During the Great Depression, millions of Americans were down on their luck and hopeless. "Going to the racetrack was the perfect escape. People came from far and wide to watch their favorite horses race. The horses were sleek, elegant, muscular, strong, and fast. REAL FAST. Except one. His name was Seabiscuit. He loved to sleep but hated to run." And yet this lazy, funny-looking horse went on to win an entire nation. Author's note. Sources. Full-color acrylic paint illustrations.

**JLG REVIEW**

*Seabiscuit: The Wonder Horse*, the eyes have it. As in her previous work, Meghan McCarthy’s charming illustrations depict everyone—horses included—as having big, oversized eyes. This exaggerated feature creates a sense of vulnerability and simultaneously conveys the widespread angst experienced during the Great Depression. McCarthy also includes black-and-white illustrated photographs arranged as if in a scrapbook from the era. These visual techniques bring a time period that might otherwise seem distant to young readers.

Seabiscuit’s story is a classic, inspirational American tale, and McCarthy tells it perfectly. Few people thought the temperamental horse would amount to much, but a businessman named Charles Howard saw potential in Seabiscuit. Then Seabiscuit’s trainer and jockey brought in animal “friends” to calm the lonely Seabiscuit and invited him with competition against other horses. Soon Seabiscuit grew from a scruffy animal to a swift, gentle hero.

McCarthy concisely describes why Seabiscuit’s rise to fame endeared him to the in-and-out American public: “Wow, a horse that looked just like them! Beat-up. A perfect. An underdog. A horse with courage!” Seabiscuit’s victory didn’t lift the country out of Depression, but McCarthy points out how people were able to “forget their troubles, even if just for a minute.” Ultimately, *Seabiscuit* is both a great story and a testament to the power of a great story.

**Curriculum Indications**

- **Type:** Picture book.
- **Genre:** Narrative nonfiction.
- **Subjects:** Seabiscuit, horses, Charles Howard.
- **Curriculum Areas:** Language arts.
- **Classroom Units:** Competition, Animals, Winners, Sports.
- **Topics:** The Depression, Horse racing, Seabiscuit, Taking chances.