



## ROLLER DERBY RIVALS

by Sue Macy

illustrated by Matt Collins

Common  
Core State  
Standards

### About the Book

GRADES  
1–5

Tune in for the thrills—and spills—of Roller Derby at the dawn of the television era!

Midge “Toughie” Brasuhn is rough, scrappy, and lightning-quick. Gerry Murray is a gutsy glamour girl—and Toughie’s chief adversary. Their legendary high-speed, hard-hitting rivalry on the Roller Derby track is about to be witnessed by a packed arena at the 69th Regiment Armory in New York—and for the first time, thousands of television viewers! The cameras are rolling. *The book includes an Author’s Note, a Roller Derby Time Line from 1935 to the present, and Sources and Resources.*

HC: 978-0-8234-2923-3 / E-book 978-0-8234-3247-9

## SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### Literature/Language Arts

**Vocabulary**—The book contains several terms specific to Roller Derby: *banked track, jam, jammer, oval, pack, penalty box, slam, and troupe*. Students can choose a favorite sport and create their own glossary of terms specific to that sport, along with the definition for each term.

**CCSS 3.RL.4**

**Parts of a Book**—*Roller Derby Rivals* includes an extensive section at the end, called “back matter.” This provides notes from the author, lists of sources the author used for her research, suggested websites, and the specific sources of quotes used in the book. Alert students to the fact that most nonfiction books (and many fiction books) today contain back matter and encourage them to explore the links and sources mentioned to increase their knowledge of the particular subject.

### Questions for Discussion / Writing

Students may discuss the following questions as a whole class, in small groups, or choose one or more as prompts for writing. In all cases students should be prepared to provide rationales for their opinions, and cite proof where required. **CCSS 3.W.1, 3.SL.1, 3.RL.6**

Roller Derby is quite an aggressive sport. What are your feelings/opinions about violence in sports today? Do you think it makes games more exciting? Do you think it should be prohibited or curbed? Why or why not?

Gerry and “Toughie” were actually friends, even though they “beat each other up” on the skating track because the fans loved to watch it. Do you think this was honest or fair? What is your opinion of other sports that seem to be fake, such as some wrestling matches, for example?

TV played a large role in making Roller Derby popular in 1948. What is your opinion of the role that TV plays in today’s sports? Do you think it keeps people from buying tickets to games, or does it encourage them to do so? How do you prefer to watch games: on TV or in person? Why?

**Biographies**—Some noted figures in Roller Derby lore in addition to Gerry and Toughie are mentioned in the back matter of the book: Leo Seltzer, Ann Calvello, and Joanie Weston. Students may be interested in reading more about them. Some links are provided below and students may also search online for additional information or photos. After they have found information, they may write short biographies of these figures, or they may present the information orally to the class. **CCSS 3.W.7, 3.W.8, 3.SL.2, 3.SL.4**

**Interview**—Ask students to imagine they are news reporters during the seventeen-day run of the Roller Derby in New York City in December 1948. Have them create a list of questions they would ask

Gerry Murray and/or Toughie Brasuhn and then, using information gained from research, write a short news article in which their questions are answered.

## Research / Electronic Resources

**Roller Derby Foundation**—[www.rollerderbyfoundation.org/](http://www.rollerderbyfoundation.org/) presents information on the history of Roller Derby and biographical information on its founder, Leo Seltzer.

**Roller Derby History**—<http://selvedgeyard.com/2009/08/04/vintage-roller-derby-bad-girls-sass-on-wheels/> presents many photos that show Gerry and Toughie as well as an excellent article from a 1948 issue of *Life* magazine. (Note: This site contains ads and pictures related to other entities.)

**Joanie Weston**—[www.nytimes.com/1997/05/18/us/joanie-weston-62-a-big-star-in-the-world-of-roller-derbies.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1997/05/18/us/joanie-weston-62-a-big-star-in-the-world-of-roller-derbies.html) presents Weston’s obituary and information about her life and career.

**Ann Calvello**—[http://derbymemoirs.bankedtrack.info/Calvello\\_Ann.html](http://derbymemoirs.bankedtrack.info/Calvello_Ann.html) presents an interview with Calvello regarding her life and career.

**Women in Sports**—[www.womenssportsfoundation.org/](http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/) presents a wealth of information, history, and news about women in sports to further its purpose of encouraging girls and young women to participate in various sports.

Classroom Activities prepared by Sandy Schuckett, school library consultant.

## About the Author and Illustrator



Photo Credit Jill Rietjens

**Sue Macy** loves to write about sports and fearless women. Her books have been named ALA Notable Books, Best Books for Young Adults, and *Booklist* Editors’ Choices. She is the author of *Basketball Belles: How Two Teams and One Scrappy Player Put Women’s Hoops on the Map*, which *Booklist* praised in a starred review for its “sprightly text” and “fabulous, in-your-face paintings that bring the palpable excitement home.”



**Matt Collins** has illustrated numerous books for children. His art has also appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and *Sports Illustrated for Kids*. His website is [www.mattcollins.com](http://www.mattcollins.com).