



Going Places

Fran Hurcomb

Interest level: ages 8–11

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AR Quiz # 126475

Consider the following as you read *Going Places*:

How can one person make a difference in his or her community?

Story

Jess and her friends in the tiny northern community of Fort Desperation want to form a girls' hockey team so they can travel to a tournament. There are several big obstacles in their way. Are there enough girls interested? Will they find a coach? On top of these problems, someone in town doesn't want them to play. Can the girls unmask the "Hockey Vandal" before he derails their plans? With help from their community, the girls persevere and make their dreams come true.

Author

Fran Hurcomb has lived the Northwest Territories for over thirty years. She is both a writer and photographer and has travelled extensively around the North, documenting the land and the people. *Going Places* is her second children's novel. She has also written many northern nonfiction books for both children and adults.

Connecting to the Curriculum*Language Arts*

- Fort Desperation is a tiny, isolated community. Engage students in a discussion about the differences between life in a small community and life in a big city, with special attention paid to opportunities, relationships and technology.
- As a class activity, create an illustrated dictionary of hockey terminology.
- Read *That's Hockey* by author David Bouchard. Have students write a poem about skating or hockey. Encourage students to use vivid descriptions that engage the senses.
- Invite students to take turns reading poems from *The Spell of the Yukon* or *Songs from a Sourdough*. Although Robert Service was a poet in the neighboring province of Yukon, his writing captures much of life in the Canadian North. Discuss the images his poems convey.
- Following from the above activity, challenge students to compose lyrics for a folk song or ballad about a character or event from *Going Places*. Direct students to the music of Gordon Lightfoot (“The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald” or “The Canadian Railroad Trilogy”) for examples of folk songs that tell stories.
- Invite students to imagine themselves standing in Jess’s shoes (or skates!). Have students write a letter to Jess’s father telling him all about the girls’ hockey team in Fort Desperation. What sorts of other things might Jess want her father to know?
- Have students write a critical review of *Going Places*. Each review should include a plot summary, the author’s name, information about the setting and characters, as well as a section detailing their reaction to and thoughts about the book. Ensure students understand that they may share positive reactions as well as thoughtful critiques of the story.
- Assign students to write a newspaper article about an event in the book. Articles should cover the five Ws near the top, include quotes from the people involved in the event, and follow an inverted pyramid format. Post the articles where others can read them.

Art

- Have the students create a poster or collage about hockey or skating.
- Let the students design a hockey jersey for the team of their choice. Students could be asked to bring in any hockey jerseys they have at home so that others can get some ideas.
- Invite students to design a hockey trading card. Using a blank index card, students can create a card for a player from the story. Cards should have a picture on one side and team information and stats on the back.

Science

- Examine the nature of ice. How is ice formed? How thick does it have to be in order to be safe to walk on? To drive on? Explore any ice that is accessible outside. Chop holes and measure the thickness. Examine different types of ice—colors, patterns, etc.
- Assign students to research how artificial ice is made in arenas. Compare this ice to natural ice.
- Have students research the seasonal change in daylight in the Canadian North. How does the amount of daylight differ between summer and winter? Why is it called “the land of the midnight sun?”
- As a class, investigate the aurora borealis. What causes this phenomenon?

Social Studies

- Jess and her friends are Dene (First Nation), Metis and non-aboriginal. In the Northwest Territories there are six different Dene language groups. As a class, find out about these different groups and how they work together in today's North.
- Fort Desperation is a fictional community, but its name is just as odd as numerous others in the North. Have students look at an atlas and make a list of other place-names that catch their attention. They may choose to use Alaska as well as the three northernmost Canadian territories.
- Use the book as a starting point to learn a bit about the history of the Northwest Territories. Assign groups to research the following questions, and then return to the class in a jigsaw-style learning exercise. Questions to consider might be:
 - ◆ Who was Mackenzie?
 - ◆ Why did explorers come to northern Canada?
 - ◆ Who are the Dene people?
 - ◆ How did the fur trade evolve?
 - ◆ How did the fur trade change the way of life for people in the North?
- Have the class look at a map of the Northwest Territories. Find the Mackenzie River. From the clues given in the book, have them infer where Fort Desperation might have been located, had it been a real community.
- Alone or in groups, have students research the history of hockey in Canada.

- Have students research Hayley Wickenheiser. How is she significant to Canadian hockey?
- Jess's mother makes moose stew for supper one evening at the café. Have students find out about some local dishes that are prepared specially in your area. Then direct them to look up the following on the Internet: the muffledetta, sopapillas and the clambake. Where do these regional dishes originate? Invite students to sleuth out more regional dishes and share their findings with the class.

Math

- Introduce students to the cord measurement for wood (a cord is four feet high by four feet wide by eight feet long, or 128 cubic feet). Have students look up the cost of cords of different kinds of wood in your area. With this information, have students develop a series of word problems dealing with different amounts and types of wood. Students can post their problems on a bulletin board for other students to solve.
- Have students choose an NHL team to follow. Once a week, examine the newspaper for the latest hockey stats for their teams. Students can keep track of goals and assists, games played, wins, overtimes and shutouts. From this, they can construct tables, charts and graphs that summarize data from their teams.

Health/Personal Planning

- Jess is voted captain of the team at the end of the story. Discuss with students: what does it take to be a good captain? Assign students to work in pairs or small groups to develop a suite of characteristics that apply to good leaders.
- Engage students in a goal-setting session. From the results of the exercise above, have them choose one or two qualities of good leaders that they would like to nurture in themselves. Guide students in breaking their larger goal into the specific behaviors that will lead them toward developing those leadership skills.

Connecting to the Text

- At the end of chapter 3, Jess notes that “you slide farther on grease than sandpaper.” This is a *proverb*—a popular saying that expresses a truth in a metaphorical way. “A penny saved is a penny earned,” and “The pen is mightier than the sword,” are two others. What do they mean? Pair students up and assign them to develop a list of proverbs and describe their meanings.
- Sometimes authors use a literary technique called *foreshadowing* to alert readers to what's coming later in the story. What clues does Hurcomb provide as to who is vandalizing the girls' hockey gear and rink? As you see it, what is the point of foreshadowing? Discuss.

- Descriptive, action-packed passages are great for moving a story forward. One of Hurcomb's strengths is her ability to create an image in your mind that you can actually see, hear and feel. Read the following passage from chapter 13, when Jess and the hockey team surprise the vandal by taking his photograph with digital cameras:

“What the—?” He stood up and stared, stunned for a moment, it seemed. We stood and stared too. For a moment everything was still. Deep in the bush, an owl booted. Then the Vandal was all motion. He turned and jumped onto the Ski-Doo, cranked its motor into action and was gone in a roar and a cloud of snow, across the rink and down the trail.

Have students locate several other passages in *Going Places* where the author uses action and description to increase interest. Highlight strong verbs that move the story forward. As a class, brainstorm a few possible story lines. Challenge students to select one or two of these story lines and write a short passage using description and strong verbs.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. For Jess, winter means hockey and skating. It's her favorite time of year—her favorite thing to do. Is there something that you're equally passionate about? Describe what gets you all fired up.
2. Fort Desperation is a very small community. Jess knows pretty much every family and their kids—what they do, what they like. Think about the community you live in. Would you say it's the same as or different than Fort Desperation? What would be the advantages of living in a small community? Would there be any disadvantages?
3. Members of the Fort Desperation community pull together to get things accomplished. Find several examples of this teamwork in the book. How does working together to achieve common goals help to strengthen the relationships between people living in the same community?
4. Have the students discuss the various ways that they can work together with the community at large to achieve goals.
5. Lead a discussion of why students think the “Hockey Vandal” wanted to stop the girls from playing hockey. How fair is it for one person to ruin the enjoyment of many? Do students think the girls acted appropriately in trying to catch the vandal?

Author's Note

Dear reader,

I became involved with girls' hockey in Yellowknife, NWT, in 2003, when my thirteen-year-old daughter decided to take it up. For the next five years I helped out where I could—team manager, chaperone, score keeper, and finally Governor of Female Hockey for the Yellowknife Minor Hockey Association. It was a real learning experience, but almost always fun.

Girls' hockey is one of the fastest growing sports in Canada. It's a little different from mainstream hockey, but it's still hockey, with all its bumps and bruises.

Organizing something like girls' hockey is a challenge anywhere, but in the tiny communities of northern Canada, it has a whole new set of challenges. This is a simple story about a girls' hockey team and how both the young and old members of the community got together to make it happen.

Of course, there is a mystery to be solved and there are challenges to be overcome. Jess and her friends took on their own personalities as the book developed, but overall, they reminded me of so many of the young northern women I've met over the years. This is a hockey book with a unique northern perspective.

Yours truly,
Fran Hurcomb

Resources**Books***Fiction*

- Brouwer, Sigmund. *Thunderbird Spirit; Chief Honor*
- Carriere, Roch. *The Hockey Sweater*
- Fitzgerald, Dawn. *Getting in the Game*
- Macgregor, Roy. *The Screech Owl series*
- McFarlane, Brian. *The Mitchell Brother series*
- Roy Brownridge, William. *The Moccasin Goalie*

Nonfiction

- Daitch, Richard W. *Hello Canada: Northwest Territories*
- Davidson, John. *Hockey for Dummies*
- McKinley, Michael. *Ice Time: The Story of Hockey; Hockey: A People's History*
- McLeod, Tom and Mindy Willet. *The Delta is My Home*
- Napier, Matt. *Z is for Zamboni: A Hockey Alphabet*
- Simac, Kimberly Jo. *Girls Play Hockey, Too!*
- Stewart, Barbara. *She Shoots...She Scores*
- Wilson, Stacy. *The Hockey Book for Girls*

Online

Canadian Hockey
www.hockeycanada.ca

Backgrounder on ice hockey
www.wikipedia.org/wiki/ice_hockey

History of the game of ice hockey
www.cbc.ca/hockeyhistory

Information about the Mackenzie River
www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mackenzie_River
www.greatcanadianrivers.com/rivers/mack/mack-home.html
www.ccge.org/ccge/english/resources/rivers/tr_rivers_mackenzieRiver.asp

Aurora Borealis—Michigan Technological University
www.geo.mtu.edu/weather/aurora

Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre (Northwest Territories museum)
www.pwnhc.learnnet.nt.ca

Government of the Northwest Territories
www.gov.nt.ca