



Thunderbird Spirit

Sigmund Brouwer

Reading level: 4.0

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AR Quiz # 34965

orca sports

Book Summary

Hockey stars Mike “Crazy” Keats and his Cree friend, Dakota Smith, are caught in a web of violence which makes winning this year’s hockey league championship the least of their concerns. Mike’s new to the Seattle Thunderbirds; he left his last team, the Saskatoon Blades, on bad terms, and he’s angry all the time. Dakota seems like a good guy to have as a friend, but unfortunately not everyone accepts Dakota’s aboriginal heritage, and racial hatred leads Mike and Dakota into a life-threatening situation. Mike’s usual response to conflict has been violence, but getting to know Dakota changes everything for Mike.

Prereading Ideas

- Some people believe that everyone has racist thoughts and feelings—that they are part of who we are as humans. Consider whether you have ever made an assumption based on someone’s ethnicity.
- Do bad things that happen to you as a child excuse bad behavior later in life? In what circumstances can negative events have positive results?

Connecting to the Text

Characters

- Mike is a deeply flawed narrator—angry, hostile, secretive. How does the author make him into a sympathetic character? Have students find examples of what makes him a character readers can relate to.
- Dakota is a much more sympathetic character than Mike. How does the author keep the reader from feeling that Dakota might be a better protagonist than Mike?
- Kendra appears fairly late in the story. What is her function in the novel? What would happen without her?
- Which character changes most in *Thunderbird Spirit*?

Plot

Suspense is a big part of the plot of *Thunderbird Spirit*. Ask students to find the clues to the two mysteries: What happened to Mike in Saskatoon? What is Dakota involved in?

Connecting to the Curriculum

Geography

- People in Seattle find the names Saskatoon and Saskatchewan amusing. Research the origins of those place names, as well as the name Seattle. Are there any similarities?
- Have students research the Terzaghi Dam and answer the following questions:
 1. Who is the dam named after and why?
 2. What river does it dam?
 3. What is the name of the lake formed by the dam?
 4. How high is the dam?
 5. What kind of environmental impact has the dam had?

History

- Have students research native land claims in the BC interior area where Dakota's grandparents live. Ask them to write a brief paragraph taking one side of the debate about Native land claims.
- Dakota refers to the rebels' desire to start a race war. Ask students what they think constitutes a race war. Were the Watts riots of 1965 a race war? What about the riots in the southern USA during the civil rights movement? The LA riots in 1992? Or the Oka Crisis in 1990?

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Think about appropriate and inappropriate ways to express anger. Is there ever a good reason to use violence when you are angry? Do anger management programs work?
2. Racism is mentioned in *Thunderbird Spirit*, but it turns out that Dakota is more in danger from other Natives than from white people. Ask students to discuss whether they think this reflects reality. If not, what do they think is the reality for Native North Americans, blacks, Hispanics, south Asians, etc.
3. For a long time, Mike refuses to tell the truth about what happened to him in Saskatoon. Who is he trying to protect, and why is he willing to take the fall for someone else?

Resources

History

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oka_Crisis
www.histori.ca/peace/page.do?pageID=343
www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ai/mr/is/info106-eng.asp
www.chiefseattle.com/history/chiefseattle/chief.htm
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Los_Angeles_riots_of_1992
www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRDvY_anJdc
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Watts_Riots
www.gov.bc.ca/arr/firstnation/lillooet/default.html

Geography

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

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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