



# The Race of 1903

by Dina McClellan

The first cars were made over 100 years ago. They weren't called cars. They were called autos.

Most people had never seen an auto. Automakers wanted to show off their new machines. They announced that they would hold a race.

## READ & RESPOND

Text Structure

**Why did automakers have a race?**

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# A Race Across the Country

The Great Race took place in 1903. The race was across the whole country. It started in San Francisco. It ended in New York.

The cars in the race only had front seats. They had no windshields. The cars did not have the ability to go fast. They only went about thirty miles per hour. Still, most people thought the cars were amazing.



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## READ & RESPOND

Make and Confirm Predictions

**How long do you think the race will last? What clues on this page can help you guess? Keep reading to find out if your guess is correct.**

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Drivers prepared for the race. They packed food, water, and tools. They had tarps for the rain. They planned the best route.

They did not want to make sharp turns. They did not want to cross ditches. Those things slowed drivers down. They wanted to go fast. There was a prize for the winner.

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### READ & RESPOND

Text Structure

**What did drivers do to prepare for the long trip? Use the words “first,” “next,” and “last” in your answer.**

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# They're Off!

The race began on one of the loveliest mornings in June. Crowds lined the streets of San Francisco. Bands played. The mayor gave a speech. The cars lined up. They were ready to go.

Then the cars took off! Some went off the roads. This was dangerous. A car could run into a ditch. It might break down.



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## READ & RESPOND

Main Ideas and Details

**What took place before the start of the race?**

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## Rough Roads

Sometimes roads were bad. Then the drivers had to slow down. They sped up when the roads were good. The cars made the air dusty. The cars did not have windshields. Each person in the car had to wear goggles.

Cars often got flat tires. Their engines broke. Then the cars needed to be fixed. Drivers fell behind in the race.

### READ & RESPOND

Main Ideas and Details

**What made the trip difficult? Name some things that could go wrong.**

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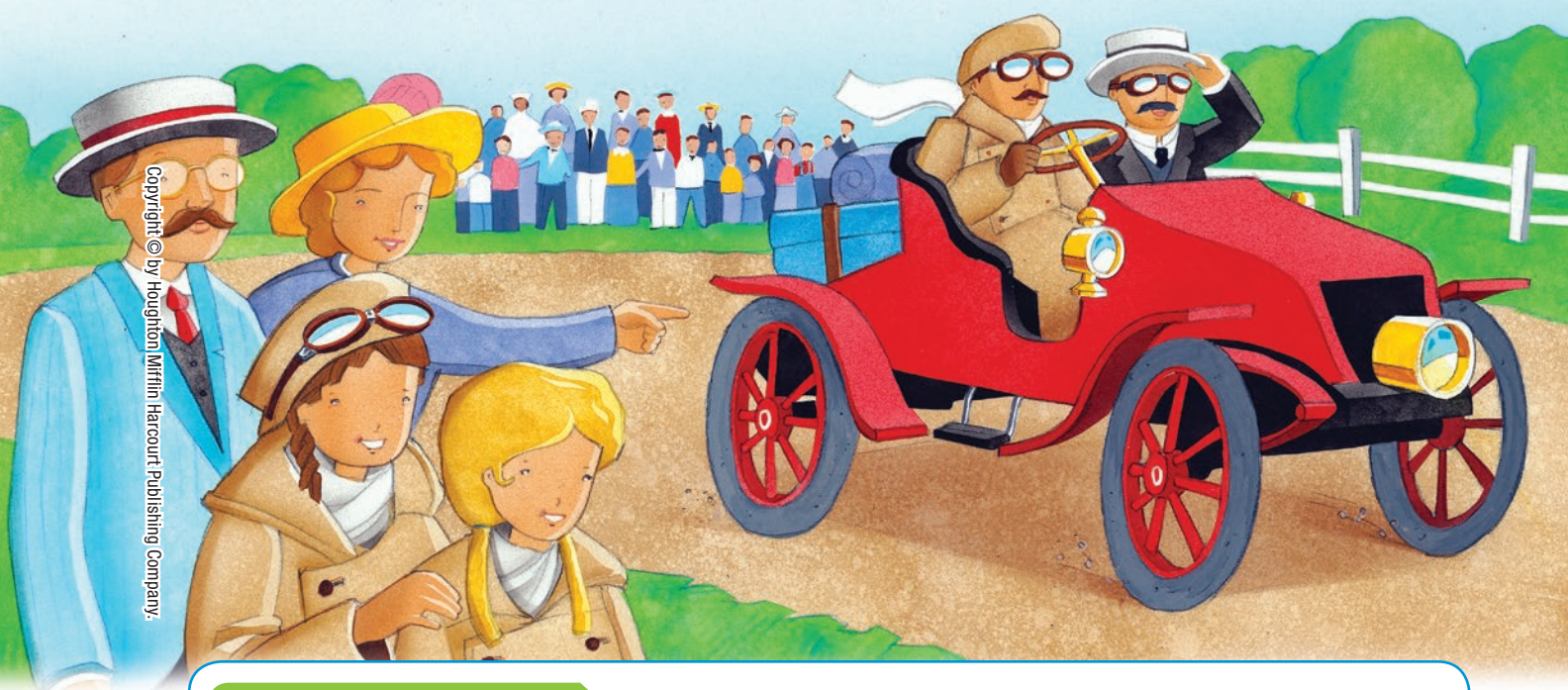
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# Along the Way

People came to watch and shout advice. They cheered as the cars drove by.

Some drivers tried to collect money. They did this by giving people rides in their cars. Then they bought more supplies for the trip.



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## READ & RESPOND

Make and Confirm Predictions

**Do you think anyone will finish the race? Why do you think so? Keep reading to confirm your prediction.**

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# Reaching the Finish

The race lasted for two months. At last the drivers reached New York. They were covered in mud. They were tired. Still, they were proud.

The Great Race of 1903 was big news. It made people think that the auto was more than a neat machine. It was a great way to travel.



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## READ & RESPOND

Text Structure

**How did the Great Race of 1903 change people's thinking?**

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# Reread and Respond



**1** How were cars of the past different from the cars of today?

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**Hint**

For clues, see pages 115 and 118.

**2** What could make drivers lose time in the race?

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**Hint**

For clues, see pages 116, 117, and 118.

**3** Why was the race important?

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**Hint**

For clues, see pages 114 and 120.