



Grind

Eric Walters

Reading level: 2.2

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AR Quiz # 83806

Book Summary

When Phil, a dedicated, talented skateboarder, meets professional skater, Bam Bam Bradley, and talks with him about his official website, Phil realizes the potential he and his friends have to make money with skateboarding. His friend, Wally, enlists the help of a computer geek friend to build a website which features the skating skills of Phil, Wally, and Lisa, Phil's former girlfriend and an accomplished skater. As their site grows in popularity, a national company agrees to sponsor their site, and soon the four friends are making money. However, the need for radical video footage pressures them to take risks that land Wally in the hospital.

Prereading Idea

Most students won't understand the technical terminology used to describe skateboarding tricks. Ask them to visit the following sites to see how the tricks are performed.

www.bobstricktips.com

http://skateboard.about.com/od/tricktips/Trick_walk_throughs_and_tips.htm

www.skateboard-city.com/skateboard-trick-tips

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- One of the obstacles that limits Phil and Wally's skate time is the lack of places available to skate legally and the subsequent harassment they encounter from security guards. Ask students to investigate the laws in their community regarding skateboarding and to determine if sites exist for skaters to legally practice their skills. Then divide the class into two groups to debate both sides of the skateboarding issues.
- Have students write letters to their city councilman addressing their findings, opinions and possible future courses of action.
- The author's conclusion to the story omits the final outcome of several events that impact Phil, Lisa, Wally and their web page. Ask students to write a short chapter fourteen, which focuses on the questions left unanswered. Students can read their alternate endings to the class. Use the students' endings as a springboard to discuss author choices, reader expectations and effective endings.

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

In chapters one and two, the author clearly describes Phil and Wally using both direct and indirect characterization enabling the reader to understand their actions and reactions. Ask students to make a list of the traits each character possesses, and then determine how the author relates this to the reader. Have students write a character description of a famous personality without naming the person. Then ask each student to read their description aloud so the class can guess who the famous person is.

Theme

The following quote represents a theme of this novel. Students can either use this quote or another quote that represents one of the themes from the book. Working in groups, have students copy the theme in the middle of a poster board. In the space remaining, have students write a paragraph on each of the main characters. Each paragraph should discuss how the theme relates to the character. Then, ask students to include a paragraph that explains how the theme relates to their lives.

“If at first you don't succeed, try, try, and try again.” —W. C. Fields

Conflict

Conflict, a crucial element in well-written stories, falls into one of the following categories: man against man, man against nature, or man against self. *Grind* includes all three types of conflict. In groups of three, ask students to list events and situations from the book that represent these three types of conflict and to identify the resolution of each conflict. Ask each group to prepare a poster board showing the conflicts. Each group can present their poster board to the class.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Phil and Wally obviously differ in their views about schoolwork and grades. What advantages and privileges do both teachers and parents provide to students who make good grades? Why is Phil so apathetic about his schoolwork?
2. Phil and Wally react differently to Bam Bam, the professional skater. How are their reactions different? How can their reactions be justified based on what the reader knows about their personalities?
3. Nevin comments to Phil, “For somebody to hate you that much she [Lisa] must have really cared for you...” What does this say about Phil and Lisa’s relationship?
4. Phil says, “I was learning when it was smart to keep my mouth shut...”. What evidence in the book supports that Phil really has learned this lesson?
5. Phil thinks that once he starts making money his father will be satisfied and realize that skating can be serious. How would the support of his father further Phil’s career as a professional skater?
6. Phil thinks Wally’s accident is his fault, and he feels guilty that Wally gets hurt. Wally tells Phil, “I did it because I wanted to do it. You had faith in me, that’s all. It’s good to have people believe in you.” What does Wally’s remark say about his friendship with Phil? Is Phil right to feel the accident is his fault? Why or why not?

Writer’s Craft

Dialogue

The author uses considerable dialogue to tell the story, enabling the readers to stay focused on the plot and the characters. With a partner, ask students to write one of the following scenes using the dialogue in the story as a model: (1) Lisa and Phil when she learns that he was kissing another girl at the movies, or (2) Phil and his father when Phil explains the idea of the website and its money-making potential, or (3) Wally and Lisa when he dares to ask her out after leaving the hospital. Ask students to practice their scenes and to act them out for the class.

Author Biography

Eric Walters is coaching his children’s soccer and basketball teams. In addition, he plays the saxophone and enjoys music. He enjoys presenting to children—blending drama, storytelling, audience participation and interaction. Eric strives to inspire his audience members, not only to respond to his books, but also to develop their own personal writing processes.