

Janelle Radney
Wood River, Nebraska
Age 14
“True Colors”

An Appaloosa with true colors would likely be a multihued brilliant patterned animal. After all, isn't that what most people think of as ideal when you say “Appaloosa”? From my perspective though, a horse's true colors are judged by what's inside. My horse Zip Plus Four—aka Tiffer—is a sorrel gelding with one white sock and a blaze. He has no spots, no mottled skin—he just got skipped by the spot and dot machine when his DNA was turned on. Yet he embodies all the other characteristics that make the Appaloosa my breed of choice. Tiffer is hard working, forgiving, versatile, competitive and kind. When I rode Tiffer for the first time last summer I knew immediately that he was going to be the best Appaloosa I had ever owned. Together, I was sure we would be able to accomplish great things. I knew it would take lots of hard work. Only a five year old, Tiffer had been on sort of an extended hiatus for a year and I'd had four pins put in my legs in May. Tiffer proved to be an even harder worker than me. Every step of the way of my recovery he's been there for me. Tiffer is an extra big horse and I am kind of an extra small person. In showmanship I take teeny running steps. The trainer yells for me to take bigger steps to match the horse's, but Tiffer hears her and instead takes tinier little trotting steps to match his speed to mine. He never tries to run me over or hurt me in any way. He works so hard with all his might to be just perfect; just perfect for me. When my leg was healed enough to start riding, I could only give partial leg cues on one side. Plus, my legs were about 12 inches shorter than the previous rider's legs so my cues weren't as clear. But even if I asked him wrong he forgave me and tried to do what I wanted. I have friends who show different breeds of horses and they are always talking about how sensitive their horses are to any little change. To me it sounds like their horses are all hyper and not very fun to be around. My Appaloosa is always steady and forgiving.

The Quarter Horse Journal always has a lot of advertisements about girls and their fancy show horses. I like to look at them and think about what they are missing out on by owning four different horses to do the job my one horse can do. Tiffer is the poster boy for a versatile and competitive Appaloosa. He was started by a 5'11" Youth World Champion Roper. I am a 4'10" puny little girly girl with a chronic disease. But last summer he was winning in Halter, Showmanship, Western Pleasure, Trail, Hunter Under Saddle, Horsemanship, Hunt Seat Equitation, Reining and even Games. At home I take him swimming in Lake Gloe and ride through cornfields in the fall. He ponies our yearlings and babysits in the pasture with the new weanlings. He can do everything! Sometimes people like to pretend they are something they are not and you have to really look to see their true colors. My little sister Lizzie is a HAL (High Ability Learner) student in school. Yet one of her best friends has Down's Syndrome. Lizzie doesn't let this stop them from having a fun time together. For her, it's what's on the inside of the other person that counts. Tiffer also has a heart of gold. He is a kind, competitive, versatile, forgiving and hardworking Appaloosa. I would not trade him for anything in the world, not for gold or even for my arthritis to be cured. True colors are the best part of an Appaloosa. Tiffer may have missed out when the spots were distributed but he certainly go the Appaloosa True Colors!