have never seen another horse like him! Needless to say, he stands out in the sea of brown that is a halter class. He also stands out around the barn with his impeccable manners, never impatiently pawing at his door or constantly calling out for his feed. Hank is by far one of the most versatile horses I've ever met, with the dexterity to compete in western and English classes on the same day with the swap of a saddle. Regarding lessons, he is patient enough for the littlest of riders and challenging enough for the most advanced. He is also one of the fastest learners at the barn, learning how to side pass in ten minutes

before a trail class and quickly picking up on how to perform a flying lead change, getting it right on his first try.

Just like my horse, I stand out among others. I prefer traveling to staying at home; I do not wear make-up; I drive a 1964 Buick Skylark....the list goes on and on. As with Hank, I am a “jack of all trades, master of some.” Given a job, I will complete it to the best of my abilities, just like my Appy. I am highly tolerant of small children, much like Hank is; in fact, Hank and I are sort of like little kid magnets. I pick up on new things quickly too, explaining why I do so well in school. Again, just like Hank I have an easy going personality and will do most anything for anybody (with certain limitations, of course).

As far as physical attributes go, Hank and I are a perfect match. Due to my thinness (coupled with minor scoliosis) my spine sticks out a little; Hank has a slight roach back, causing his spine to rise above the rest of his back as well. There are very little areas on either of us that are not muscle; we are both lean machines ready to tackle a hike or trail at any given time. Just like I look better in jeans and a flannel shirt, Hank shines the most in Western tack. However, we never look out of place in the more formal setting of an English class. The two of us make a good pair: a gawky-looking teenager on a slightly less gawky-looking horse. Somehow we manage to pull off a confident aura at shows, despite our outward appearance.

Given all of the above, the statement “Appaloosa, unique as you are” is a fitting expression. I have never met anyone like myself and I have never seen or rode another horse like Hank. As my dad would say, we are “two peas in a pod,” with Hank and I being the product of a single pea plant in a field full of beans. There will never be another

horse exactly like Hank, just as there will never be another human like me. The mere fact that our lives intersected one fateful day is pure luck and, as they say, “The rest is history.” Despite a few bumps in the road and scares along the way, I am immensely proud of our accomplishments, however small or large they have been. I will not say that I could not imagine my life without Hank, because I can – I simply do not like the idea or thought of it. We are a one of kind pair, accepting of both our defeats without complaining and taking our victories with humble acceptance. After all, the main point of competing is to have fun showing off your horse's skills, of which Hank and I always do well, no matter if we win or not. I am ecstatic to have an Appaloosa like Hank, and I hope he is equally happy to have a young rider like me.