



Scarlet Thunder

Sigmund Brouwer

Reading level: 4.1
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AR Quiz # 40659

Book Summary

Trenton Hiser is trying to walk in the footsteps of his uncle, Mike Hiser, a successful Hollywood director. During Trenton's summer vacation, he goes with his uncle to film the inside story of Scarlet Thunder, a top-level stock-car racing team. As they film the action, too many things go wrong, deadly mistakes are made and Trenton finds out that much more than the races is at stake.

Prereading Ideas

- Why is it so satisfying to see arrogant, unpleasant people fail or do something stupid?
- What are the pros and cons of hiring or working with someone in your own family?
- When is ambition a negative thing?

Connecting to the Text

Plot

The author of *Scarlet Thunder* chooses to use the first three chapters to describe events that seem to have little to do with the rest of the book. Have students discuss what purpose those chapters serve.

Make a time line out of the following events:

- Trenton and other members of the crew get poisoned
- Ken Takarura interviews Sandy
- Hunter Gunn freaks out
- Trenton calls home
- Trenton spies on Tim Becker
- A tire comes off Sandy's car and nearly hits Trenton and Tim
- Tim holds Trenton hostage with a ballpoint pen
- Trenton uses Tim's phone to trace a call

Vocabulary

The following words are all used in stock-car racing. Find out what they mean in racing and then use the word's racing meaning and its ordinary meaning in a single sentence. For example, "I lost the race because of the marbles, but I lost my marbles because of the race."

groove
marbles
toe

happy hour
silly season
wedge

firewall
spoiler
drag

drafting
stick

Connecting to the Curriculum

Science

- Take the stock-car science quiz at <http://tierneylab.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/02/11/stock-car-science-quiz>.
- In *Scarlet Thunder* Trenton and the film crew are poisoned by raw elderberries. Ask students to research and write a brief report on other common toxic plants such as azaleas, daffodil bulbs and hemlock.

Film Studies/Fine Arts

- Trenton says, “[Documentary] directors aren’t supposed to care about their subjects. They are just supposed to observe.” Tim accuses him of having ice in his veins. Someone else calls him a vampire. Get students to debate whether documentarians need to be detached from their subjects to make good films.
- Ask students to watch a documentary and write a brief report on the director’s point of view. Some good choices: *Bowling for Columbine*; *Hoop Dreams*; *Step Into Liquid*; *Super Size Me*. Then ask them to consider the previous question again.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Research how stock-car racing differs from other kinds of car racing. What kind of racing is the most dangerous?
2. Find out why there are so few women on the NASCAR circuit.
3. Documentary filmmakers need to know a lot about their subjects. Ask students to find a topic they would like to make a film about and then do a bit of research into that topic.
4. Who is Tim Becker and why is he so determined to sabotage Trenton’s uncle’s film shoot?
5. Trenton asks *Could there be anything better than fame and fortune in Hollywood?* Have students discuss whether they think he is right.

Resources***Physics of Stock-Car Racing***

www.amazon.com/Physics-NASCAR-Steel-Rubber-Speed/dp/0525950532
www.buildingspeed.org

Stock-Car Racing

www.nascar.com/2002/kyn/nascar_101/02/02/glossary/
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stock_car_racing

Women in NASCAR

http://www.stockcarracing.com/featurestories/scrp_0604_nascar_female_drivers/index.html

Poisonous Plants

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_poisonous_plants

www.hsus.org/pets/pet_care/protect_your_pet_from_common_household_dangers/common_poisonous_plants.html

When Others Fail...

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schadenfreude>

Documentaries

www.hawkeye.cc.ia.us/faculty/cpost/Roger%20Ebert%20on%20Documentaries.htm

<http://topdocumentaryfilms.com>

Author Biography

Sigmund Brouwer is the bestselling author of many books for children and teens. He has contributed numerous titles to the Orca Currents series, the Orca Echoes series and the Orca Sports series. He and his family live in Red Deer, Alberta, and Eagleville, Tennessee.

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