**Homework Questions for “CATCH, PULL, DRIVE”**

1. What is the meaning, or the origin, of the title?

It’s the technique the narrator employs while swimming. The words decompose the string of movement that compose a swimming stroke. Catch, as in catch the water in front of you. Pull, as in pull what you caught towards you. Drive, as in use you leg to kick the water and drive yourself forward.

1. What is the story about? Summarize it in 2-3 sentences.

The story is about a transgender boy coming to light about how he feels in his girl body. We experience his coming out with him and all the consequences that it has on his life. We experience his doubts about how others will perceive him and how it will affect his swimming career.

1. What do you think of Coach’s reaction when the narrator came out to him?

I find his reaction very harsh yet, understanding. It was not an okay way of defining boundaries. Particularly with someone who’s just coming out and going to through tons of questions and anxiety. On the other hand, he’s not telling him to change, and seems to be fine with his decision to be his true self. I believe that he’s mainly concerned that it would affect the way he trains his students, distract them from the objective. Which is to get better at swimming, not to ponder over one’s gender.

1. Give 2-3 examples from the text that express how the narrator has felt about himself, or about his life. Include those quotes (and page numbers).

From a very young age, the narrator has felt like he wasn’t himself. One of the only places where he felt like himself was at the skatepark. Everyone would mistaken him for a boy, it felt good for him to be recognised as who he felt he was, even if that would be for a mere four hours. “And for a glorious four hours, I was just another skater boy. I was just me.” (p.188) The narrator doesn’t think of himself as normal. He thinks he’s a freak. Being out of the norm makes him think that others won’t accept him for who he is. “I—I just—what if I can’t do it? What if I can’t? I can’t, … I just wish I was normal.” (p.190) He sometimes felt like ending it all. He wanted to dig a hole that would take the exact shape of his body and die in it. He wanted to disappear from this world. Water had been a passageway to that morbid reality. It let him imagine the water as dirt that would let him fade to nothingness. “In those days, the water was the closest thing to my fantasy—touching me from all sides, in every way. I would sink into the water, imagining I was fading into nothingness.” (p.184)

1. Think about the narrator’s path in life, starting with when he was little, before he came out. (The text addresses this but not at length.) What processes has he gone through before coming out? What obstacles has he encountered?

It was always hard for him to be somewhat androgyne. It made it so he didn’t feel accepted in his birth gender. When he went into the girl’s locker room, he would get looks as if he wasn’t meant to be there. Wearing a woman one-piece swimming suit was the only way for him to assert that he was meant to be in the women’s bathroom. He was never addressed with the pronouns that represented who he is. The only place where he would be called the right ones was when he was going to the skatepark with his brother. Even his own mother never noticed his tendency to dislike girl stuff and would often correct people who had mistaken him for a boy. Even though, deep inside, he wished she didn’t do anything and let them call him by the pronouns that represent him.

1. Regarding the ending: Why does Roman not come out of their meeting, that day, as “the winner”? How does the narrator succeed in not letting Roman have “the upper hand”?

He finally stood up for himself. He didn’t let Roman belittle him. He responds when talked to. The bully is not used to being talked back to. It took Roman by surprise to finally have opposition. Our narrator didn’t let his words get to him. Instead of letting his emotions control him and let the insults get to him, he stayed calm and answered with his own brutal truths. He accepted who is in front everyone, without shame. He and Parker walked out heads high and victorious from the exchange.

1. What do you think of the subject of trans athletes?

It’s a very touchy subject. On one hand, it’s only fair to respect one’s representation of himself. If a person that was born a girl find’s himself trap in the wrong body. It’s only natural that he’ll wish to be known as a boy, since that gender is closer to how he feels. It would then be fair that we do as much as we can to let him feel accepted in our society. The problem is, if we’re talking about sport competitions, it is important that all the athletes stand on equal grounds. We can’t overlook that man is, most of the time, naturally stronger than woman. A man that goes through a physical transformation to become a woman, will not lose her physical advantage in the process. She will naturally have a physical advantage when competing against other women from having been born a man. That could make the competitions unfair. Same thing with a woman that wishes to become a man. To get on the same level, they’ll most likely need to take hormones. Those hormones are the same used in steroids(testosterone), which in the long term, could end up making a trans athlete stronger than what any man could naturally achieve.