



## ***Shatterproof***

Jocelyn Shipley

Reading level: 2.0

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### **Book Summary**

Thirteen-year-old Nate needs a break from looking after his newly disabled mom. One day when his mom thinks he's at a cross-country meet, he goes to the mall with a friend he's forbidden to have contact with. At the skate shop Nate sees a new board he can't afford but has to have, and he gets talked into running a scam. It turns out Nate looks a lot like a teen TV star filming in the area. So he and his buddy get girls to pay cash to be extras on set. It's all fine until Nate meets a girl he really likes. Nate knows he has to tell her the truth, but he's not sure he has what it takes to come clean.

### **Author Biography**

**Jocelyn Shipley** is the author of several books for young people, including *Shatterproof* and *Impossible* from Orca Book Publishers. She is co-editor of *Cleavage: Breakaway Fiction for Real Girls*. Her award-winning stories have been published in newspapers and anthologies, and her work has been translated into many languages for Stabenfeldt's GIRL:IT book clubs. Born and raised in London, Ontario, Jocelyn now lives in Toronto, Ontario, and on Vancouver Island, British Columbia.

**Connecting to the Text*****Character Study***

To engage students with the main characters and themes in *Shatterproof*, use the following as discussion topics, novel study or writing exercises.

1. Lug took pictures at the grad party and Nate got in trouble for not stopping him. Putting aside the Photoshop work, was Nate responsible too, or was Lug completely to blame?
2. Nate describes Dakota as a mean girl he doesn't trust. She calls Lug a "perv" who "ogles girls" and has "sick, creepy schemes" (ch. 2). After seeing how Lug behaves towards the girls at the mall, and towards Spring and Dakota, do you think Nate might look at Dakota differently? Was Dakota right about Lug all along?
3. Nate seems undecided about the scam: "I'm so conflicted. I want the money. But I know it's wrong", and "part of me wants to see if we can actually do it" (ch. 5). Reflect on this. Nate seemed willing to risk his integrity for a new skateboard. At what point did he realize he was in too deep and the scam had gone too far? What meant "too far" for Nate?
4. Everyone noticed that Nate changed over the summer. He got leaner and more muscular from all the running he did. After what happened with Lug at the mall, and getting to know Spring, do you think Nate has now "grown up" emotionally as well? In what ways?

***The Writer's Craft***

Challenge students to compare and contrast two characters: Dakota/Spring or Lug/Nate. The characters' personalities are revealed through their attitudes, actions and decisions. Examine the two characters closely, using the questions below as prompts.

- How are the characters described initially? What were your first impressions?
- Were your first impressions consistent throughout the novel, or were the characters more complex or complicated than you thought initially?
- For your two characters, find examples that demonstrate how the two are different. Consider things like their attitudes, their actions, and their decisions.
  - ♦ For each of the two characters, indicate if they would be someone you would want to hang out with (or not) and why. What makes them interesting or unattractive to you?
  - ♦ How do the contrasts between the characters help us connect to key themes, such as right/wrong, personal integrity, selfish/selfless, the meaning of friendship, beauty, etc.

***Building Vocabulary***

The following words are used in *Shatterproof* in the context of Nate and Lug scamming girls at the mall.

audition	episode	industry	rehearsal
autograph	extras	locations	roles
celebrity	fantasy	on set	series
discovered	filming	privacy	scouting

Ask students to write a paragraph describing what happened, using four or more of the words above. Students may wish to choose one of these prompts:

- Dakota said Nate looked a lot like Bo Blaketon. Later, at the mall...
- A girl asked Nate if he was Bo Blaketon. Nate denied it but Lug stepped in and...
- A girl from the kiosk asked to be an extra on *Shatterproof*. That gave Lug an idea...

### Connecting to the Students

Nate has a lot to deal with. He helps care for his mother, who's now disabled because of an accident, and he must help with the cooking, shopping and cleaning. His dad left their family and Nate thinks he's a jerk. Nate's also just started high school and doesn't have friends yet. Use the following for discussion, personal reflection or writing topics.

- As Etta says, Nate really deserves a break. What could Nate do to take care of himself, while still helping out with his Mom? (**Prompt:** running, skateboarding, movies)
- Nate's dad left the family after the skiing accident. Nate said, "I hate him so much. But I miss him too" (ch. 4). What can Nate do to get in touch with his feelings? How can he build a healthy relationship with his Dad?
- Nate hasn't made friends at high school yet. Given his experiences in the novel, what could he do to meet people? (**Prompt:** running, recycling, get involved with a charity)
- Sometimes it's hard to get out of a bad friendship, especially if you've been friends for a long time. Imagine Lug hadn't moved away, and he's still getting Nate into trouble. How could Nate break away? If you had to get out of a relationship or serious situation, what is available to you? (**Prompt:** at school, in the community, online)

### Connecting to the Curriculum

#### *Social Studies, Law*

Lug and Nate commit (or threaten to commit) several crimes in the novel. Ask students to define the terms below and connect them to the novel. What would the consequences be for Lug and Nate if they were caught?

Consider consequences to various domains: legal, social, school, family, reputation, etc.

- Fraud (*deliberately deceiving another or depriving them of a right, for your own gain*)
- Blackmail (*making threats to make a gain for yourself; causing loss until a demand is met*)
- Shoplifting (*taking goods from an open store without paying*)
- Cyberbullying (*harming or harassing someone using information technology networks*)

***Personal Planning***

Lug does a lot of bad things. He blackmails his friend, takes pictures of people without permission, scams people out of money and shoplifts. Ask students to reframe his bad behaviors as potential skills and talents. How could Lug redirect and focus his skills in a healthy, lawful way—through school, a job, a sport or hobby? For example,

- Lug is really good at acting a part, he's inventive and a quick thinker. He might be really good in drama class, at an improv club, or as a debater.
- Lug is great at giving a "spiel" and "he handles everything like a pro" (ch. 6). If he was trained and understood boundaries, he might make a good salesperson.
- Lug is a "master at staying cool" (ch. 12). Maybe he could work in emergency services. They have to stay cool under pressure.

***Social Studies, History***

At the end of the novel, Nate promises he'll make a big donation to UNICEF. Ask students to find out more about this organization, answering one or more of the questions below. See **Website** below for teacher resources.

- When was UNICEF created by the United Nations, and why? Where does it get funds?
- UNICEF does a lot of work in the field in places around the world. What does "in the field" mean? Provide an example, including location, services provided and to whom, and the reason there is a need for UNICEF.
- Write a definition and give examples for one of these terms in the context of UNICEF: *Goodwill Ambassadors, emergency aid, water and environment, poverty.*
- Why do you think UNICEF is important to Spring? Give an example from the novel.

***Creative Writing Ideas***

1. Nate's mom was once a track star and fitness instructor, and now she's disabled. That's why she was so excited by Nate's "fake story" about competing at a cross-country meet (ch. 1). Imagine you're Nate on the ferry heading home. You decide you can't tell Mom face-to-face so you write her a letter instead. Begin:  
*Dear Mom, You'll never believe what happened to me today, and the lessons I learned...*
2. At times, Nate forgets how much trouble Lug causes. Ask students to imagine they are Nate a few weeks after he's home. Nate's cousin has just moved to Vancouver and goes to the same school as Lug. They've started hanging out. Write an email to your cousin warning him/her about Lug. Incorporate one or more of these quotes from the novel:
  - ch. 3 I'd forgotten how Lug is always up to something. And how that something usually gets him in trouble. Gets *us* in trouble.
  - ch. 4 Uh-oh. Lug's ideas always end badly.
  - ch. 5 Something tells me I *will* regret it. Big time.
  - ch. 5 "You're evil, you know that?" / "Know it and proud of it."
  - ch. 6 I can't help thinking about all the times Lug's schemes have gotten me in trouble.

3. Ask students to imagine a dialogue between Spring and Nate's mom where they talk about their accidents, and what they've learned about themselves. **Prompt:** Spring says she's a stronger person, and knows that beauty comes from inside. But she also says, "I still wish it had never happened, you know? I'd like to be normal again" (ch. 11).

### Connecting to the Wider World

1. Nate says, "Lug's weird about girls. He's obsessed with them, but he doesn't seem to respect them" (ch. 2). Ask students to reflect on this, finding examples of the way Lug thinks about and behaves towards girls. Is Lug someone you'd want to hang with or you'd want your friends to hang with? How is Nate's view of girls different from Lug's?

You may wish to introduce the concepts of objectification and chauvinism. For example, Lug says, of girls, they're "pretty things" (ch. 3); "all girls want to be on TV" (ch. 4); and "it's their own fault if we take their money" (ch. 6). Is it ever okay to talk about girls and women (or anyone) this way?

2. In chapters 8, 9 and 10, Nate and Spring talk about consumerism. Nate says the "mall is full of overpriced junk nobody needs." Spring says, "everything is overpriced and probably made by child labor." They agree "commercialism sucks."

Ask students to create a mind map on this topic: Think of something you got at a mall. Where was it designed? Built? Packaged? Is it a "normal teenage thing...to want cool stuff," or did the mall "make" you want it, as Nate suggests?

3. A theme that emerges in the novel is the right to privacy. Lug didn't care about privacy when he took pictures of girls at a party without asking them, or when he took pictures and video of Nate at the mall. Also, when a group of girls first mistook Nate for Bo Blaketon, one girl said, "I'm sorry...I should have respected your privacy" (ch. 3).

Use these as an opportunity to discuss the right to privacy, whether in person or online.

- ♦ For all its many benefits, the Internet can also be a dangerous place. We hear about scams, phishing and even predators. Make a list of ways to protect your privacy online. For example, by choosing a user name that doesn't indicate where you live, not posting your Social Security Number/SIN, or sharing your home and school addresses.
- ♦ In the US, there is a federal law which protects kids under 13. Find out more about the *Children's Online Privacy Protection Act* (COPPA). When it comes to the privacy and protection of kids, what rules does it make for people who operate websites?

- ♦ Lug was caught taking pictures of girls at the grad party and his parents found out (ch. 2). Lug deleted the pictures and wrote an apology letter, but it didn't stop him doing it again (taking pictures and blackmailing). If someone at your school got caught doing this, what would the consequences be? Would that be enough to get through to Lug?
- ♦ Do you think celebrities and other public figures should have to sacrifice some or all of their right to privacy because being in the public eye is part of their job?

**Web Resources**

<https://teachunicef.org>

[www.priv.gc.ca/en/about-the-opc/what-we-do/awareness-campaigns-and-events/privacy-education-for-kids](http://www.priv.gc.ca/en/about-the-opc/what-we-do/awareness-campaigns-and-events/privacy-education-for-kids)