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Early on, Tom Smith sensed something special about a knobby-kneed horse called "Seabiscuit." The trainer and the Biscuit had a close connection from the very beginning. Image online, courtesy Seabiscuit Heritage Foundation. PD

Tom Smith was a "horse whisperer." Known as "Silent Tom" to people, he could communicate with horses like few others.

But in the early decades of the 20th century, Smith's way of life was fast disappearing. By the 1930s, cars had unquestionably replaced horses as the principal mode of transportation for Americans.

Smith, the man who brilliantly communicated with horses, found work at some of the race tracks. After the stock market crashed in 1929, however, the Great Depression descended on the United States. People weren't betting on horses, and there were few jobs available for a guy who had dedicated his career to an obsolete way of life.

A period of gloom had descended on America - and on Tom Smith. He took a job in Tijuana, Mexico, at the Agua Caliente track.

In 1934, Charles Howard hired Smith to help him break into horse racing - the "sport of kings." Sent to the East Coast to find a good horse, Smith saw Seabiscuit for the first time.

Bad-tempered, the horse had been raced too often. But there was something about him that later made Smith tell Howard:

Get me that horse.

Listening to Tom on that subject, Charles Howard made one of the best business decisions of his life. He paid a mere \$8,000 for the racer who would become the top money-winner of his day.

Seabiscuit was an unlikely choice, but Tom Smith saw something special that few others saw in the knobby-kneed thoroughbred. And there was something more. Something unusual. When the future champion saw his future trainer for the first time, he nodded at him.

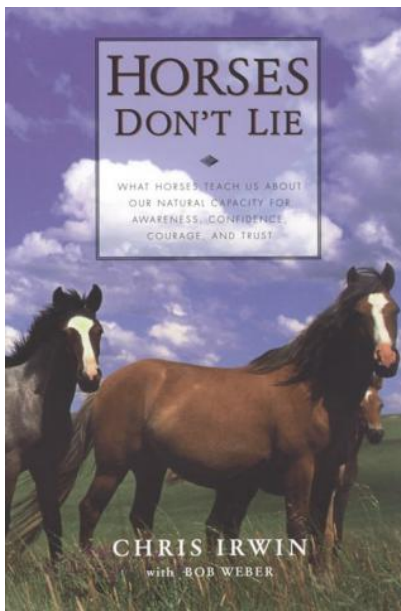
Perhaps the horse also sensed something special in the man.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/TOM-SMITH-Seabiscuit)

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See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/TOM-SMITH-Seabiscuit)

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Horses Don't Lie - by Chris Irwin

Image online, courtesy amazon.com website.

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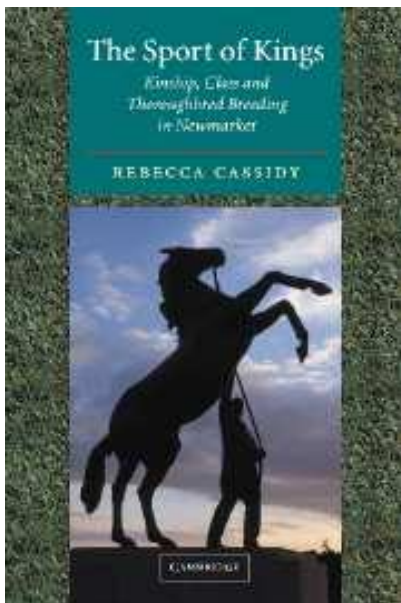
Agua Caliente Track - Tijuana, Mexico

Image online, courtesy the community-2.webtv.net website.

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The Sport of Kings - by Rebecca Cassidy

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Tom Smith

Image online, courtesy the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame website.

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Tom Smith Photo

Image online, courtesy the [American Legend Horse Farm](#) website.

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Seabiscuit Photo

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

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National Archives file