



Cobra Strike

Sigmund Brouwer

Reading level: 4.0

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AR Quiz # 40648

Book Summary

Something is wrong in Johnstown, the small Kentucky coal-mining town where Roy Linden plays football for the Johnstown Striking Cobras. When small animals and birds start dying on his grandmother's land, Roy's investigation uncovers a scandal that threatens the town, his family and his football career. Roy, whose stutter often makes him the target of cruel jokes, forms an alliance with his team's new star quarterback. Together they figure out a way to shut down the polluters without jeopardizing their families' lives or their own futures.

Prereading Ideas

- Why is difference so threatening? What kinds of things help to make people more understanding and tolerant of difference? What are some examples of differences that make us uncomfortable?
- Is activism on a small scale effective? Can one person make a difference?

Connecting to the Text***Imagery***

Spot the simile. The author of *Cobra Strike* uses lots of similes. Find five similes and explain what they mean and why they are (or aren't) effective.

Character

- *Cobra Strike* is set in Kentucky coal-mining country. Some of the characters use very vivid expressions when they talk. What do these characters have in common? Does the way they talk make them more real or does it make them seem ridiculous?
- Choose a character from *Cobra Strike* and write a brief paragraph discussing whether or not the character is a stereotype. If you decide the character you choose is a stereotype, suggest something that would make the character less of a stereotype and more a real person.

Theme

- Tolerance. Roy's stutter has made him a target of cruelty in his small town. Does being the target of intolerance make him a more tolerant person? What other responses might he have? What part does intolerance play in Roy's activism?
- Faith. Roy's grandmother leads a faith-based life that allows her to be very certain of her moral decisions. Is it necessary to have faith to lead a moral life?

Connecting to the Curriculum***Geography/Geology***

Mammoth Cave National Park in south-central Kentucky has the world's longest known cave system. Have students research other famous caves such as the Carlsbad Cavern or the Lechuguilla Cave.

Caving has its own vocabulary. Match up the word with its definition.

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| 1. Spelunker | a) animals that live their entire life cycle within a cave. |
| 2. Sinkhole | b) knotted or twisted shapes due to slowly seeping water |
| 3. Littoral | c) a cave formation that develops from the cave floor and protrudes upward. |
| 4. Talus | d) a cave formation that develops from the cave ceiling and hangs downward |
| 5. Troglobite | e) a sea cave |
| 6. Troglodyte | f) openings between rocks that have fallen down into a pile |
| 7. Helictite | g) terrestrial sedimentary rock |

8. Stalactite h) bowl-shaped depressions that are created by the collapse of an underground cave
9. Stalagmite i) a human cave dweller
10. Travertine j) a person who enjoys exploring caves

Answers: 1j, 2h, 3e, 4f, 5a, 6i, 7b, 8d, 9c, 10g

Chemistry

- Roy performs some lab tests on the water from Gram's property (ch.4, ch.8). What technique does he use to determine whether there are toxins in the water? Are his findings scientifically accurate? What methods can people without access to chemistry labs use to find out whether their water contains toxins?
- Is bottled water better for you than tap water? Have students research and debate the pros and cons of drinking bottled water.

Literature

- When Roy recites from *Hamlet* he doesn't stutter. He also admires Shakespeare's insight into human nature. Waymen's sister Elizabeth thinks Shakespeare got it wrong (ch.9). Have students rewrite Hamlet's famous soliloquy as if Hamlet believed that the "undiscovered country" was heaven.
- Foreshadowing vs. cliffhangers. Have students read the last line of each chapter and discuss whether they are foreshowing or cliffhangers. What is the difference? Why do authors use these techniques? Are they effective?

Environmental Studies

- Polychlorinated Biphenyl (PCB) is a pollutant that enters the environment through both use and disposal. What industries are known PCB polluters? How did the public come to know about the pollution? What has been done to clean up?
- Mines are notorious polluters. What parts of mining cause the pollution?
- Whistle-blowers are people who expose the illegal activities of large corporations. Some recent movies have dramatized whistle-blowing. Ask students to watch *Erin Brockovich*, *The Insider* or *Silkwood* and then write an initial scene for a movie of *Cobra Strike*.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Coach Pitt harasses Roy about his stutter. Would a coach at your school be able to get away with that kind of behavior?
2. Is there any difference between harassment and bullying? What can you do if you are being harassed or bullied?
3. Roy's stutter is very noticeable, but Waymen's dyslexia is hidden. Which would be hardest to live with and why?
4. Roy and Waymen both think of sports as a way out of their small towns. Why is it so important to them to get football scholarships?

Resources***Stuttering***

www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/voice/stutter.htm

www.westutter.org

Water Quality

www.insidethebottle.org/us-bottled-water-vs-tap-water

http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2006/02/0224_060224_bottled_water.html

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3739/is_200511/ai_n15847258

Pollution

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

www.scorecard.org

Caves

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

www.jenolancaves.org.au

www.nps.gov/mac

Coal Mining

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

www.pollutionissues.com/Br-Co/Coal.html

Activism

www.campusactivism.org

www.greenpeace.org/international

www.slac.com/tree/links.html

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.

Author Website

www.coolreading.com