

Roller Girl

Recommended for Grades 4-8

Book Summary: Roller Girl

Astrid and her best friend, Nicole, are taken to a roller derby where Astrid falls in love with the sport and makes the decision to do whatever it takes to become like her new role model, Rainbow Bite. Her first lessons consist of constantly falling and being overshadowed by the other junior rollers. She chooses to return and gradually gains confidence in herself through befriending Zoey, practicing, and passing notes to Rainbow Bite.

Nicole has declined to join roller camp and Astrid maintains the lie with her mother that she and Nicole are in camp together. As she and Nicole grow further apart, Astrid becomes more unsettled with Nicole's new best friend until she decides that she and Nicole are no longer friends.

At roller camp, the junior rollers are faced with their first roller derby bout and Astrid dreams of being a jammer, the star of the team who scores all the points. She is dismayed to learn that Zoey is chosen to be a jammer instead.

[Spoiler]

Astrid is crushed in not being chosen as a jammer and her reaction results in a strain with her friendship with Zoey, making Astrid feel even more alone. Her mother finds out that Astrid has been lying to her and makes her apologize to Nicole, which begins to mend their friendship and opens Astrid's eyes to how selfish she has been. She finds a way to support Zoey in the roller derby bout and they regain their friendship.

In the end, when faced with her two very different friendships, Astrid recognizes that she and Nicole have both changed over the summer and chooses to celebrate after the roller bout with her new roller derby friends.

Author Biography: Victoria Jamieson

Victoria Jamieson grew up in Havertown, Pennsylvania until her family moved to Florida. There she became fascinated by the Disney animators and decided she wanted to do it when she was older. She went to the Rhode Island School of Design and turned her focus towards illustration instead of animation. She began working as an illustrator with HarperCollins in addition to becoming involved in roller derby. Today she writes, illustrates, teaches children's book illustration at Pacific Northwest College of Art and skates with the Rose City Rollers.

She currently lives with her husband and son in Portland, Oregon.



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Discussion Questions: Roller Girl

1. Astrid's mother takes her to her first roller derby and she falls in love with it. What do you think attracted Astrid to roller derby? Is there something unique to roller derby that other sports don't have? If so, what?
 2. When Astrid first begins roller skating, it isn't as easy as she thought it would be. Why is it important to stick to something difficult? When was a time you had to work hard to improve at something? What was the result?
 3. How do you think Nicole felt when she was torn between her friendships with Astrid and Rachel? Should she have gone along with Astrid or done what she wanted even if it cost Nicole her friendship with Astrid? Why?
 4. Through the story, Astrid continues to lie to her mother about going to roller camp with Nicole. When should she have told her mother the truth and why? Would her troubles have been easier if she had opened up to her mother sooner? Why or why not?
 5. How does writing to Rainbow Bite increase Astrid's confidence in herself?
 6. According to Rachel, it is better to stop being friends than to pretend to still be friends. Do you agree with this? Why or why not?
 7. During the last week before the derby, Astrid does nothing but practice, including ignoring Zoey's attempts to do things together. Would you consider Astrid passionate or obsessed with roller derby? Why? What is the difference between the two?
 8. Consider Astrid's friendships with Nicole and Zoey and how they both began. How are the two friendships different? What do you think Astrid prefers about each of her friends? Why does Astrid need both of these friendships?
 9. Zoey is chosen to be a jammer and not Astrid. Why is it important to be happy for friends when something good happens to them? How else could Astrid have been a better friend?
 10. How did Astrid admitting all her problems to her mother make her feel better?
 11. How does Astrid change from before roller derby to after her first skating bout?
 12. How does the artwork enhance the story? How does the particular style work?
 13. How do you think the author's own love of roller derby influenced the story? How much of Astrid's story do you think the author based upon her own life?
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