

The Perfect Blindside

Study Guide

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Award winning YA Mystery
Encouraging teens to embrace their
gifts from God through fiction.

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Note to Instructor

This study guide is intended to help students analyze the story by providing comprehension questions. These questions are designed to be adaptable and can be answered with one or two sentences or with longer essays. Keep in mind, the student's answers will probably be slightly different than the answers provided. They may also be used as discussion questions, as springboards to more in-depth analysis. Select the questions appropriate for your student(s). This guide is created in the OLVS curriculum style.

Summary

Fresh off winning a silver-medal, sixteen-year-old snowboarding sensation, Jake Taylor's ego has become as large as his tricks on the superpipe. After his instant catapult to fame, his parents move him to a small Colorado mountain town, hoping to find a more wholesome environment.

Sophie Metcalf, like most of the nation, watched Jake's rise to fame with fascination. However, her initial excitement for his move to Silver Springs quickly melts away when she observes a side of him that no one else seems to see - an arrogant, egotistical jerk.

A series of unexpected run-ins thrust Jake and Sophie together. As they begin to trust one another and their feelings grow, they are unwittingly pulled into the dangerous events around town that could cost them the ultimate price – their lives. With no one to rely on except each other and God, the two must not only expose the criminals and halt the drug-dealing, but figure out a way to stay alive.

Chapters 1-2

1. How does Jake feel about reporters?
2. How does Jake feel about his move to Silver Springs?
3. What is Jake's plan to deal with this move?
4. Who were Jake's good childhood friends? Are they still friends?
5. Is Sophie excited about her first day of school? Why or why not?
6. Was Sophie a fan of Jake Taylor during the Olympics?
7. We find out a few reasons why Sophie changed her mind and doesn't like Jake. Can you name one?

Chapters 3-4

1. Mallory and her friends ask Jake about his hobbies. What does he realize?
2. Who does Jake refer to as the Ice Princess? Why?
3. What do Jake and his parents argue about?
4. What odd thing does Sophie notice on her hike?
5. How did Claim Jumpers Creek get its name?
6. What does Jake ask Sophie to do for him?
7. What is Sophie's reaction?

Chapters 5-6

1. What event is Jake helping at?
2. How does Jake first feel about going to this event?
3. What does Rachael tell him about her friend Emma?
4. What does Jake realize about his life? What's his new plan?
5. What does downtown Silver Springs resemble?
6. What was the library building originally?
7. Where does Sophie take Jake? Why is it there?

Chapters 7-8

1. Jake and his mom are going on a trip. Where are they going and why?
2. At the ceremony and after-party, Jake meets some interesting people. Who is the only one he connects with?
3. While Jake is there, who does he think about? Is this surprising to him?
4. At the end of the evening, Jake's mom is concerned about something. What?
5. Who shows up at Sophie's house unexpectedly? Where does he want to go?
6. How does Sophie convince herself that going with him is a good idea?
7. What is the piece of Old West history that Jake tells Sophie about?

Chapters 9-10

1. Where are Jake and his teammates?
2. Jake is surprised to see Sophie there. What does he teach her to do?
3. How did the town of Breckenridge get its name?
4. What is the name of Jake's signature snowboarding move? Why is it named that?
5. Kate confronts Sophie about something. What is it?
6. What does Deputy Grady give to Sophie?
7. How does Sophie occupy her time while Jake is away?

Chapters 11-13

1. What happened during Jake's week of training?
2. What happened while Jake was hiking to the mine?
3. Why do Jake and Sophie decide to go back to the mine?
4. How does Sophie describe how God talks to her?
5. What happens on Jake's drive home from Sophie's house?
6. What is the fallout from the scandal? What is Sophie's reaction?
7. What does Jake figure out?
8. What does Jake decide to do?

Chapters 14-15

1. When Sophie meets up with Jake, what does he tell her?
2. Kate tells Sophie to check out a celebrity magazine. What does Sophie find?
3. Jake decides to take things into his own hands. What does he tell the sheriff?
4. How does the sheriff respond?
5. When Jake heads back to the mine, what does he overhear?
6. When Jake realizes his plan is flawed, why does he stop at the library?
7. What happens when Jake gets the incriminating evidence?
8. How does Jake contact Sophie?

Chapters 16-17

1. What does Sophie see in the photograph that Jake sent her?
2. What does Sophie notice in the magazine photo?
3. When Sophie puzzles out the mystery, why doesn't she tell anyone?
4. What does Sophie decide to do in order to help?
5. Believing Sophie is not coming, Jake decides he has two options. What are they?
6. What does Jake realize the men don't know about how he got there?
7. What does Jake finally realize he wants for his life if he gets away?

Chapters 18-20

1. When Sophie finds Jake, how does she create a distraction?
2. Jake has a unique way of getting away quickly. What does he do?
3. When they finally get to the library, what do they find?
4. Why is it hard for the sheriff to believe their story?
5. What does Jake realize about the people who were worried about him?
6. What is Jake's leading man move that Sophie asked for?
7. After the story is over, we find out that Father Scott has encouraged Jake to use the experience in a positive way. What has Jake begun to do?
8. What are your gifts and talents? How could you use them to help others?

Chapters 1-2 Answers

1. How does Jake feel about reporters?

Jake does not like reporters. He finds them annoying because, in his opinion, they ask dumb questions and sensationalize everything. He refers to them as a combination of Walkers, Talkers, and Stalkers.

2. How does Jake feel about his move to Silver Springs?

Jake is not happy about the move. He'd rather his family had moved to Vail to be near his teammates, and use a private tutor to finish high school.

3. What is Jake's plan to deal with this move?

Jake plans to stay at home and try to keep the peace by not arguing. He plans to not get involved with his new school, only put minimal efforts into his studies, and move out on his own when he graduates.

4. Who were Jake's good childhood friends? Are they still friends?

Rick and Jon were his friends back in Kansas. They are no longer friends. After Jake returned from the Olympics the two boys stopped talking to him and refused to take his calls, turning the most exciting time of Jake's life into the loneliest.

5. Is Sophie excited about her first day of school? Why or why not?

No. Sophie is annoyed that Jake has moved to Silver Springs, and that everyone is fawning over the sports superstar. She's frustrated that no one can see that he is arrogant and self-centered.

6. Was Sophie a fan of Jake Taylor during the Olympics?

Yes. She loved watching him, and was intrigued by his incredible story, his good looks, and his tricks on the halfpipe. In fact, she read as many articles as possible about him.

7. We find out a few reasons why Sophie changed her mind and doesn't like Jake. Can you name one?

Sophie received two driving tickets that she blames on Jake. One for speeding and one was for not stopping at a stop sign. She is still upset for the way he parked once, taking up two spaces, which caused her to park far away, step in a puddle, and ruin her new shoes. She also witnessed him acting annoyed when someone asked him for an autograph and photo.

Chapters 3-4 Answers

1. Mallory and her friends ask Jake about his hobbies. What does he realize?

Jake realizes that he doesn't have any hobbies. He has been so busy training that he hasn't done anything else, or had much free time. He can't even remember the last time he just hung out.

2. Who does Jake refer to as the Ice Princess? Why?

Jake calls Sophie the Ice Princess because she has been glaring at him since he arrived. This is completely different from how all the other girls treat him.

3. What do Jake and his parents argue about?

They argue because the principal has called to inform Jake's parents that after one week of school, Jake is failing.

4. What odd thing does Sophie notice on her hike?

Sophie finds a large amount of dead fish in the pond.

5. How did Claim Jumpers Creek get its name?

Claim Jumpers were people in the Old West who took over other people's property. The area near the creek was a place where Claim Jumpers would camp and wait for landowners to leave town.

6. What does Jake ask Sophie to do for him?

Jake asks Sophie to do his math homework for him.

7. What is Sophie's reaction?

At first, Sophie is offended and ready to tell Jake no. But then she decides this could be her chance to show everyone that he is not so great, but is a liar and a cheater.

Chapters 5-6 Answers

1. What event is Jake helping at?

Jake is driving to Copper Mountain to help at a Special Olympics event. His teammate Rachael has talked him into participating.

2. How does Jake first feel about going to this event?

Jake's nervous. He thinks it sounds like a nice event, but he's not sure if it's for him. He's not sure how to talk to the kids, or how to act around them.

3. What does Rachael tell him about her friend Emma?

A few years earlier, Emma began going to parties and began experimenting with drugs. Emma and some friends were driving through the mountains after a party and crashed. They all died.

4. What does Jake realize about his life? What's his new plan?

Jake realizes that he doesn't have any hobbies, friends, or other interests besides snowboarding. He decides that he will try a little harder at school so he doesn't lose his snowboarding privileges.

5. What does downtown Silver Springs resemble?

Silver Springs is an Old West mining town. It looks like something out of a Hollywood movie.

6. What was the library building originally?

The library was the original mining company office.

7. Where does Sophie take Jake? Why is it there?

Sophie takes Jake to the secret tunnel behind the library wall. She panicked when she thought he was being chased by the paparazzi and pulled him into the hiding spot. The original owner of the mine added the tunnels from his office to the mine so that he could check on his workers. The tunnel from the library to the far end of town was used during the Prohibition years to smuggle illegal items into town.

Chapters 7-8 Answers

1. Jake and his mom are going on a trip. Where are they going and why?

Jake and his mom are going to California for some sponsorship events and to attend the Kids' Favorites Awards.

2. At the ceremony and after-party, Jake meets some interesting people. Who is the only one he connects with?

The only person Jake meets who seems down to earth is an actor named Dante Foxx.

3. While Jake is there, who does he think about? Is this surprising to him?

Jake thinks about Sophie. He thought he would connect with, and have so much in common with, the celebrities that were at the event but that wasn't the case.

4. At the end of the evening, Jake's mom is concerned about something. What?

His mom was concerned about two girls, who are obviously on drugs, that were extremely flirtatious. The girls mention that Jake promised to party with them and then hand him a note. His mother also finds out he snuck out of the party.

5. Who shows up at Sophie's house unexpectedly? Where does he want to go?

Jake shows up at Sophie's house on Saturday morning. He says he'd like her to be his tour guide and take him to the mine.

6. How does Sophie convince herself that going with him is a good idea?

Sophie believes this is her opportunity to prove that Jake is not genuine and uses people.

7. What is the piece of Old West history that Jake tells Sophie about?

Jake tells Sophie about the '49ers code that Dante Foxx shared with him. The code was something that prospectors used when they discovered gold. The prospectors would send letters back to their families that were filled with secret messages to describe where the strike could be found. They used this method so anyone who intercepted the message would not know where the gold could be found.

Chapters 9-10 Answers

1. Where are Jake and his teammates?

Jake's team is spending the day at Breckenridge ski resort. The team was invited to try out the new snowboarding park.

2. Jake is surprised to see Sophie there. What does he teach her to do?

Jake gives Sophie a snowboarding lesson.

3. How did the town of Breckenridge get its name?

The town was named after the vice president at the time, John Breckinridge. When the Civil War broke out, the vice president joined the Confederate Army. The town was embarrassed and slightly changed the spelling of the town.

4. What is the name of Jake's signature snowboarding move? Why is it named that?

Jake's mom calls the "blindside" his signature move. Because of the rotation of the trick, the rider is unable to spot the landing.

5. Kate confronts Sophie about something. What is it?

Kate finds out that Sophie went to the mine with Jake but didn't tell her about it.

6. What does Deputy Grady give to Sophie?

Deputy Grady gives Sophie a printout of 4-wheel drive trails around the area.

7. How does Sophie occupy her time while Jake is away?

Sophie decides to investigate the mysterious death of animals around the area. She gathers soil and water samples, as well as a dead bunny to send to a lab in Denver. She is hoping to write an article about contamination from the mine to help her get into a good journalism school.

Chapters 11-13 Answers

1. What happened during Jake's week of training?

Jake's week of training went badly. He kept trying a new trick but could never quite get it. A camera crew was there and captured the failed attempts. The footage was later aired on a sports channel.

2. What happened while Jake was hiking to the mine?

While Jake was up at the mine, someone slashed all of his tires and left a note: *Keep your nose out of our business.*

3. Why do Jake and Sophie decide to go back to the mine?

When Sophie hears about what happened to Jake's jeep, she wants to investigate.

4. How does Sophie describe how God talks to her?

Sophie believes that the little thoughts that pop into her head are God's way of guiding her.

5. What happens on Jake's drive home from Sophie's house?

Jake is pulled over by Deputy Grady for speeding. The deputy searches the jeep and finds marijuana.

6. What is the fallout from the scandal? What is Sophie's reaction?

Jake overhears his parents questioning the possibility that the drugs were his. His position on the team is in jeopardy. His sponsors might drop him. Sophie believes him.

7. What does Jake figure out?

Jake figures out that Deputy Grady is up to something. Jake overhears the deputy saying that he planted the drugs in Jake's jeep. Jake realizes that the deputy is involved in the drug operation plaguing the area.

8. What does Jake decide to do?

Jake knows he must tell Sheriff Miller what he learned, but the sheriff is out of town. In the meantime, Jake's worried about Sophie investigating. He decides he needs to end things with her in order to keep her safe.

Chapters 14-15 Answers

1. When Sophie meets up with Jake, what does he tell her?

Jake informs Sophie that he doesn't want to see her anymore. He tells her that the only reason he was hanging out with her was because of a bet he had with Chad.

2. Kate tells Sophie to check out a celebrity magazine. What does Sophie find?

In the magazine is a photo of Sophie up at the mine. The accompanying article implies that Sophie is responsible for distracting Jake and his recent difficulties in training.

3. Jake decides to take things into his own hands. What does he tell the sheriff?

Jake tells Sheriff Miller his suspicions about Deputy Grady.

4. How does the sheriff respond?

Sheriff Miller doesn't believe Jake. The sheriff actually tells Deputy Grady about Jake's accusations.

5. When Jake heads back to the mine, what does he overhear?

Jake hears the men discussing moving the drugs to a different location. They state that they are unable to move them right now because of an approaching storm.

6. When Jake realizes his plan is flawed, why does he stop at the library?

Jake had hoped to sneak back up to the mine and record the illegal operation, but with a snowstorm on the way, he realizes his footprints would be seen. He knows he can't hike up the trail to the mine. When he remembers Sophie mentioning the tunnels that run between the library and the mine, he decides to approach from the inside. He goes to the library to take the key for the library door so he can sneak back in during the middle of the night.

7. What happens when Jake gets the incriminating evidence?

Jake records the area and takes some still photos of the evidence. Before he can sneak away, Deputy Grady captures him.

8. How does Jake contact Sophie?

Jake manages to text Sophie with a '49ers coded message.

Chapters 16-17 Answers

1. What does Sophie see in the photograph Jake sent her?

At first Sophie thinks the image is blank, but after enhancing it, she realizes that it is actually a photo of boxes piled on top of each other against a dark wall.

2. What does Sophie notice in the magazine photo?

After a closer look, Sophie realizes that sunlight is shining off a new silver chain and lock. She is positive that those were not there a few months back when she took photos of the area.

3. When Sophie puzzles out the mystery, why doesn't she tell anyone?

Sophie's afraid that no one will believe her, or that they might contact the sheriff about her theory, who in turn would tell Deputy Grady, further endangering Jake.

4. What does Sophie decide to do in order to help?

Sophie decides to face her fears and go check out the tunnels to see if Jake really did go there.

5. Believing Sophie is not coming, Jake decides he has two options. What are they?

Jake can either make a break for it outside when his hands and feet are free, but have to deal with three feet of snow and men with guns. Or, he can attempt to escape into the pitch-black tunnel with his arms and legs bound.

6. What does Jake realize the men don't know about how he got there?

Jake realizes that the men might not know about the tunnels, which could give him an advantage.

7. What does Jake finally realize he wants for his life if he gets away?

Jake realizes he has been an egotistical jerk. He understands that the most important things in life are God, his parents, and his friends. He also sees that everything is a gift that can be gone in an instant, and that he shouldn't think only of himself.

Chapters 18-20 Answers

1. When Sophie finds Jake, how does she create a distraction?

Using the secret lookouts, Sophie lights firecrackers and throws them in front of the mine door.

2. Jake has a unique way of getting away quickly. What does he do?

In order to get down the tunnel quickly, Jake pulls out his skateboard and rides the rails of the old mining track.

3. When they finally get to the library, what do they find?

They burst through the hidden passageway to find Sheriff Miller. Startled to see them, the sheriff pulls out his gun and points it at them.

4. Why is it hard for the sheriff to believe their story?

Sheriff Miller trusted Deputy Grady, who was his apprentice.

5. What does Jake realize about the people who were worried about him?

Jake understand that not everyone are Walkers, Talkers, or Stalkers, but there are people who genuinely care for him.

6. What is Jake's leading man move that Sophie asked for?

Jake arranges for a horse-drawn sleigh to take them to the Snow Ball dance.

7. After the story is over, we find out that Father Scott has encouraged Jake to use the experience in a positive way. What has Jake begun to do?

Jake has begun to speak at youth conferences about finding a way to use your talents and interests to glorify God.

8. What are your gifts and talents? How could you use them to help others?