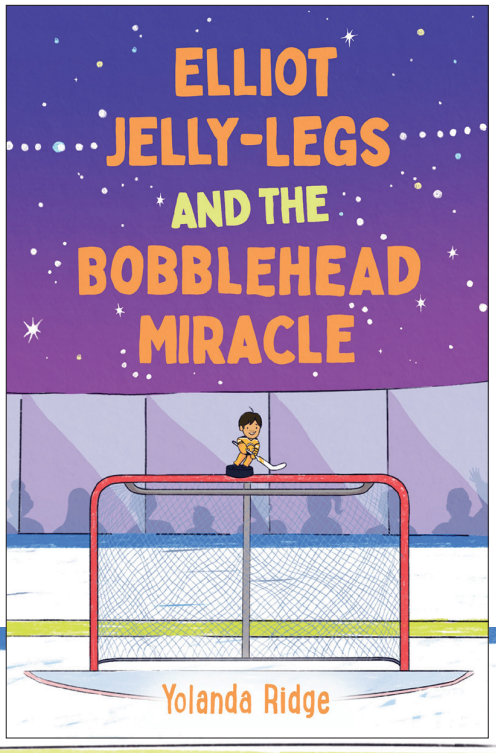


9781459833791

ELLIOT JELLY-LEGS AND THE BOBBLEHEAD MIRACLE

DISCUSSION GUIDE

ORCA

About the Book

Eleven-year-old Elliot loves hockey and finally convinces his parents to sign him up. There's just one problem: he can barely skate. But he is determined. He practices every chance he gets and even takes extra lessons. He is still miles behind the rest of his teammates in terms of skills and speed, though. So when the goalie gets injured, Elliot surprises everyone by offering to take his place. He figures his "jelly-legs" won't be quite so obvious in net. He is wrong. The first game is a complete disaster. In desperation, Elliot begs his Carey Price bobblehead for a win. Both thrilled and surprised when his wish is granted, Elliot makes more wishes. His team keeps winning. But is the magic real? And what will happen if his teammates discover the secret to Elliot's success?

Themes

Friendship | Hockey | Believing in yourself | Resilience | Bullying | Climate Change | Adoption

Read-Aloud Suggestions

Page 22–23 *"One last thing before we let you go," Coach Matt says after he's answered a bunch of questions. "Does anyone have any experience in net?"*
When the team finds out their goalie is injured, Elliot volunteers to play in net.

Page 32–35 *I'm sure everyone's in suspense, not just the other team, waiting to see how I'll do—including me. When we play street hockey or mini-sticks, I'm pretty good in net. But as Duncan keeps telling me, there's a big difference between goaltending on ice and goaltending on pavement.*
Elliot gets ready for his first game as goalie for the Trail Blazers.

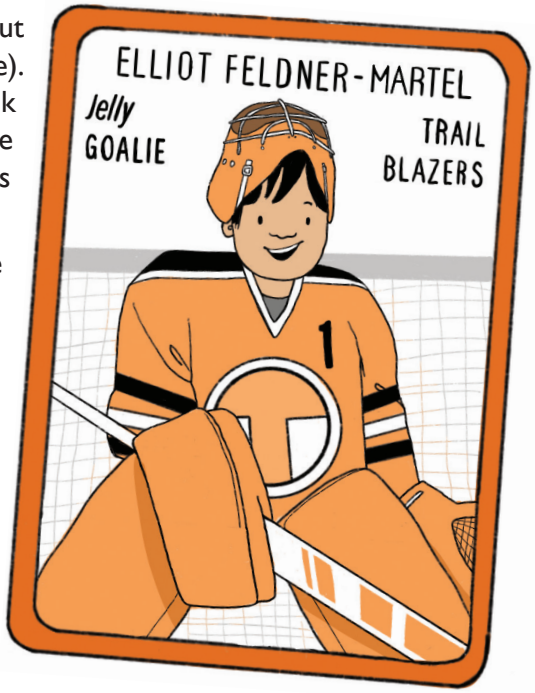
Page 118–123 *When I stepped up to be goalie, I never imagined this kind of pressure. How am I going to survive all these one-on-one matchups? Especially the one against Cane, who's probably been waiting the whole tournament for a moment like this. I have a horrible feeling he's about to go full cyclone.*
Elliot plays goal in an overtime shoot-out that will determine the winner of the local tournament.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you think the Carey Price Bobblehead is magic? Why? Why not?
2. What does Elliot do that contributes to his success on the ice?
3. Why do you think Hunter doesn't want Elliot to succeed?
4. Do you have any superstitions? What are they?
5. Why do you think it's so common for athletes to believe in superstitions?
6. What do you think is the difference between bullying, trash talk and teasing?
7. Who is your favourite player on the Trail Blazers? Why?
8. How would you describe the relationship between Elliot and his sister, Aislyn?
9. How does Elliot's friendship with Duncan change throughout the novel?
10. What are the similarities between Elliot playing hockey and his mom running for Mayor?

Activities

1. Make your own hockey card. Include a simple drawing of yourself on the front. Use the back side to add a short personal description that you think might be interesting to others. It doesn't have to be about hockey. It could be about another sport, a favourite activity, hobby, or special talent.
2. Have you ever felt like the worst person on a team? Or been convinced that everyone is better than you at something? Write about that experience. What would you like everyone to know about how it feels to think you're not good enough? What would you say to your best friend if they felt that way?
3. Pick three sports or activities that are popular with you and your friends. Survey your classmates to find out which is their favourite. Make a graph or pie chart to show the results.
4. Write out a list of good things about hockey and bad things about hockey (or a pros-and-cons list about the sport of your choice). Think about why Elliot's parents didn't want him to play. Think about why Elliot wanted to play. Once your list is complete, have a debate with one of your classmates, where one person argues for playing the sport and the other argues against it.
5. Make a list of the projects Aislyn tried for the Change Climate Change Contest. Now pretend that you're competing in a contest like that. How could you improve on one of Aislyn's designs? Can you come up with a unique project of your own?
6. Watch the documentary Trophy Town as a class. Individually search for the Trail Smoke Eaters to find out more about their success in the World Ice Hockey Championship. Make a poster or a presentation that includes information about the 1961 tournament and why it was such a profound accomplishment for members of the team at that time.



About Writing the Book

Elliot Jelly-Legs and the Bobblehead Miracle was inspired by Yolanda's son Spencer. Like Elliot's parents, Yolanda and her husband didn't want Spencer to join organized hockey because they were worried about the risk of concussion and other injuries (and turning into rink rats when they'd rather be skiing!). When they finally agreed to sign Spencer up for Greater Trail Minor Hockey (because he wouldn't stop asking), he discovered how hard it was to catch up to his teammates when he could barely even skate.

Proud of Spencer for believing in himself and persevering, the family worked hard to support him even though none of them had ever played the sport before. Yolanda felt guilty for keeping Spencer off the ice and desperately wanted to find a shortcut to help him catch up to his teammates so he could enjoy playing and being part of the team.

Having always believed that the best accomplishments are the ones you work hard for and achieve yourself, Yolanda started playing with the idea of a "magical" shortcut and how making wishes can sometimes lead to bad outcomes. That's when Elliot's story was born.

About the Author

Photo credit: Tim Ridge

Yolanda Ridge has always had a lot to say. As a young girl, she talked her way through every family meal, only to be left alone at the table after everyone else was finished eating. When she wasn't telling stories, she was reading—still two of her favorite things to do. Before writing for young people, Yolanda wrote everything from poetry to academic research articles. In 2006 she became the mother of twin boys who inspired her return to creative writing. With a Master of Science degree and ten years of experience as a genetic counsellor, she's adept at making complex concepts understandable—a skill she uses in crafting middle-grade novels, writing science books and visiting classrooms. Originally from Ontario, Yolanda grew up in Alberta and eventually settled in British Columbia because she couldn't go any further west. She currently lives in the Monashee Mountains where she likes to ski, cycle and hike with her family. As the only girl in the house, she still has a lot to say. To find out more, visit yolandaridge.com.