



Deadpoint

Nikki Tate

Reading Level: 4.2

978-1-4598-1352-6 PB

Book Summary

Ayla loves climbing. But she prefers to climb indoors, with all her safety harnesses in place and soft mats to land on. Her climbing partner and best friend, Lissy, is much more adventurous and loves the outdoors. When Lissy starts hanging out with Carlos, the new thrill-seeking guy in town, Ayla wants to keep an eye on her and finds herself tagging along on a weekend climbing trip up Black Dog Mountain. But things go very wrong when Lissy and her dad, the only adult in the group, are badly injured high on the side of the mountain. Suddenly the risks of climbing become very real. Ayla and Carlos need to figure out how to get help, and every decision they make could have catastrophic consequences.

Prereading Ideas

- Have students research the top climbing peaks in North America. What are they, where are they, how high are they?
- Have students research the differences between different types of climbing (free, roped, bouldering, etc.). Are there different danger factors for each? If so, what are they?
- In *Deadpoint*, there is a discussion about the 7 factors of things that can go wrong and, possibly, end in death. Discuss with students if those same factors are in place with sports they might be a part of (e.g. skateboarding, white water rafting or back-country skiing/snowboarding).
- Ayla has a lot of anxiety regarding climbing out doors. Have students examine the difference between safe and unregulated environments for extreme sports.
- Tagging is a theme in the book. A discussion about tagging, public and private spaces, and the legitimacy of outdoor art would be of interest.

Connecting to the Text

Plot

Ayla finally steps out of her careful life when she decides to go with Lizzy in order to protect her friend from doing something dangerous. Characters are a product of their environment. Although we do not know the full story around Ayla's father's depression, he seems to be playing it as safe as possible by rarely going outside—never exposing himself to the possibility of being hurt. Tracking how Ayla is reluctant to move from one spot in the indoor climbing gym to another, onto her first steps climbing a real mountain, to her not only completing a dangerous climb but having to save her friends, have students examine the motion of the plot from how Ayla feels and how this relates to her outward abilities.

Character

- Carlos is the beautiful stranger who arrives to shake up the regular lives of the characters. What is his influence on the characters? On the plot? Without Carlos coming into the picture do you think there would have been any change in Ayla and Lizzy's lives?
- Lizzy has lived a very free life. In chapter 7 Lizzy is described as being “conceived in a tent...born in a gully and grew up in a backpack.” How do you think this kind of life would have affected the person she became?
- Ayla is afraid of putting herself out there, whether it is with climbing or socially. Examine the backstory of her life (the divorced parents, the past accidents and near accidents) to establish how a person might attempt to protect herself from being injured—physically or emotionally.

English

- The climax of a story is when all the events which have been put into place clash to create a single situation which the main characters must triumph over. What is this event? How did the plot lead to this point? How is it resolved (both in the text and for Ayla emotionally and mentally)?
- What are the differences between what Ayla thinks Lizzy is intending to do (free climb to impress Carlos) and what she actually has in mind (being as safe as possible and also trying to protect Carlos from injuring himself)?
- Andrei is supposed to be the parental figure here. The adult. The one to look after the kids and make certain everyone is safe. Does he do his job? If so, why are he and Lizzy injured?

Biology

- Rock climbing is unlike most other sports in regards to how finger and tendon strength are extreme assets. Have students investigate methods for improving finger strength and find a deeper understanding of what our tendons do.

- Andrei is knocked out for some time. There are a number of different ways in which someone can lose consciousness. One is a restriction of oxygen to the brain, another is being violently struck on the head. Many movies, books and video games use having a character be knocked out for a long period time as a plot device. Have students examine the possibilities of someone actually being unconscious for a long period of time and the physical and mental ramifications of this happening.

Math

There is a lot of math in rock climbing, specifically geometry. Using the following website (www.visualtrig.com) have students determine the distance that will be climbed dependent on the height and angle of a given triangle.

Physical Education

A large part of climbing, beyond tendon and finger strength, is core strength. Have student first look into the long list of sports which require core strength, then discover specific core training programs which would work best for these different activities.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. What is your impression of Ayla after the first ten chapters? What about for the final ten chapters? What is the growth Ayla goes through and does she do so by her own choice?
2. Carlos is a daredevil who lives by his own rules. He climbs the movie theater wall and leaves his mark behind. What is appealing about Carlos to Lizzy? Is it that he is much like her father, or the exact opposite? Why does Ayla feel she has to protect her friend from Carlos' behavior?
3. Carlos' hero is Alain Robert. What makes Alain an interesting figure? Is his influence positive or negative on Carlos' decision making?
4. Ayla seems to be more interested in taking pictures than climbing. Do you feel this is a technique to save herself from being in danger or is this her true nature?
5. In chapter 15 Lizzy is told that her broken leg "hurts, but you're not going to die from a broken leg." At this point the most important thing is for Lizzy to get off the side of the mountain. Is telling her she will not die a useful technique to help her get over the pain she is feeling and do what needs to be done? Or does this belittle the pain she is facing?
6. The relationship between Ayla and her father is strained due to Ayla's parents' divorce. Her father, unable to deal with his divorce, relies on Ayla for navigating daily living. Discuss the realities of this relationship and how it affects the way Ayla behaves out in the world (responsible but afraid).
7. What do you think changes Carlos' mind about doing more free climbing?
8. Carlos admits to being afraid at one point (chapter 21). He fears having a panic attack. Ayla's growth in the novel has to do with her overcoming fear. What do you feel Carlos' growth is?

9. The title, *Deadpoint*, refers to that point in a climb when you leap from one hold to another and feel as if you're floating. What does the title signify for Ayla's journey?
10. After the events in the novel, what do you believe will be each character's next step? Will Ayla continue to climb outdoors? Will Carlos be more careful? Will Lizzy ever climb again now that she fully understands the dangers?

Resources

Climbing Walls

<http://andylibrande.com/homeclimbingwall/2014/01/choosing-climbing-wall-angles>

www.instructables.com/id/Garage-Climbing-Wall

Finger and Tendon Strength

www.wikihow.com/Exercise-Your-Fingers

www.bodybuilding.com/fun/drobson18.htm

Panic Attacks

www.helpguide.org/articles/anxiety/panic-attacks-and-panic-disorders.htm

World-wide Best Climbs

www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/top-10/climbs

Author Biography

Nikki Tate is the author of more than thirty books, most of which are for children and teenagers. Born in England, Nikki has traveled all over the world and now lives in Canmore, Alberta, so that she can indulge her passion for climbing. For more information, visit www.nikkitate.com.