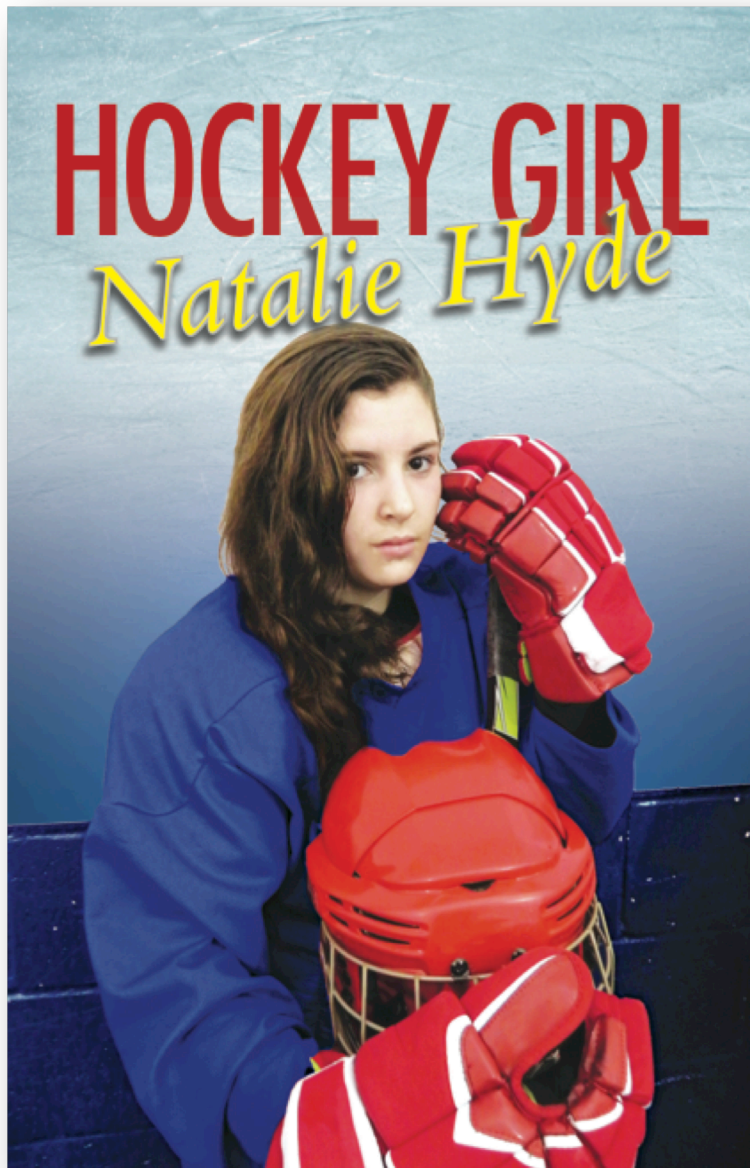


A Teacher's Guide to
Hockey Girl

by Natalie Hyde



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STORY SUMMARY

Tara's softball team has been challenged by the boys to put together a winning girls' hockey team. The bet? Whichever team finishes lower in its respective division will have to wear cheerleading outfits (complete with skirts and pompoms) to the other team's entire next season of home games! Tara and her Roadrunners are determined not to give the Hornets the satisfaction.

But winning is going to be an uphill battle for the girls, especially in a hockey-crazed town that cares more about the boys' teams than anything else. So when the boys' teams begin screaming for more ice-time, it's the girls' teams that get relegated to the graveyard times at the local rinks—if they're lucky. To make matters worse, Tara discovers that the one boy who seems sympathetic to their cause (and super-cute, to boot) is the son of the ice-rink manager and their most belligerent opponent.

What the Roadrunners need is some divine intervention which comes in the shape of Sister Helen, a former women's ice hockey star and their new coach. Inspired to fight for their right to play, the girls launch a campaign to gain fair and equal ice time. Will the town rally behind the girls? And will the Roadrunners pull it together in time to finish ahead of the Hornets and save their dignity?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Natalie Hyde is the author of more than twenty-five fiction and non-fiction books for kids. Her first two novels, *Saving Arm Pit* and *I Owe You One*, have garnered awards in both Canada and the U.S.

She lives in southern Ontario with her husband and four children. They share their home with a small leopard gecko and a cat that desperately wants to eat him.

TEACHER'S GUIDE CONTENTS

Pre-reading Activities

Chapter Guides

Each chapter guide includes:

Vocabulary- new words to help build vocabulary base

Discussion Starters- questions that move through the six steps of critical thinking: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation

Predictions- to prompt students to imagine what events might transpire

Note: This guide is not meant to be assigned to students in its entirety.

Culminating Activities

Activities that demonstrate curriculum expectations in language, social studies, history, art and drama.

Interview with the author: Natalie Hyde

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

1. Look at the cover. How would you describe the girl? What is she thinking?
2. What do you know about the history of women's hockey? When did it start?

Where did it start? Check your knowledge with the facts here:

<http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/exploring-the-history-of-womens-hockey.html>

3. What do you think the title means?
4. Read the summary on the back cover. How close were your predictions?

CHAPTER ONE

VOCABULARY

momentum

ogling

chronically

roster

scuffle

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Why were the boys at the park?
2. Explain why the girls decided to start up a hockey team.
3. Read the following passage from Chapter One: "Just as people living in the Rockies strapped on skis before they could walk, kids in Cartwright laced up (their skates) and hit the ponds, the arena, and even the frozen Nith River as soon as they could toddle." What sport or activity is common in your town or area? Why?
4. Why do you think the boys give the team a standing ovation instead of sulking when the Roadrunners win?
5. Imagine you were being teased by the boys in the park. How would you have reacted?
6. Do you think Tara should have done more to diffuse Rachel's anger?

PREDICT

The guys think the girls won't be able to handle playing hockey.

Do you think the girls will prove them wrong?

CHAPTER 2

VOCABULARY

binary	lingering	fidgeting	slogans	kneading
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DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. When was the bakery busiest?
2. Why did Tara have a craving for an apple turnover?
3. The girls think playing hockey will keep them in shape for next year's softball season. What sort of off-season training would you do to keep in shape for a sport?
4. Why is Dolores surprised that there is a girls' hockey team?
5. Rachel would like a funny slogan printed on her T-shirt. Tara would stick to a picture. What type of slogan would you like to have printed on a T-shirt?
6. Tara is uneasy about what Dolores has said about the 'men of this town finally coming around'. Do you think Tara should be concerned?

PREDICT

Do you think Dolores is right and there will be trouble for the team?

CHAPTER 3

VOCABULARY

rummaged	lethal	ammunition	Cardiac arrest	perks
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DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. What time slot did the girls have for their practice?
2. Why is Lilly looking for the perfect murder weapon?
3. Tara wonders if “guys were trying out for the teams so they could play hockey or just get the perks that came with wearing the jackets.” What perks do you think the jackets might give the wearers?
4. Why does Kip suggest that the game has ‘got’ Tara? Do you think he is right? Why or why not?
5. Tara finds a nutrition bar at the bottom of her knapsack. Imagine what other items would be in her knapsack based on what you know so far about her. What sorts of things would you think some of the other characters have; i.e. Kip or Rachel?
6. Tara “is not a pretty sight that early in the morning”. How does she describe herself? What does it mean to be a morning or evening person? Which do you think Tara is? Which are you? How can you tell?

PREDICT

Do you think the girls will agree to train with the guys?

CHAPTER 4

VOCABULARY

channeling

methodically

asthma

Tai chi

bellowed

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Why does Tara's team like playing the top teams in the league?
2. What did Mike Chu's parents think caused Mike's asthma attack?
3. Coach Santos told the team that "our house guests are heavy duty upfront, but they're weak on the D. So let's nix the sin bin, go deep in their backyard, and put the biscuit in the basket." Explain what the hockey slang words the "D", "sin bin" and "biscuit in the basket" might mean.
4. Sam has superstitions about the way she needs to get dressed before a game. Why do you think people have superstitions? Can they help or hurt someone's performance?
5. Coach Santos tells the girls that the team needs to get its act together and stop making him look like a fool. Do you think this is an effective way to motivate the team? If you were Coach Santos, what would you say to the team?
6. Do you think Coach Santos is a good coach for the girls' team? If not, what could he change?

PREDICT

Do you think playing hockey will really mess up Sam's baseball skills?

CHAPTER 5

VOCABULARY

neurotoxin	suffocates	chauvinistic	barrage	phantom
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DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Where did Lilly get the idea to use iocane powder in her novel?
2. What signs were there that Coach Santos was mad other than his speech?
3. Think of some examples of how Coach Santos might have acted if he had been happy with the team's performance.
4. Tara tells the team, "We're at our peak right now, after a whole summer of playing ball."
How has playing softball together helped the girls be a better hockey team?
5. Lilly would like to win the Agatha Award for a mystery novel named after Agatha Christie.
Create a book award named after yourself, and list its criteria for winning.
6. At the start of the third period, Rachel says that she would almost rather take poison than go back out on the ice. How difficult would you find it to finish that game?

PREDICT

What do you think Jenna's 'funny feelings' were referring to?

CHAPTER 6

VOCABULARY

cholesterol	stalking	comeback	groupie	sludge
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DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Why was the diner called the Burger Bar?
2. Explain why people who were worried about their health ate at Wanda's Wheat Grass and More.
3. What sort of ingredients would you combine for a health smoothie?
4. Other than keeping the floor clear, why do you think the "Parking Lot" is a genius idea?
5. Tara's sports bag is taken by accident from the Burger Bar. What would you do if you noticed your bag was missing?
6. Do you think Tara was right not to give Dark Eyes/Kip her phone number? Why or why not?

PREDICT

Does Kip/Dark Eyes really want to help Tara, or is it all a trick?

CHAPTER 7

VOCABULARY

simultaneously	rummaging	pneumonia	exasperated	sauntering
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DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. What were the three usual topics for Tara's family dinner conversation?
2. Why does Tara's mother want Tara and her brothers to wear their jackets the next day?
3. Tara says that her temper simmers and churns until she erupts in a rage. Is this similar to Rachel? Create a chart to show ways that Tara and Rachel are alike and different.
4. Give examples from the text that show how Tara's family feels about women's hockey.
5. Will tells the family that his science teacher teaches that getting a cold from being chilled is "an old wives' tale". What is "an old wives' tale"? What other examples of old wives' tales do you know?
6. Do you think Kip is serious about his offer to practice with Tara? Why or why not?

PREDICT

Do you think Tara will take Kip up on his offer to practice?

CHAPTER 8

VOCABULARY

sieve	carnage	maroon	intentionally	skunked
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DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. How were the Roadrunners doing so far in their season?
2. Why did Coach Santos put Diane in goal instead of Sam?
3. Tara is confused that the team called the Greys have Creamsicle orange shirts. Design a new team shirt with logo for the Greys that better fits their name.
4. In what ways were Tara and the team going to show the other team that they were serious about the game?
5. Tara describes the other team as having “a goalie like a sieve, can’t pass the salt across the table let alone a puck across the ice, and has worse aim than a three year-old boy in the bathroom.” What examples might Tara have used if she were describing the top team in the league instead of the worst team?
6. Do you think the ‘weather system team’ had accurately described the Greys or deliberately lied about them? Why would they do that?

PREDICT

What do you think happened to Coach Santos?

CHAPTER 9

VOCABULARY

executive

forfeiting

skeptical

careened

prodigies

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Was the team allowed to play without a coach?
2. Why was Rachel's first decision as temporary coach to put Sam back in goal?
3. Tara says, "Ten players fought over that little rubber disk like it was the last brownie in the pan." What other similes can you think of to describe the scene?
4. One of the Grey's players tells Sam, Rachel and Tara, "Hey, it was nice to beat you Roadrunners. Let's do it again sometime, OK?" Was she being sincere or sarcastic? How can you tell?
5. The team doesn't know what happened to Coach Santos. Imagine a reason he left the game so suddenly.
6. Why do you think Tara ducked her head quickly when her eyes locked with Kip's?

PREDICT

Will Coach Santos be back at the practice the next morning?

CHAPTER 10

VOCABULARY

wrath

tormented

groupie

prioritize

absorbed

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Why did no one want to stay in the dressing room?
2. Why does Andrea decide to go to the Hornet's game?
3. Tara says the team is "puckless". The suffix 'less' here means "without". Think of other words that end in 'less' that mean to be without something.
4. Tara wonders, "Hadn't those guys tormented us enough?" In what ways had the Three Stooges tormented the girls?
5. Imagine you were at your favourite sport's practice and your coach hasn't arrived. What games or activities would you invent to improve your skills?
6. Do you think Coach Santos had a good reason for leaving the Roadrunners? Why or why not?

PREDICT

Will the girls miss playing hockey?

CHAPTER 11

VOCABULARY

intense

pensive

cringe

obscene

vehemently

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Did the Hornets have a lot of fans at their games?
2. Why did most of the Roadrunners end up going to the Hornets' game?
3. Say the words 'smacks' and 'wheeze' out loud. Do the words sound like their meaning?
(Onomatopoeia) Try and think of other words you know that sound like their meaning.
(splash, drip, plop, clink)
4. The boys' team reacts to events in the game. Find actions of the Hornet's players in the text that give clues to how they are feeling.
5. The girls are impressed with how the guys play the closely-matched game. Narrate the game from the Hornet's point of view.
6. When Rachel sees Mr. Santos up on the rail, she raises her hand to make an obscene gesture. Do you think she was right or wrong to react that way? How would you react if you met someone who you feel had done something wrong to you?

PREDICT

Do you think the Roadrunners will find a new coach?

CHAPTER 12

VOCABULARY

abrasive

embezzling

radical

implications

arrogance

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. How were the girls going to find a new coach?
2. What were some of qualities the girls were looking for in a new coach?
3. Andrea calls the clothing a nun might wear a 'penguin suit'. Can you think of other professions that are recognized by the clothes they wear? Do any other ones have nicknames?
4. Do you think the girls made the best choice for a new coach out of the four people that the girls had to choose from? What skills would each one have to offer? Would you have chosen someone different? Why or why not?
5. The Hornets' and Roadrunners' bet requires the losing team to be the cheerleading squad for the winning team the next season. Imagine the kind of bet you would have made. What would the stakes have been?
6. Do you think Tara overreacted when Braydon and Tyler make comments about their team? Why or why not? How would you have reacted?

PREDICT

Do you think the girls will regret making the bet with the guys?

CHAPTER 13

VOCABULARY

shinny

mates

chastity

genuine

yodel

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. How many games did the team have to reschedule?
2. Why was Sister Helen available to coach the Roadrunners?
3. When Tara thinks of a hockey-playing nun, she pictures Maria Von Trapp from the movie, The Sound of Music. What images do you picture when you think of a nun? Which do you think are realistic and which images do you think come from popular media (movies, TV)?
4. Sister Helen answers some FAQ's for the team. Do you think they were good questions? Were they good answers? If you were in the dressing room, which questions would you ask?
5. Imagine you were supposed to be an example for other people. Write a code of behavior for yourself.
6. Do you think Sister Helen will be a good coach for the team?

PREDICT

Do you think Coach Helen will have any luck getting better ice times?

CHAPTER 14

VOCABULARY

spandex

concussion

confrontations

makeshift

convert

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Why was there such a long lineup at Dolores' Bakery?
2. How did the Roadrunners do at their last game?
3. Dolores says that the "guys were in here crowing about your loss". What image does the verb 'crowing' evoke? Try the line with a synonym for 'crow'. How does it change the image? Try making a list of weaker and stronger verbs that show the same action; i.e. cry (weep, sob, wail) or run (lope, pelt, race, scamper, bolt) to see how they change the image.
4. What does Kip's reaction to Tara's confession about her accidental goal say about his character?
5. If Tara really didn't want to practice with Kip, what could she have said to him? What might Kip have said in response to convince her?
6. Do you think Kip is sincere in his desire to help Tara? Do you think the only reason he wants to help her is because he 'loves the game'?

PREDICT

What answer was Tara hoping for to her question, why was Kip helping her?

CHAPTER 15

VOCABULARY

canine

indignation

incapacitated

unperturbed

paralegal

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. How did the Roadrunners do at their Friday night game?
2. How did Coach Helen react to their 'epic' loss?
3. The girls wanted to fight back against the Growler's team but Coach Helen insisted they play a game of skill. How do you keep yourself in control when you are harassed or teased?
4. Coach Helen tells the team that "our world has a language of signs". What do you think that means? What are some examples of the signs we use to communicate? (haircuts, jewelry, tattoos, car we drive, landscaping etc)
5. Coach Helen's nun roommates have other skills that they use to help and protect the team during the fight with the Growler's team. If you were to have your own two bodyguards, what two different skills would you want them to have?
6. Compare the way the two teams approach the game? How do they react when they have difficulties (eg. Penalties). What do you think this says about their coach's values? Which team would you like to play on?

PREDICT

How will future games between these two teams play out?

CHAPTER 16

VOCABULARY

culminating	hideous	humane	mock	technique
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DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Why did Tara want new hockey gloves for Christmas?
2. Why did Aunt Tabitha want to give away her lamp? What do you think an eco-mission is?
3. Tara's father had always told her that "Championships are won at practice". What sayings do you hear a lot at home or school?
4. Why were Kip and Tara so embarrassed when the other guys found them at the pond?
What were they afraid the guys would think?
5. Tara and Kip "vent their anger on a poor defenseless piece of rubber" by practicing slap shots. What are some healthy ways you might vent your anger?
6. Do you think the guys bought Tara's excuse of breaking in new skates as why she was at Kip's rink? Would you believe it?

PREDICT

Will Tara and Kip continue to practice together, or will they think
it is too awkward now that the guys have seen them?

CHAPTER 17

VOCABULARY

lethal

Carotid artery

fluctuation

plunge

grilled

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Why were the girls floored by their game start time?
2. Why has Kip not ended “tangled up” with Tara on the ice again?
3. What does the phrase “friends in high places” mean? Give an example from your community of what ‘high places’ could refer to? What benefits do people seem to have by having influential friends? Is this fair? Why or why not?
4. Why was Tara worried that Tyler would say something about finding her and Kip at the pond? Would it bother you? Why or why not?
5. Imagine that you were Tara and Tyler had mentioned to everyone in the Burger Bar about your practice session with Kip. How would you feel? Write down what you might say to your friends if this happened.
6. Would you be concerned if you had a friend like Rachel who knew all about poisons and lethal stabbing techniques? How would you describe Rachel? Is she interesting, weird, scientific or dangerous?

PREDICT

Will the fire in Winterton affect Tara’s league?

CHAPTER 18

VOCABULARY

forfeit

priority

goaded

adamant

wryly

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Why does the team have to forfeit the rest of their games?
2. Why would a tournament be a priority over other games?
3. Sister Kate tried to reason with the league president and give him ideas to allow the girls to keep playing. Work in groups to come up with your solution to the problem.
4. Why do you think Kip never told Tara his full name? Do you think he did it on purpose?
5. Tara asks Kip if he knows “what it’s like to have someone else telling you what you can and cannot do?” Imagine a situation where someone has told you, you cannot do something you really want to do. Write an argument to convince them to change their mind.
6. Do you think Kip had a valid excuse for not telling Tara his last name? Why or why not?

PREDICT

Do you think Kip will speak to his dad on the girls’ behalf?

CHAPTER 19

VOCABULARY

smoldering

harassing

Neanderthal

encompassing

exposure

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. What was unfair about the board's decision?
2. What actions by their parents and the rest of the town led Tara and the team to believe that "we girls were always second best"?
3. The team members try to brainstorm ideas to get their message out to everyone in town. Make a list of ways an important message could be delivered in your community.
4. George delivers T-shirts that read, "Harassing the server will definitely result in smaller portions". Advertisers often use humour to deliver serious messages. Why do you think that is?
5. The girls cannot use words on their T-shirts. Think of a message that is important to you. Draw or describe the pictures and symbols you would use on your own T-shirt to spread your message.
6. Why do you think the guys misunderstand the 'Equal sign' T-shirts at first?

PREDICT

Do you think the girls' T-shirt message will work?

CHAPTER 20

VOCABULARY

scathing

condescending

statistics

claustrophobic

lobbying

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Why did Vicki's aquafit class get moved to 7:30 am?
2. Why do you think they call certain students, 'plastic girls'?
3. Vicki is described as having 'cherry-sparkle lip-glossed lips'. What impression of her do you get from this description? Write about your favourite character (books or movies) using only one descriptor to get across what sort of person they are.
4. What is Tara's father's argument as to why the girls' ice time should be cut and not the boys'? Do you agree with this? What is her mother's argument?
5. Pick your favourite school sports team. Imagine that the school board is going to cut games for that sport from the school year schedule. Create your argument to convince the school board not to cut your sport.
6. What was your impression of Tara's mother at the beginning of the story? What is your impression of her now? Why did it change? Or why did it not change?

PREDICT

Will Tara's mother's actions make a difference? Where?

CHAPTER 21

VOCABULARY

interned

disorientation

abruptly

Social Justice

literally

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. How far have the equal T-shirts spread?
2. Why does Tara think that the T-shirts aren't getting them anywhere?
3. Sam says, "I don't think they even have double-headers in hockey". Every sport has its own vocabulary. Make a list of words from the story so far that are hockey terms and their meanings.
4. What is Kip's explanation as to why he is wearing a protest T-shirt. Is it a valid explanation?
5. Sam says that Nadine's mom "works for the Cartwright Herald and thinks maybe they'll run an article about" the T-shirt protest. Pretend you work for the Cartwright Herald newspaper. Write an article about the girls' struggle for ice time and their protest T-shirts.
6. Do you think Rachel's plan to go to the media is a good one? Why or why not? What alternate plan might you come up with?

PREDICT

What do you think will happen at the Board of Director's meeting?

CHAPTER 22

VOCABULARY

armoured

pandemonium

wimples

pitch

badgered

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Why was Tara practicing in front of her bathroom mirror?
2. Why was the head of the Minor Hockey Association, Mr. Taylor, so nervous?
3. Coach Helen says, "Peaceful demonstration can be a powerful thing". What actions by the team were an example of 'peaceful demonstration'? What other examples in history can you find for peaceful demonstrations?
4. Coach Helen says, "Looks like we all had the same idea when we got dressed tonight". What does she mean by this? Do you think she is right?
5. The reporter and cameraman interview the Roadrunners. Imagine you were the reporter. What questions would you like to ask? Imagine you are the cameraman. What shots do you think would make an interesting story?
6. What factors made Mr. Taylor change his mind about the girls' schedule? Which factor do you think was the most effective?

PREDICT

Do you think the girls will win the bet?

CHAPTER 23

VOCABULARY

hectic

adrenaline

smirked

ecstatic

momentum

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. How close were the standing between the Hornets and Roadrunners as the girls faced Petrolia?
2. What would happen if the Hornets won their last game?
3. The girls call the one player on the Vipers' team The Growler. Why did they give her this nickname? Think of nicknames for members of the Roadrunners team.
4. Andrea is upset with the flyer of the skimpy cheerleading outfits the Hornets sent them. Why do you think this was so effective? What emotions do advertisers use to try and convince customers to buy their products or use their services?
5. Andrea is texting her cousin at the Hornets' hockey game in Julian Falls. She thinks it will be the bad news that the Hornets won. If you were Andrea's cousin and had to deliver the bad news, what text would you write?
6. Sam thinks that there is a chance the Hornets lost because they had been losing to them most of the season. Rachel thinks that they have the momentum of their last game where they finally beat the Eagles. Which opinion do you think most accurate? Why?

PREDICT

How did the Hornets do against the Eagles?

CHAPTER 24

VOCABULARY

gloating

unceremoniously

offside

alternated

shorthanded

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. How did the Hornets/Eagles game end?
2. What do the Roadrunners have to do in order to win the bet?
3. Tara is so excited and nervous that she doesn't even remember Coach Helen's pep talk before their last regular season game. Write down the pep talk you would have given the team.
4. Coach Helen tells them that "a team effort will win this". What do you think a 'team effort' is? What would you see on the ice? How would it help?
5. Rachel gave Tara a quick nod when she got ready for the faceoff. The nod meant Rachel would bounce the puck right to Tara if she got it. What other team sports signals do you know? (hockey, baseball, soccer) Invent a few signals of your own that would help your team in your favourite sport.
6. Do you think the Hornets were good sports about losing? How can you tell?

PREDICT

Do you think attitudes will change in Cartwright after this?

CULMINATING ACTIVITIES

LANGUAGE ARTS

Your favourite sport is not getting the recognition it deserves. You and your teammates need funding to attend the World Youth Games.

Plan a campaign to increase awareness for your sport and to drum up financial support. Why is your sport important? What skills does this sport bring to young people? Why is it important for your team to attend the Games?

Your campaign could include letters (to officials, the newspapers, government), advertisements, slogans, posters, radio spots, and short commercials.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Have students investigate equality and inequality in sports.

When were women allowed to participate in sports? In which sports do men and women compete side-by-side? In which sports do they have separate events? How do you feel about women competing against men even when there are separate female events? Should this be allowed?

This website lists nine women who competed against men.

<http://www.totalprosports.com/2011/10/28/9-female-athletes-who-competed-against-men/>

Choose one and create a report (written, photo essay, journal etc) to give details of their backgrounds, struggles, challenges and successes.

HISTORY

Hockey is called 'Canada's Game'. Research the history of women's hockey in Canada. What difficulties did the first women's teams and players face? Where did they play? What sort of equipment did they use? What was the reaction by the general public to women hockey players?

The author drew on the true story of the Preston Rivulettes women's hockey team in Preston (now Cambridge), Ontario in the 1930's for inspiration for this story. Research details of this amazing team.

ART

Book trailers are much like movie trailers. They are used to generate interest and excitement about a book and are typically less than 2 minutes long. Students should familiarize themselves with copyright rules regarding photos and music before they begin.

Here are some examples of different book trailers:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l59sMzeA_vQ

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z00J2PD5MQg>

Have students use various techniques (stop animation, Claymation, video, etc) to create book trailers for Hockey Girl.

DRAMA

Choose a scene (or scenes) from the story that has/have drama and action.

Have students rewrite these scenes as a script including stage directions and prop suggestions and act as the director for their scene(s). The director can then assemble their cast, help students rehearse their parts, organize props and stage elements and then perform the scene(s) for their classmates.

AN INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR NATALIE HYDE



Where did you get the idea for *Hockey Girl*?

I was researching old hockey skates for a non-fiction book I was writing, when I came upon a picture of the Preston Rivulettes women's hockey team. It took me totally by surprise because I had never heard of this amazing team whose winning record has never been matched. And more surprised that they were actually from my hometown! The more I read about them, the more

impressed I was by their skill, athleticism and daring—and the fact that they did this in the 1930's when women didn't enjoy the same respect in sport that they do today. I knew they had to find a way into a book.

How much of the story is true, then?

The beginning, where the softball team is dared into forming a hockey team to play a 'real sport' is very much the way it happened for the Rivulettes. In 1930, the women's softball team in Preston was trying to decide what to do with their winter. One member suggested starting a hockey team and an onlooker supposedly scoffed at them and dared them to do it. I wonder how foolish he felt when they became the winningest team ever?

Did you ever play hockey?

I was (and still am) strictly a spectator! We did play floor hockey in school and I scored a grand total of one goal. I was playing center during one gym class and just as the teacher dropped the ball, an announcement came on the P.A. system. Everyone was distracted, including the other goalie, and I whacked the ball right into the net without even taking one step. That was my entire hockey career. I am a great hockey fan, though, and spend many freezing hours in arenas around town cheering for our teams.

Are any of the characters based on real people?

None of the characters are based on one single person. Most of them are made up of bits and pieces of people I know...including myself.

Which characters have pieces of you?

Well, like Tara I love brownies, turnovers, tarts and Danish. I have a real sweet tooth. But I'm also a bit like Rachel because I can be pretty competitive. Like Lilly, I love to write and Sam and I both have some superstitions.

Do you have a writing routine?

I can't write right away because my brain needs to warm up a bit first. So I like to check my email and certain blogs first thing in the morning. After I can't find any more distractions, I open my work-in-progress and re-read the last chapter or so. That helps me get back into the mood and characters in the story. Then as I reach the last line I've written, I'm usually ready to keep going.

What do you like to do when you are not writing?

I enjoy watching sports that I can't play, such as hockey and baseball. I also love to bake (well, eat the baking). I'm also fascinated with genealogy, which combines two of my favourite things: history and interesting characters. In the course of researching my own family, I've discovered a daring sea captain, a ghost and a murderess. I'm still looking for pirates.