History AT HOME

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Daytona Racers
Fast-Paced Florida Lesson 1

You may know that Daytona Beach is famous for NASCAR racing, but did you know that Central Florida beaches have been called the birthplace of speed?

In the early 1900s the world was changing fast, and Florida was changing with it. Railroads and paddlewheel steamboats had opened up access to Central Florida in the late 19th century, making the area a popular destination for wealthy tourists from the North. Before Henry Ford made automobiles more affordable with the introduction of the Model T car in 1908, cars were only available to the richest people in America. For wealthy automobile pioneers vacationing at Ormond Beach and Daytona, the wide beaches offered a perfect track to race their expensive toys. Unlike the dirt tracks where other races had been held in Chicago and Detroit, the hard, packed-sand surface of Florida's beaches didn't get kicked up by the speed of the cars and blind the drivers.

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In 1903, the first organized race on the hard sand took place on a five-mile stretch from Ormond Beach to Daytona. The three-day event was deemed a success and put Ormond and Daytona Beach on the automobile-racing map. The area quickly attracted famous drivers from around the world, and racing events became increasingly popular. Fascinated with this new technology, large crowds gathered on the beaches to watch drivers compete to break land speed records. Fifteen land speed records were broken on the shores of Daytona Beach, including the first car to reach a speed of over 200 miles per hour!

As racing continued to gain popularity in Daytona, Bill France Sr., a retired driver who participated in sixteen races at Daytona Beach, recognized the need for set rules and regulations. He met with other drivers and race promoters at the Streamline Hotel in Daytona Beach to discuss the formal organization of stock car racing and, in 1948, NASCAR (National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing) was born. The final stock car race on the sands of Daytona Beach took place in 1958, but it paved the way for one of the most popular races still around today: the Daytona 500!

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D-26   WINTER BATHING AT DAYTONA BEACH, FLA.

Did you know you can still drive your car on most areas of Daytona Beach? You may not be able to drive more than 200 miles per hour like the early stock car drivers, but next time you're cruising down the beach at a maximum speed of 10 miles per hour, think of all the racing legends who once drove on these sands!
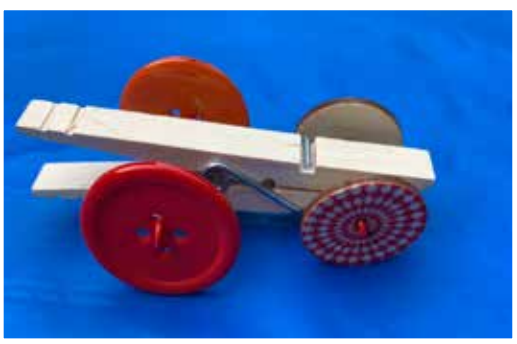
Daytona Racers
Activity

Make an old-timey clothespin stock car and put your racing skills to the test!
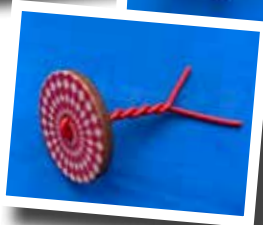
WHAT YOU'LL NEED:
- Clothespin
- 4 buttons (at least ¾ inches in diameter)
- Drinking straw
- 2 craft wire (1 piece 4 inches and 1 piece 6 inches, or use 2 bread ties)
- School glue
- Scissors

Want more fun? Challenge someone you live with to make a clothespin stock car and race them against each other!

Daytona Racers
Activity

WHAT TO DO:

1. Cut two pieces off the drinking straw – one piece should be ½ inch long, and the other should be 1 inch.
2. Make the front axle and wheels, like this:
   - Start with one button. Fold the 4-inch piece of craft wire in half and slip the two ends through two of the holes in the button. Pull the wire through until the folded middle of the wire rests against the button. Then twist the craft wire, leaving 1 inch untwisted.
   - Choose a second button. Slip the ½-inch piece of straw over the twisted wire, slip the open ends of the craft wire through two holes in it, and twist the ends of the wire to close and secure the second button.
3. Make the back axle and wheels, but repeating Step 2 with the 6-inch piece of craft wire, 1-inch piece of straw, and the two remaining buttons.
4. Pinch the clothespin to open the front and slip the front axle into the round indent.
5. Secure the back axle behind the clothespin's metal coil with a small amount of school glue and slip the back axle in until tight and secure.

Sources

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This lesson helps reinforce these Florida State Standards for K-5th grade:
• SS.1.A.2.1 Understand history tells the story of people and events of other times and places.
• SS.1.A.2.2 Compare life now with life in the past.
• SS.4.A.4.1 Explain the effects of technological advances on Florida.
• SS.4.A.6.1 Describe the economic development of Florida's major industries.
• SS.5.A.6.3 Examine the 19th century advancements (canals, roads, steamboats, flat boats, over-
land wagons, Pony express, railroads) in transportation and communication.