



## ***Dawn Patrol***

Jeff Ross

Reading level: 3.1  
 978-1-4598-0062-5 PB  
 AR Quiz # 151726

### **Book Summary**

Everything stops making sense for extreme surfer Kevin Taylor after his parents die in a plane crash. When Kevin disappears, leaving only a cryptic note, his best friends Luca and Esme have no choice but to try and find him. Their journey takes them to the coast of Panama, where they must confront unfriendly locals, a surfer who seems bent on destroying them, and monster waves. As their hope dwindles and time runs out, the mystery of what really happened to Kevin's parents deepens, and Luca and Esme begin to wonder if they are in over their heads.

### **Prereading Ideas**

- What would it take for your parents to let you travel halfway across the world in search of a friend who had gone missing?
- Brainstorm all the places in the world where surfing can be enjoyed.
- How far would you go to save a friend who was in trouble?
- Do you tend to trust people right away, or are you a bit more suspicious? Does one approach have advantages over the other?
- “Good people sometimes do bad things.” Talk about what this means.

## Connecting to the Text

### Plot

- Invite students to write the next chapter for *Dawn Patrol*. Remind them to stay in character (as Luca), asking themselves as they write: What would Luca do next? How might he interact with Kevin/Esme/other characters in this situation? Chapters should advance the plot and develop character where possible. (As an alternative challenge, invite students to write the next chapter from Esme's or Kevin's perspective.)
- Talk about how good dialogue helps to advance the plot (and develop characters). Have students read chapter 10 again, or read it to them. Have them pinpoint things the characters say that lead us to understand more about the storyline. Discuss: Why is it often more effective to let the plot unfold through the characters' speech than in any other way, i.e. through blocks of narrative? Have students find two or three other sections in *Dawn Patrol* where dialogue adds to the plot.

### Character

- Dialogue redux! Explore the dialogue links in the Resources section. At these carefully selected websites, you'll find examples of strong dialogue as well as tips on how to create good character speech. Using the information they learn from these sites, have students create a section of believable dialogue between two characters in *Dawn Patrol*. Their dialogue must do one of the following:
  - ◆ advance the plot (move the story along)
  - ◆ help us understand the characters and their motivations
  - ◆ create conflict
  - ◆ stir up emotion in other characters
  - ◆ stir up emotion in the reader
- In a well-written story, every character has a "job." For example, Kevin's job is to be the linchpin of the whole story: without his disappearance, Luca and Esme would never have taken the trip to Panama, and Luca never would have met Alana. Divide students into pairs or small groups and have them determine each character's job in *Dawn Patrol*. Then have them decide how events would have unfolded differently if that character weren't present in the story.
- Conflict is what keeps a story moving along. It's what makes things interesting! Typically, story plot follows one of four basic patterns of conflict:
  - ◆ *Person against nature*. Tension comes from the character's battle against strong forces of nature.
  - ◆ *Person against person*. Tension comes through the conflict between the protagonist and the antagonist.
  - ◆ *Person against society*. Tension comes from the main character's struggle against some societal factor that must be overcome.
  - ◆ *Person against self*. Tension is created as the protagonist faces internal conflict; the hero has two or more courses of action and must decide which course to take.

Guide students in a discussion of the kind of conflict pattern in *Dawn Patrol*. Are there more than one, depending on which part of the story you look at? Which one predominates?

### *Theme*

- Teach your students to identify the *theme* of a given book. Explain that theme can often be summed up in a specific phrase (e.g. love demands sacrifice). Stress to students that theme is universal and applies to the whole story, from a wide angle, and not just characters or events in the book. (Ergo, when students state the theme of the book, they shouldn't be saying "Luca and Esme learn that XYZ..." or "surfing is...") As practice for figuring out theme, use picture books like *Frederick* by Leo Lionni and *Something From Nothing* by Phoebe Gilman. Guide students in finding the theme of *Dawn Patrol* by having them ask themselves: What am I learning about life through reading this book? That's a good place to start in defining a book's theme.
- Challenge students to find another theme that runs through the book.

### *Setting*

- Have students read chapter 3, where Esme and Luca arrive at Delgado's. Invite them to sketch the scene as they see it.
- Discuss with students the importance of setting, especially for a story like *Dawn Patrol*. As they read the book, have them create a list of words and phrases that help to create a clear picture of the setting in the reader's mind.
- Challenge students to make a "map" of a wave according to the detailed descriptions of surfing in the story.

### *Literary Devices*

Foreshadowing is when the author uses hints to suggest what events will happen later in a story. Discuss with students that foreshadowing creates suspense, draws readers into the plot and prepares them for the story climax. As they go through *Dawn Patrol*, can students find any examples of foreshadowing? What about when the book is finished? Use the example of the conversation between Delgado, Luca and Esme when the youngsters first arrive at his resort (chapter 3), where Delgado tells them surfing is a culture, and that the last thing anyone wants to do is rip people off and make them feel bad. Can they recognize the foreshadowing here? Divide them into small groups and have them page through the book looking for further examples of foreshadowing.

**Vocabulary**

Have students choose five of the following terms from the book. Using print or online resources, have students define each, then use each term in a sentence.

accommodate	gargoyle	pier	trajectory
adrenaline	loco	pinwheel	wise
cautious	maul	sinewy	

**Connecting to the Curriculum****English**

- Read the following passage from chapter 5 aloud to students:

*My board shot into the air, and the leash yanked me backward. I sucked in as much air as I could before I went under. When you wipe out, you never know when you will resurface. Sometimes you pop up and have lots of time before the next wave rolls in. Other times you stay under for a full set of seven or eight waves and come up gasping and choking and thankful to be alive.*

Have students jot down the verbs they hear as you read the passage. When you finish, have students share their verbs. What do they notice about them? (Many of them are strong verbs.) Discuss how strong verbs make a passage so much clearer and livelier. Have students go back through *Dawn Patrol* and find other passages where the verbs are similarly strong. Challenge them to incorporate strong verbs into their own writing, or to create a Mad Lib-style story where the verbs have been blanked out (to be filled in by a friend).

- Task students to write a 250-word summary of *Dawn Patrol*. Then have them create a word cloud using Wordle.net (or a similar cloud-generating website) by copying and pasting their summaries into the generator. Alternatively, they can create a Wordle from as many surf terms as they can pull out of *Dawn Patrol*. Play around with fonts and layouts to create a Wordle that pleases them.

**Art**

Have students find a particularly descriptive or evocative passage from *Dawn Patrol*. Invite them to sketch it, paint it or otherwise interpret it using an artistic medium.

**Health/Personal Planning**

Delgado is a paramedic and a pro surfer. Kevin's parents were real estate developers. Luca's dad is a banker. What do students know about these careers? How do they compare to what they want to do when they're adults? Engage students in a discussion about career choices. Have them list three or four careers they think they might like to pursue, and make a list of the known pros and the known cons of each job. Encourage them to also list one or two jobs that they would do if no one else cared. (This last part of the assignment is important, as students' first reaction to this exercise will be to list the careers they feel their parents or other adults would like to see them doing.)

***Social Studies***

- The rapid development of pristine natural lands into resort properties is a big concern in some parts of the world, especially where the local people don't have as much political and financial "muscle" as foreign developers. As a class, brainstorm a list of questions that students could use to help them consider both sides of this issue. Divide students into small groups and have them research the pros and cons of such real estate development, using the brainstormed questions to guide them.
- Where in the world is Panama? Have students research this small Central American country, jigsaw-style. Explore Panama's geography, economy, history and surf culture—and don't forget to assign a few students to learn about the reasons behind the Panama Canal.
- Surf culture is a real North American subculture, with its own collection of expressions, accepted behaviors and expectations. Engage students in a discussion of subcultures. How can we define a subculture? What are some other subcultures that are familiar to students? (e.g. hip-hop, bikers, hippie.) Have students identify parts of the book where surfer culture is particularly evident.

***Science***

- Explore waves with students. Start here, with this lesson plan at Discovery Education: [www.discoveryeducation.com/teachers/free-lesson-plans/the-phenomenon-of-sound-waves.cfm](http://www.discoveryeducation.com/teachers/free-lesson-plans/the-phenomenon-of-sound-waves.cfm). (The lesson says it's geared to K-5, although it's informative enough to carry well into the middle grades.)
- Wave breaks often occur over reefs, which are particularly dangerous areas for surfers. But besides making great waves and posing challenges to surfers, reefs are valuable marine ecosystems. Have students investigate the threats to the world's reef ecosystems, using the websites in the Resources section below. As an extension activity, challenge them to develop a PowerPoint or SlideShare presentation to educate others about reef ecology, human-caused threats and the consequences of coral reef decline.

**Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions**

1. In chapter 2, Luca explains—to the best of his ability—how to catch a wave. But then he tells the reader that it's impossible to teach someone the exact moment to stand up. "You have to feel it," he says. Are you familiar with a sport or a musical instrument where you could say the same thing? That it's hard to teach a specific skill—that you have to go by feel instead of by being told how to do it? Explain.
2. Bocas del Mar is an island that's known around the world for its great surfing. What is your area known for?

3. Dawn patrol is the name for surfing during the early morning tide. At the beginning of chapter 4, Luca reflects on the morning as a special time:

*There's something mystical about being out in the ocean as the sun is rising. It's peaceful and different from any other time of day. It feels as though everything is starting over again.*

What is your preferred time of day? Write three sentences similar to the ones above that describe your feelings for this time.

4. When Luca wants to go after Kevin in the big waves, Delgado refuses to tow him in. He doesn't want to be responsible if something goes wrong and Luca gets hurt. Can you think of any other sports where the participants watch out for each other's wellbeing in a similar manner?
5. In chapter 14, Luca knows he's in for the ride of his life as he faces forty- and fifty-foot waves. Imagine the fear he must feel. Have you ever had an occasion where you felt fear of this magnitude? That life-and-death kind of fear? Explain.
6. Kevin is in denial about his parents' death. He seems incredibly naïve to what Luca and Esme know to be the truth. Can you think of any other stories you've heard or seen where a character refuses to believe the truth because it hurts too much?

### Author's note

Dear Reader,

I am not a great surfer. The first problem with this is that I love surfing. I love it more than skateboarding or snowboarding. But of these three sports, surfing is by far the most dangerous. The dangers of surfing are piled one on top of another. First there is the danger of being out in the ocean on a plank of fiberglass. Then there is the danger of what lurks beneath the waves. And I don't just mean sharks and other sea life, but also reefs and rocks and broken boats. Finally, there is the danger of attempting to stand on top of a wall of water as it crashes toward the shoreline.

To surf, you need to overcome all these very logical fears. Or be dim enough to pretend they don't exist.

*Dawn Patrol* was born while I sat bobbing in the waters off the coast of Panama waiting for another set of waves to come in. The island I was staying on with my extended family was a slice of paradise. The locals were friendly and welcoming. The sun was bright and warm every day. It was a beautiful place. But, like many beautiful places, corporations were buying up pieces of it. I began to wonder how far someone would go to turn paradise into profit. And so Loco Delgado was born. Kevin came into the picture when I realized I needed someone to be manipulated by the greedy Delgado. And the worst kind of manipulation I could think of was to dangle hope in front of a person: hope that the worst thing that had happened to him was all a mistake.

Next I needed some people who would care enough about Kevin to go out looking for him—people who would stop at nothing to find and help their friend. Enter Luca and Esme.

I was then able to simply write about surfing. The joy of standing on a wave. The claustrophobic insanity of being driven to the bottom of the ocean; pushed deeper and deeper by the same wave you were standing on mere seconds before. The sense of loss and helplessness felt in those moments when you wonder when—or if—you will breathe again.

And I couldn't help but think that losing a family member, or someone else very close to you, feels an awful lot like being pummeled by a wave.

Jeff Ross

## Resources

### *Surfing*

[www.surflife.com/home/index.cfm](http://www.surflife.com/home/index.cfm)  
[www.surfrider.org](http://www.surfrider.org)  
[www.worldprosurfers.com](http://www.worldprosurfers.com)  
[www.teenink.com/nonfiction/heroes/article/5009/Surfer--Bethany-Hamilton](http://www.teenink.com/nonfiction/heroes/article/5009/Surfer--Bethany-Hamilton)

### *Writing Dialogue*

<http://screenplay.lifetips.com/cat/64969/characters-dialogue/index.html>  
<http://bloodredpencil.blogspot.com/2010/03/dialogue-just-way-we-talk.html>  
<http://blog.nathanbransford.com/2010/09/seven-keys-to-writing-good-dialogue.html>  
[www.musik-therapie.at/PederHill/Dialogue&Detail.htm](http://www.musik-therapie.at/PederHill/Dialogue&Detail.htm)

### *Reefs*

[www.wri.org/publication/content/8230](http://www.wri.org/publication/content/8230)  
[www.reef.crc.org.au/discover/threats/index.html](http://www.reef.crc.org.au/discover/threats/index.html)  
[www.reefbase.org/main.aspx](http://www.reefbase.org/main.aspx)

### *Career Choices*

[www.bls.gov/k12](http://www.bls.gov/k12)  
[www.bls.gov/ooh](http://www.bls.gov/ooh)  
[www.kids.gov/6\\_8/6\\_8\\_careers.shtml](http://www.kids.gov/6_8/6_8_careers.shtml)

## Books

### *Fiction*

Choyce, Lesley. *Wave Warrior*  
 Claire, Edie. *Wraith*  
 Haber, Quinn. *Experience Pipeline* (a multiple adventure story)  
 Hamilton, Bethany. *Soul Surfer*  
 Lopez, Jack. *In The Break*  
 Rue, Nancy N. *Boyfriends, Burritos & an Ocean of Trouble*  
 Stevenson, Robin. *Dead in the Water*  
 Strasser, Todd. *Take Off: Impact Zone, Get Tubed*  
 —Cut Back: *Impact Zone, Stoked*

*Nonfiction*

Kampion, Drew. *Greg Noll: The Art of the Surfboard*

Mason, Bill. *Ocean in Motion: Surfing and the Science of Waves*

Young, Nat. *Complete History of Surfing: From Water to Snow*

**Author Biography**

**Jeff Ross** grew up near Collingwood, Ontario, where he learned to ski, snowboard, skateboard and injure himself in fantastic and unique ways. *Dawn Patrol* is his third novel in the Orca Sports series—all of which feature sports that involve standing sideways on a board. Jeff lives in Ottawa, Ontario, where he teaches English and Script-writing for Television and Animation at Algonquin College. He is humored on a daily basis by his wife and two sons.

**Author Website**

<http://jeffrossbooks.com>