

Example by StudyDriver

Source: <https://studydriver.com/alpine-skiing/>

Alpine Skiing Example

“The adrenaline that I felt I would remember for the rest of my life... and I continued to experience it for years”. That’s how my grandma described her love for alpine skiing. Whenever I would visit her in the cold, barren winter, it would always be the first thing we would do: ski. I’ve known her love for the sport as long as I can remember, and, not surprisingly, her story was intertwined with the beloved sport. What I didn’t know is that her love for skiing happened to have roots in her love for my grandfather. As it turns out, both events happened within a week of each other. Furthermore, that single ski trip she so eagerly told me about sparked a passion for alpine skiing, one that she would continue to pursue all of her life. Skiing has always been an important part of my grandma, so I decided to make that my research topic for this assignment.

HISTORY OF ALPINE SKIING

I decided to start off my research by studying the history of alpine skiing. To understand how any sport came about, it is vital to know where it came from. I was surprised to learn skiing dates back centuries. According to Suemedha Sood, the ski was invented before the wheel. Skiing began as a mode of survival. Skis and snowshoes

were first invented to cross wetlands and marshes in the winter when they froze over (Suemedha Sood). They enabled man to travel during the winter and hunt reindeer and elk across the frozen tundra (Sood). Many sports today originated in a similar way. Ancient man didn't have the time or the energy to play a sport just for the fun of it. Instead, these sports usually evolved out of survival, and innovations created, in this case skis to survive a harsh winter. Skiing's next era evolved out of military prospects. In the 1760s, the Norwegian army held skill competitions involving skiing down slopes, around trees, across level snowfields and while shooting (Sood). This reminded me of the Biathlon today, a sport that combines cross-country skiing with rifle shooting. The competitions being held could have determined an officer's ranking, and were most likely a way to determine if a soldier was fit for battle. According to Olympic Sport, Men's and women's alpine skiing both debuted in the Olympics in 1936 at Garmisch-Partenkirchen.

HOW DID ALPINE SKIING BECOME POPULAR?

Although learning about the history of skiing was fascinating, it didn't have much to do with my grandma and her story. One of the things she mentioned to me during the interview was that alpine skiing was just becoming popular, one of the reasons she felt so lucky to be able to experience it. And so, my next research topic was created: how did the sport become popular and accessible to the general public, like it is today. According to Suemedha Sood, the 1880s saw a shift from Nordic skiing (cross-country skiing), to Alpine skiing (downhill skiing), because the adrenaline rush had more appeal to the average person than skiing across level terrain. This was perfectly in line with what my grandma told me about, that the rush of adrenaline she felt made her fall in love with the sport. Evidently, many others felt the same way, popularizing alpine skiing. This evolution eventually made the Alps the new centre of the skiing world (Sood). My grandma was an avid traveler all of her life, and I'm sure she is well familiar with the renowned mountains. In 1924, the first Winter Olympics was held in Chamonix, France. I was a bit surprised of this fact, as I thought the winter olympics were always held with the summer olympics, ever since its origins. The pastime of skiing grew rapidly between 1955 and 1965 (Sood). My grandma took this landmark ski trip in the early 1970s, when the ski craze would have spread from the Alps to other parts of Europe, as well as Russia. The metal ski, invented in the 1950s, made the sport easier for recreational skiers

(Sood). Today, skis are not only made up of metal, but fiberglass and types of plastic as well. In the 1960s came the plastic boot (Sood). Although these innovations seem minor, they must have improved the experience enough to make alpine skiing so popular. All of these advances resulted in ease of use and control on the slopes, making it more and more popular to the general public.

DOWNHILL SKIING

I now decided to focus on the specific alpine event that my grandma loves so much: downhill skiing. According to Adam Augustyn, Downhill skiing is a ski race for speed on an adjusted downhill course that is marked by gates formed by paired poles, set at least 8 meters apart, through which the racer must pass. Contestants make at least one timed practice run, then compete in an order set by previous performance and starting at one-minute intervals (Augustyn). The one who completes the course in the shortest time, without missing any gates, is the winner (Augustyn). For women, the course is 1.6 to 2.5 km long, with a maximum vertical drop of 700 metres (Augustyn). Courses are characterized in terms of time, such as a two-minute downhill (Augustyn). During straighter parts of a course, skiers go into a tuck position in order to be more aerodynamic and increase their speed (Augustyn). The average speed of downhill events is 64 to 80 km/hr (Augustyn). This both surprised me and frightened me. It is a bit hard to imagine my old, frail grandma flying down a slope at such a high speed. However, the FIS recognizes the dangers of traveling at such high speeds and takes great efforts to ensure the safety of its skiers. Competitors are required to wear crash helmets (Augustyn). Each competition is regulated by a race jury who has the right to remove skiers it thinks are weak or unprepared for a particular course (Augustyn). In addition, race organizers can add more gates to slow the descent of the hill (Augustyn). This definitely reassured me, but I was still surprised my grandma would love such a dangerous sport. The downhill probably demands the most courage of all Alpine events, but it is the most exciting and adrenaline-filled event as well. Once again, I was reminded of my grandma's description of the sport: adrenaline-packed. Of course, that excitement also results in extreme danger, but that is what makes downhill skiing so exhilarating.

CONCLUSION

The research I did for this project changed my perspective on both the world and my grandma. I was extremely surprised to learn that my sweet grandma loved to go downhill skiing, which is such an extreme and dangerous sport. Although she sticks to normal alpine skiing now, I was still surprised to learn that she was such a thrill-seeker when she was young. It really reminded me that she was young and adventurous once too. My creative project will now have much more accurate images and descriptions of skiing, and I will focus a bit more towards the end of the graphic novel how the trip sparked a lifelong passion for the sport. I also have a much greater appreciation for alpine skiing. The sport that we today consider to be so common, was a luxury only a couple decades ago. Most importantly, I now have a new understanding for my grandma's love for the sport. The way her eyes sparked with excitement when she told me about the adrenaline she felt during that trip, it was the same spark that I saw in her when she taught me the sport as soon as I was able to walk, and the same spark that I feel to this day when I am on the slopes, a constant reminder of my charming, seemingly fragile, grandma.