



Up North

Jeff Ross

Reading level: 2.8
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Book Summary

Rob Maclean and his mom have moved to a small community in northern Ontario in order to be closer to Rob's imprisoned brother, Adam. One night after a rowdy party, Rob and some friends end up in a van speeding through a First Nations reserve. The driver of the van has a deep hatred for Indigenous people, and he lobbs rotten fruit at a group of young men gathered in front of a community center. The young men chase them down, and Rob's friend Alan is injured and ends up in a coma. Now the police are pressuring Rob to identify their prime suspect.

This is the second story featuring Rob and Adam Maclean, after *Coming Clean*.

Prereading Idea

Up North touches on issues that many teens face: divorce, peer pressure and bullying. Ask students to write a brief account explaining how one of these issues has affected their lives or the life of someone they know. Ask for student volunteers to share with the class.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- Bullying is a fact of life for many children and youth; sadly, most people have been bullied, have witnessed bullying or have even bullied someone else. Ask students to write about a time they had an experience with bullying and then, in small groups, share their experiences. Have each group discuss ways bullying can be avoided, ways to respond when bullied and ways to talk with peers who may be bullying others. Students should also look at life from the perspective of the bully, and discuss what happens in a kid's life to make him or her want to be mean to others. Have each group write and present a skit focused on one of the scenarios they have discussed.
- Present several definitions of a stereotype to the class and then ask students to share stereotypes they see evident in their daily environments. Expand the discussion to include stereotypes about older people, races and religions. In small groups, ask students to discuss how stereotypes are developed and perpetuated in society and the ramifications of people choosing to act on stereotypes. Ask each group to write a synopsis of their discussion and the conclusions reached. Have one person from each group share with the class and then post the group responses.

Connecting to the Text—Elements of the Novel***Theme***

People's capacity for cruelty is one of the universal themes of literature. Ask students to write a short paper justifying why this should or should not be considered the dominant theme of *Up North*, using examples from the book to support their answer. Have the students participate in a panel discussion to discuss this and any other suggested themes.

Conflict

Every student has the right to attend a school with a safe environment and to learn without fear of bullying. Bullying can take many forms: physical abuse, verbal abuse, emotional abuse, such as isolation from a group, and cyberbullying. All leave a mark on the victim and, often, on the bully. The most common reasons people are bullied involve physical appearance and social status. Ask students to create a "Top 10 Ways to Prevent Bullying" list for students and educators to help prevent and stop bullying in schools. Have students create posters with the lists and display them throughout the school.

Setting

The setting for *Up North* is northern Ontario, but the events could happen in almost any diverse school. In what other types of settings could this story have taken place—an office, a church, a retail store? In groups, have students choose an alternate setting and outline what conflicts might take place, how the characters might act and react to the conflict, and how the problems might be resolved. Have each group use its outline to prepare a "coming attractions" movie trailer for the scenario described. Have the class select the best scenario based on the believability of the alternate setting and details.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Prior to the incident on the reserve, how does Keith exhibit bullying behavior?
2. Why do Alan and Rob go with Keith to the reserve? What could they have said or done to prevent what happened?
3. What reason does Keith give for going to the reserve? When Marc tells Rob why he thinks Keith wanted to harass them, how does Rob respond?
4. What reasons does the judge give for making all four boys who were involved in the fight work together to complete their community-service hours?
5. Who is injured in the wreck? What provisions does the group find in the cabin?
6. Why does Keith continue saying rude things to Marc and Duncan? How do Marc and Duncan react to Keith's verbal assault?
7. Rog says, "We all have to learn when to make choices for ourselves" (chapter 11/page 105). What choices does each character make that affect the situation?
8. In chapter 12 (page 109), Rob talks about what he learned from the experience. How would you paraphrase the lesson Rob learned?
9. Why does Marc do the right thing even though he knows it will bring shame on his family?
10. Why is it important to Rob to visit his brother, Adam, in prison? What ground rules does Adam set before he agrees to let Rob visit him?

Writer's Craft***Vocabulary Enrichment***

Ask students to define the following words on a 3-x-5-inch note card. Then, in small groups, have students prepare a demonstration for each of the words. Have each group present its demonstrations and allow the rest of the class to guess the word.

Vengeful	ch. 1	Cringed	ch. 7
Scuffle	ch. 3	Sparsely	ch. 9
Debris	ch. 5	Smirk	ch. 10
Cowardice	ch. 6	Tensing	ch. 11

Author Biography

Jeff Ross is the award-winning author of several novels for young adults, including Orca Soundings titles *Coming Clean* and *A Dark Truth*. He currently teaches scriptwriting and English at Algonquin College in Ottawa, Ontario, where he lives with his wife and two sons. For more information, visit www.jeffrossbooks.com.