



## ***Blood Sport***

Tash McAdam

Reading Level: 3.9

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### **Book Summary**

Trans guy Jason had been waiting for years to get out of his group home and move in with his sister. Then she unexpectedly died. He's sure that she was murdered, but he's the only one who thinks so. After finding a photograph Becca kept hidden, he decides to infiltrate a boxing gym to prove that her death wasn't accidental. Jason didn't expect to find somewhere that feels like a home in the scuzzy gym. He soon feels torn between two worlds—he's determined to discover what happened to his sister, but it's the first sense of belonging he's ever felt.

Prep for an upcoming tournament coincides with uncovering details about his sister's murder, but the evidence Jason's gathering isn't enough. He has to find real proof. But when he does, he blows his cover. Jason doesn't see any other option but to run. His friends follow, and he reluctantly tells them the whole story. With their help, he's able to piece together what happened the night Becca died. Together, they come up with a plan to record the gang boss's next money delivery. Things go wrong when they're caught watching, but quick thinking and a quicker call to the police, finally with enough evidence, save the day.

### **Prereading Idea**

LGBTQ individuals have faced oppression and violence throughout history. Brainstorm words, phrases and celebrities connected with transgender identity. Discuss what issues trans people may face in modern society and throughout history. Trans women of color (TWOC) are the people most likely to be victims of directed violence. Ask why TWOC are such a disproportionately oppressed group. Ask students to think of examples of how we can help make society safer for trans individuals and be good allies.

**Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas**

- Jason is in foster care. His group home is not a safe or comfortable place for him, even though he has his own room and the staff care about and support him. In Canada, there are approximately 50,000 children in care. The majority of foster children, about 60% of them, are aged 14 and under. Indigenous youth make up a disproportionate amount of the children in care. Place students in groups of four or five and assign each group to choose a country to investigate. Each student must then research one of the following aspects of foster care: statistics, laws, interventions, costs to society and prevention. Ask each group to create a poster, leaflet or PowerPoint presentation on the foster care systems around the world.
- LGBTQ people are underrepresented in the media. Ask students how many trans people they can name. Then ask how many fictional characters they can name (TV, movies, books, comics, etc. all okay). Organize the names into trans women/trans femme people vs trans men/trans masc people, then organize those into sub categories of white people vs people of color. Compare the numbers of each group to see who is most represented. Then, have the students pick a fictional or real trans person and prepare a short, one-minute speech on their chosen person.
- 40% of trans adolescents have attempted suicide. They are at a significantly higher risk than cisgender teens for self-harm, homelessness, drug abuse and death by suicide. Ask the students to research a trans teen issue, e.g., suicide, self-harm, homelessness or drug use. Prepare a short PowerPoint on the issues trans teens face and how we as a society can combat those issues.
- Boxing has been criticized due to the high likelihood of injuries, especially concussions. Ask students to investigate concussion syndrome and create an awareness campaign about signs and symptoms of a concussion, what to do if you suspect you or someone else has a concussion, and what the dangers of repeat concussions are.

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

Choose one of the supporting cast. Brainstorm what you know about the individual (suggestions: Becca, Ron, Sunny, Preet, Lucky, X, Big Jay) from textual evidence—make notes on the character’s appearance, behavior, history or personality. Next, refer back to your brainstorm and identify which of the traits/descriptions you generated are inferred (information you have gathered based on evidence) and which are direct descriptions from the text. Draw a quick sketch of the character and put **direct quoted** material on the outside of the character, and **inferred** qualities on the inside of the character. Provide supporting quotes for as many of the inferred qualities as you can.

***Point of View***

*Blood Sport* is written from Jason's point of view. We are inside Jason's head, hearing his thoughts, experiencing his feelings. How would the story be different if it had been written from a different perspective? Put students into pairs and have them work on rewriting one of the scenes between Jason, Sunny, Lucky and Preet from one of the other character's perspectives.

***Plot***

Plot is the sequence of events in a story and generally builds towards a conflict. The story's plot includes four stages: exposition, rising action, climax and falling action. Provide students with an image of Freytag's pyramid and label the stages. Divide students into groups of three and ask them to identify what occurs in each stage. Put the students into groups of three, and ask them what they think happens after the end of the story. Have each group partner with another small group and share their insights

**Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions**

- What are some of the problems that Jason faces in his group home? What role does Jason's trans identity play in his relationships with the other kids in foster care?
- Why do you think the story is called *Blood Sport*? How does the title relate to the story?
- Why does Jason believe his sister was killed, and why does he think it's up to him to find out what happened?
- How does Jason feel about Sunny, Lucky and Preet?
- What assumptions does Ron make about Jason that make Jason feel ignored and unheard? What could Ron have done differently?

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

Split the students into table groups and provide each table group with a dice. Give them 20 minutes as a group to discuss the following words and look them up if necessary. When it is their turn, each student should pick a word from the list (and not tell anyone). They should roll the dice to find out what their task is. The other students must guess the word they are trying to communicate. If no one gets the word, the student should reroll the dice and try a different technique.

1= define/describe the word

2= use it in a sentence

3= provide a synonym

4= provide an antonym

5= act out the word

6= free pass!

- stubs
- dominates
- sprawl
- offensive
- lurch
- crusty
- hormone
- droopy
- pummel
- spacious

### **Author Biography**

Tash McAdam is a Welsh Canadian author of several books for young people including The Psionics series (Nine Star Press). Tash identifies as trans and queer and uses the neutral pronoun *they*. As an English teacher, they are fully equipped to defend that grammar! They teach high school English and computer science, and they have a couple of black belts in karate. They live in Vancouver.