



Boarder Patrol

Erin Thomas

Reading level: 3.2

978-1-55469-294-1 PB

Book Summary

Ryan is driven. He's going to be a professional snowboarder, and nothing's going to get in his way. He learned the hard way that doing the right thing doesn't always pay off. Ryan lives with his aunt and uncle now and spends all his time at the ski hill. He volunteers with the Junior Safety Patrol to cover the cost of his lift pass.

When Ryan's board is stolen, he discovers that his cousin, Kevin, knows more than he should about the ongoing theft problem at the resort. Upon further investigation, Ryan learns that drugs are involved—and Kevin's in over his head. Ryan has no choice but to get involved.

As Ryan prepares for the video shoot that could be his big break, he learns that Kevin's in danger. Ryan has to choose between career and family, and hope that, for him, doing the right thing will pay off.

Prereading Ideas

- Every sport has its particular culture and ideals. Have you tried snowboarding? What are your preconceptions about the sport?
- Have you ever gotten into trouble for doing the right thing? Think of a story or movie where one of the characters gets into trouble for standing up and doing what's right.
- What do you love doing so much that you could see yourself one day going “pro”?
- When do you think it's a good idea to keep a secret?

Connecting to the Text

Plot

- Ryan's cousin, Kevin, is involved with a group that steals equipment and deals drugs on the ski hill. Ryan becomes suspicious because Kevin always seems to have money and is keeping secrets from Ryan. What would you do if you suspected that a relative or a close friend were mixed up in something dangerous?
- Ryan finds instructions online telling him how to use a coat hanger to break into a car. Do you think that information that might potentially be used for illegal activities should be publicly available? What are some arguments for it? What are some arguments against? Arrange students into teams of two; have them debate the pros and cons.
- Make an overhead of the following list. Discuss with students some of the things that make a good story:
 - ◆ a plot that is exciting, suspenseful, baffling or extraordinary
 - ◆ interesting situations that are well explained and believable
 - ◆ characters you care enough about to make you want to keep reading
 - ◆ characters you can relate to and who change and grow as they make decisions to solve problems
 - ◆ descriptions that make you feel like you're there
 - ◆ a variety of settings
 - ◆ a fast start—action, danger, humor
 - ◆ situations that provide an emotional response and give you something to think about
 - ◆ a good ending with problems solved and characters getting what they deserve

Using these criteria, have students write a critical review of *Boarder Patrol*. Students should ensure their review touches on a number of the criteria with examples and reasons for their assessment.

Character

- When his family moved away, Ryan chose to stay behind to pursue his dream of becoming a professional snowboarder. Olympic athletes sometimes have to leave home early to be billeted with families in cities where the training facilities that they need are available. In a reading response journal, have students consider and respond to the following questions: How far would you go to pursue your dream? Would you be willing to leave home? Do you think that Ryan made the right choice?
- Part of making your characters believable is writing realistic dialogue for them. If a character says things that you know nobody would say in the real world, then the story just won't work. Have students select several passages from *Boarder Patrol* where the dialogue is particularly strong or convincing. They should be prepared to explain their choices to the group. Did any students select the same passages? What makes these passages realistic?

Theme

- One of the themes of *Boarder Patrol* is the power of courage. Provide examples from the book where Ryan has to draw on his courage. How does the story move forward each time he faces his fears and takes on a challenge?
- Another theme in the book is that there is often a cost attached to doing the right thing. Ryan learns this first through his father's experience, then through his own. Ryan's father did something that he felt was right, although it had consequences for their family. If you discovered something that was harmful to others, but knew that reporting it would make your own life difficult, what would you do? Do you think that Ryan is right to be angry with his father, or not?
- Twice in the book, Kevin asks Ryan for help at a time when it's difficult for Ryan to help him—once because Ryan has to leave the competition awards ceremony, once because he has to leave the video shoot. In the first case, it turns out that Kevin didn't need his help after all. Read the fable of "The Boy Who Cried Wolf." Discuss with students: how is that story similar to this situation? Why do you think Ryan acted as he did?
- Do you think Ryan was right to keep Kevin's secret, once he knew what Kevin was involved in? He could have gone to Kevin's parents or to the police. Why didn't he? What would you do in a similar situation?

Point of View

The story is told from Ryan's point of view. As a reader, do you think that he is always right about what's happening? Example of when he's right: suspecting that his cousin is mixed up in something dangerous or illegal. Example of when he's wrong: assuming that Jamie deliberately sabotaged him by taking his place for the magazine interview. Have students write a section of *Boarder Patrol* from the point of view of a character who either is wrong about what's happening, or is deliberately lying to the reader. Then have students write the same story in the form of a factual report, stating what really happened. What details did their narrator change or get wrong? Why did the details come out differently?

Vocabulary

Snowboarding has its own unique vocabulary. Have students read the definitions for the following words. Assign students to choose a number of words and use them in a sentence. Can they use five of the following terms in a short paragraph about snowboarding?

backside rodeo: a spin and a back flip executed at the same time; the "backside" part of the name means that the rider starts off the jump with his or her heel edge

chair lift: a mechanical device that carries people up a ski hill. On a chair lift, people sit on a bench-style seat, side by side. A safety bar holds them in place as the bench travels through the air, suspended from a cable, to the top of the hill.

goofy: a style of riding a snowboard with the right foot in front of the left

patrol: usually the first-aid and hill-safety organization at a ski resort

rail: a long bar or rail, often metal, embedded in the snow, usually parallel to the direction of the hill so that riders can slide down it on their skis or board

regular: a style of riding a snowboard with the left foot in front of the right

switch: riding a snowboard in the opposite direction to what the rider is used to, for example someone who usually rides "goofy" riding "regular" instead

tabletop: a jump with a flat top

terrain park: an area or a run at a ski hill, which has been built up and groomed with jumps, banks, rails and other "obstacles"

tree well: an area of loose snow that collects around and under a tree. A tree well is dangerous because a person can become trapped in it and may suffocate.

whistleblower: someone working for or within an organization who reports something that the organization is doing wrong, usually because it's dangerous to the public

Connecting to the Curriculum

English

- Explore with students how to write a screenplay. Watch a section of *Stand By Me*, *E.T.* or *Edward Scissorhands*. Discuss setting, dialogue and the importance of stage direction. Have students choose a section of *Boarder Patrol* and adapt it for a screenplay.
- Study several magazine profiles of people the students know well (politicians and celebrities are good for this exercise). Discuss journalistic integrity and impartiality in preparation for students to tackle this assignment. Have students choose a sports figure they admire and write a feature magazine profile about that person. Be sure to include biographical and historical information, as well current events in the subject's life, and quotes from the subject.
- This novel is set on a fictional mountain in British Columbia. The mountain doesn't exist, but British Columbia's mountains are home to many famous ski resorts such as Whistler and Blackcomb. Have students find a brochure or online advertisement for a real ski resort in British Columbia. What selling points does the advertisement use to promote the ski resort? Who are they aimed at? Why?
- Create an advertisement for Ryan's ski resort, Salmon Valley, using points from the book.

Social Studies

Off-trail boarding is important in this novel. The main character, Ryan, sometimes chooses to board in the wooded areas of the mountain, or out of bounds. The "back 40" is a name sometimes given to the ungroomed part of a mountain. There are dangers attached to riding off-trail. Discuss with students: What might be the dangers of riding off-trail? (Avalanches, getting lost, tree wells.) Why would a person choose to ride off-trail? Why would they choose not to? What precautions should a person take before riding off-trail?

Health/Personal Planning

Ryan finally ends up asking Jamie and Ted Travis for help. What resources are in place for kids who have a problem but don't have anyone to talk to? (Discuss Kids Help Phone and other community resources.)

Science

- Have students research hypothermia, and construct a timeline showing hypothermia's progressive effects on the human body.
- As a class, investigate tree wells. How do they form? What makes them so dangerous?
- Research and discuss different types of lifts used at ski resorts: T-bars, gondolas, chair lifts, etc. What kinds do students have experience with? What are the pros and cons of each kind? (This could tie into a science lesson on pulleys or mechanics.) Investigate the safety concerns and considerations of each type of lift mechanism.

Physical Education

- Ryan volunteers as part of a fictional first-aid patrol at his resort. Many ski resorts employ the services of the Canadian Ski Patrol System or the National Ski Patrol System, or create their own patrol. The job of a patroller is to help keep skiers and boarders safe on the hill, and to respond to accidents when they happen. First-aid training is an important part of the job description, as is the ability to move an injured person off the hill. Has anyone in the class had any first-aid training? Why is it important? What sorts of accidents might happen on a ski hill? (Possible tie-in to physical education unit on first aid.)
- A snowboard is made up of one piece, like a surfboard or skateboard. Once the snowboarder's feet are attached to the board, he or she can't move them in relation to the board. The snowboarder controls the board by shifting his weight and turning. Have students pretend their feet are attached to the floor. Which ways can they still move? Can they touch their toes? How far can they bend their knees without lifting their feet or losing their balance?
- Investigate injuries caused by snowboarding (usually these involve the wrists, knees and concussions). How do these injuries differ from skiing injuries? How can students guard against them?

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Both Ryan and his dad took risks to do the right thing. What are some of the risks that might be involved in doing what's right? Why do we feel so good when we take those risks and do the right thing?
2. Have you been in a situation where you've started to drift away from someone you've known for a long time? Why does this happen sometimes?
3. Ryan's father left town and found a job in a new city because he reported something that his company was doing wrong. This resulted in the plant he worked for closing down. At the beginning of the book, Ryan resents this and thinks that if his father had kept his mouth shut, their family could have gone on as normal. Are some things worth a sacrifice? Would you put your family's well-being ahead of everything else?
4. Ryan's ambition is to become a professional snowboarder. He spends most of his free time at the ski hill, practicing and preparing. Do you have an ambition that you work toward?
5. What do you think will happen after the story ends? Will Ryan become a successful snowboarder? Is that a realistic goal for a teenager? Research and give examples of professional athletes that you admire. How did they get where they are today?
6. Ryan and Jamie are rivals as well as friends; will the fact that they compete with one another on the hill affect their friendship?

Resources

Writing Screenplays

www.screenwriting.info

Skiing and Snowboarding

http://wapedia.mobi/en/List_of_snowboard_tricks

www.csps.ca

www.nsp.org

www.britishcolumbia.com/ski

www.canadasnowboard.ca

www.snowpro.com

www.casi-acms.com

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snowboarding>

Books

Ryan, Kevin. *The Illustrated Guide to Snowboarding*

Smith, Jim. *The Art of Snowboarding: Kickers, Carving, Half-Pipe, and More*

Author Biography

A mediocre skier with exceptional first aid skills, Erin Thomas spent five years as a ski patroller, before giving it up to focus on her writing and primary schoolteaching. Erin lives with her family in Whitby, Ontario.

Author Website

<http://erinthomas.ca>