



Wildcat Run

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illustrated by Kasia Charko

ISBN: 978-1-55469-830-1

About the Book

Jake, Tommy and Lexie are on a ski trip. In an attempt to squeeze one last run in for the day, the kids head out on their own to ski down Easy Street. But Jake and Lexie convince Tommy to try Wildcat Run instead. Wildcat Run presents the young skiers with more than they expect, including a cougar sighting. When Lexie has a bad fall, the kids are left stranded on the hill in the fading daylight. Will they be rescued or will they have to spend the night alone on the mountain with a cougar?

About the Author

Sonya Spreen Bates is a Canadian writer living in Australia. As a child, when she wasn't riding horses, she loved to read, daydream and scribble down short stories that she never dared to show anyone. She dreamed of traveling to Australia, but never imagined she'd be living there one day. Sonya obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Linguistics from the University of Victoria and a Master's degree in Speech Pathology from Dalhousie University. She has spent many years working with children with communication disorders, both in Canada and Australia, and often writes her own stories to use in therapy. For more information, please visit <http://sonyaspreenbates.wordpress.com>.

About the Writing

Wildcat Run is the third book about brothers Jake and Tommy. In the second book, *Smuggler's Cave*, they were joined by their cousin, Lexie, and I knew when writing *Smuggler's Cave* that the three children would have another adventure together. I had a vision of them riding up a ski lift together, and imagined all the things that could go wrong. I remembered skiing on a ski run similar to Wildcat Run at Lake Louise when I was first learning to ski and thinking how easy it would be to lose control and deviate from the narrow track, how easy it would be to get lost if you thought you could take a "short cut," and how it could be a long time for help to arrive on the relatively remote section of the mountain if you got injured. The idea for a cougar sighting came from another ski experience I had when I saw tracks in the snow while cross-country skiing in the Shuswap region of British Columbia. Luckily I didn't encounter the cat that had made the tracks like Jake, Tommy and Lexie did, but a bit of research on the Internet and a vivid imagination made that become real for them.

Teaching Ideas—Curriculum Connections***Prereading Idea***

- Parents give children lots of instructions, especially if their children are going to be doing something on their own. How does disobeying parents affect how much freedom children can have?
- In what way can children prove themselves worthy of their parents' trust?

Classroom Discussion Questions

1. Tommy doesn't really want to try a different ski run, but he lets Jake and Lexie talk him into it despite his apprehension. Should he have stood up to them and not given in to peer pressure? What could he have said or done to make them see his point of view? Should Jake and Lexie have respected his opinion when he said he wanted to go down Easy Street, even though it wasn't what they wanted to do?
2. When Jake sees the cougar tracks, he shows them to Lexie, but doesn't tell Tommy about them. Why would he do this? What might he be thinking or feeling? Discuss the relationship between Jake and Tommy. Does it change over the course of the story?
3. The boys' dad tells them to take either Gentle Giant or Easy Street, but the children go down Wildcat Run instead. What kind of danger does this put them in? What could go wrong?

Suggested Activities

- In the story, Jake is carrying a backpack containing essential items that helped the children survive in the snow. What would you put in a survival pack? How would this differ if you were going hiking in the middle of summer? Or on a boat trip? Make a poster of the items in your survival pack for a special excursion you would like to take.

- Jake, Tommy and Lexie spot a cougar on Wildcat Run. Lexie knew a lot about cougars from researching them on the Internet. Do your own research project on cougars. Where do they live? Are they solitary animals, or do they live in a family group? How and what do they hunt? Are they nocturnal or are they more active in daylight? How big are they? Do you think they would really be a danger to three children of Jake, Tommy and Lexie's age?
- Jake and Tommy build a snow fort to keep the three children warm on the mountain. The snow insulates them from the cold outside, while the candle flame and their bodies warm the air inside. What are some other materials that would be good insulators? Do the same materials make good insulators from the heat and the cold? Split into groups of two or three. Have each group make a box from different materials, such as wood, cardboard, Styrofoam or bricks. Take the boxes out into the hot sun and place an ice cube in the box. How long does it take for the ice to melt? Which material is the best insulator? Would this same material be a good insulator from the cold? Why or why not?
- In *Wildcat Run*, the children are stranded on the top of a mountain in the middle of winter in the dark. Think about what the scene looks like, what the children would see and hear and smell, and how they would feel. Then write a poem describing this experience.

Websites of Interest

Hinterland Who's Who—Cougar
www.hww.ca/hww2.asp?id=87

Cougar Rewilding Foundation
www.easterncougar.org/index.htm

Wilderness Survival
www.wilderness-survival.net

Other Books by the Author from Orca Book Publishers

Marsh Island

Smuggler's Cave

Reviews

“Well-written and will definitely appeal to the intended age group. The story is believable, and suspense and tension heighten as the dark closes in on the kids on the hill...Young readers will admire Jake, Lexie and Tommy's tenacity, teamwork and adventurous spirit and look forward to reading about more of their adventures in future books by Bates. Recommended.”
 —*CM Magazine*