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## BOOK REVIEW: MUSTANG – FROM WILD HORSE TO RIDING HORSE BY VIVIAN GABOR

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# Book Review: Mustang – From Wild Horse to Riding Horse by Vivian Gabor

## Reviewed by Lisa Graham-Peterson

For many equine enthusiasts, the iconic image of the US West isn't a chap in chaps on a dusty town road. It's a herd of wild mustangs kicking up dust as they fill the horizon with magic. Nothing stops them. Nothing separates them. The plight of today's North American mustang is anything but magical

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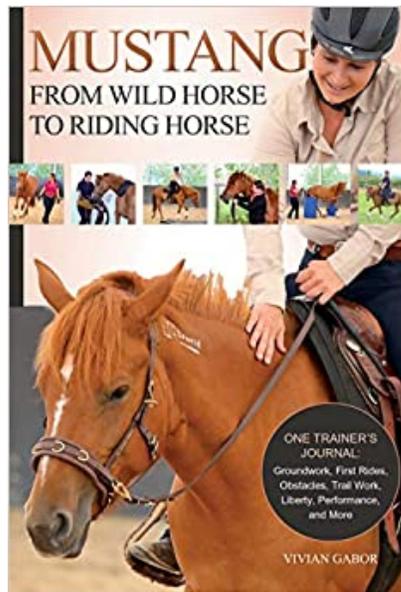
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– unless you're reading *Mustang – From Wild Horse to Riding Horse* by **Vivian Gabor**.

Within her pages, the personality and spirit of these now-feral horses take center stage. The cover teases you: "One Trainer's Journal: Groundwork, First Rides, Obstacles, Trail Work, Liberty, Performance, and More." The 'more' is what every trainer and rider is constantly searching for: insight into what our horses are thinking, what motivates them to behave the way they do.



Author Gabor is already an accomplished trainer and animal behaviorist when she joins the Mustang Makeover in Germany, held to facilitate the adoption of captured Mustangs. Trainers work with these horses for 90 days and then show to audiences of up to 6,000 at a time. At the end of the training, the Mustangs are auctioned off to new homes. This book tells of Gabor's training journey with "her Mustang" – a chestnut mare named Mona.

This isn't another "how to start a horse" manual. How could it be? The Mustang is not just another domesticated horse, but a born-in-the-wild creature. Gabor keeps this point fresh in the reader's mind. She writes in the Preface, "... Mustangs have not been bred with our interests and desires in mind. Nature's external influences are responsible for which in their wild herds survive."

She considers Mona's wild nature with every training decision she makes. Why does Mona choose to walk around the poles instead of over them? Because a horse in the wild would do everything to simplify energy use. As Gabor points out, "Mona's ability to pick things up quickly and to keep her attention on what's important is a key trait that I keep on seeing in this horse. Perhaps it is in her nature not to give unimportant things so much attention, so as not to lose sight of what really matters."

As a reader, I was acutely aware that every new step in training held heightened significance because this wasn't just another horse. My heart

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was in my throat with every milestone – first touch, first farrier visit, first saddle, first trail ride, first show ring. Mona made everything just a bit more ... unknown and exciting. Like the Mustang she is.

The book was originally published in German; this translation to English is excellent (many translations are not). The layout is graphically supported to help you move easily through major segments, with callout boxes for general guidance beyond the Mustang storyline. Color photographs help the reader join Mona and Gabor close up.

## Mustang – From Wild Horse to Riding Horse by Vivian Gabor

Translated to English by Helen McKinnon

Print Length: 159 pages

Color Photographs: 207

Publisher: [Trafalgar Square Books](#)

Publication: 2020

ISBN: 9781570769740

[Click here to purchase this book](#)

### About the Author

Germany-based Vivian Gabor – Dr. Gabor – is a passionate horsewoman, horse clinician, and trainer. Her career was built on understanding how horses communicate and learn to use that to train horses and help humans create stronger bonds with their equine companions. Following studies in Biology with a major in Animal Physiology, she earned her doctorate in Equine Science with a focus on Equine Learning Behavior. With her scientific background, her talent with horses and humans, and her accomplishments competing with her own horses, she formed [The German Institute for Behaviour and Communication](#). The Institute educates horse clinicians, trainers, and equine therapists interested in adding scientific knowledge to their training, working methods, and skill set.

After she participated in the Mustang Makeover Germany 2017, Dr. Gabor wrote this book. She is now one of the judges for this event. You can follow both [Dr. Gabor](#) and the [Mustang Makeover](#) on Instagram



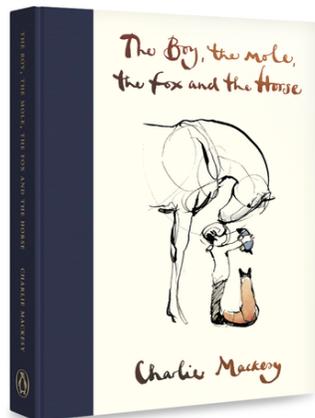
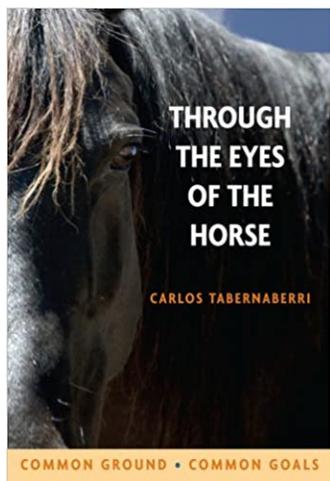
### About the Reviewer

**Lisa Graham-Peterson** (

[lisagrahampeterson.com](http://lisagrahampeterson.com)) is a Minnesota-based writer, editor, and university professor. A Western-style rider herself, she admits holding a hopelessly romantic image for the wild Mustangs of the US. Lisa harbors no romantic notions about horse training, however. She is certain she'd be lousy at it and is grateful to all the professionals like Dr. Gabor.



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