

The Indian skate park bringing children together

Level 1 • Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

1 Warmer

Take a few seconds to picture a skateboarder. Then compare your thoughts with other students.

- What do they look like?
- How old are they?
- What are they wearing?
- Where are they?
- What sounds can you hear?

2 Key words

Match the key words with the definitions. Then find them in the article to read them in context. The paragraph numbers will help you.

concrete

funds

skateboard

barefoot

purpose

1. a board with four wheels on the bottom that you stand on and ride _____ (para 1)
2. without any shoes or socks on _____ (para 2)
3. a hard substance used in building made by mixing cement, sand, small stones and water _____ (para 2)
4. the aim of something, what something is meant to do _____ (para 5)
5. provides money for something _____ (para 6)

divide

arranged marriage

male-dominated

role model

enrolled

6. on an official list of pupils or students _____ (para 10)
7. someone who's good behaviour other people want to copy _____ (para 12)
8. controlled mainly by men or boys _____ (para 12)
9. when the parents decide who their child should marry _____ (para 14)
10. an important difference or disagreement between two people or groups _____ (para 18)

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'No school, no skating': the Indian skate park bringing children together

Jamie Fullerton

13 March, 2020

- 1 The children run outside at breakfast time and grab skateboards from next to a brown cow.
- 2 With their skateboards under their arms, they run barefoot. They put their boards down onto the concrete of Janwaar Castle – India's newest skateboard park.
- 3 The large concrete park opened in January, 2020. It is at the edge of Janwaar, a village of roughly 150 households in rural Madhya Pradesh, one of India's poorest states.
- 4 Soon, about 50 children are skating on the concrete. Young children lie on their stomachs on skateboards, and older children do tricks.
- 5 But when a bell rings from the schoolhouse next to the park, the children drop their boards and walk inside. This is the real purpose of the park.
- 6 Ulrike Reinhard, who started Janwaar Castle and Rural Changemakers, the German organization that funds it, has two rules for the young skaters: "No school, no skating" and "Girls first".
- 7 In rural areas like Madhya Pradesh, many children do not go to school. Only 57.1% of primary schoolchildren aged six to ten are in school. For children aged 11 to 12, the number is 53.4%.
- 8 Many parents in the village, who are very poor, had little or no education, so they don't make their children go to school.
- 9 Arun Kumar, 18, says when his mother was 11 she was a married housewife. When he should have been in school, he says: "I just played and ran around the village."
- 10 Asha Gond, 20, from Barefoot Skateboarders, which is part of Rural Changemakers and runs Janwaar Castle, says: "Before the skateboard park, kids weren't going to school." About 80 children are enrolled in the village's primary school and now, most days, the number of pupils going to school has gone up from about 25 to 50.
- 11 Gond runs the skate park and also runs extra lessons for the children, outside the schoolhouse. She regularly travels to New Delhi for training and hopes to teach full-time in the village soon.
- 12 Popular, brilliant at skating and good with children, Gond is a role model for the Janwaar children. In a male-dominated village, that is very important.
- 13 Reinhard says that, without the "girls first" rule, there would just be boys in the park. With the rule, when a girl asks for a skateboard, the boy gives it to her without argument. The result is that often there are as many girls skating as boys.
- 14 Gond says that, without skating, she would have become a housewife in an arranged marriage.
- 15 Gond says, "Village people said to my parents, 'She's skateboarding with boys. She's talking to boys.' So my father said: 'Stop skateboarding.' I thought: 'Why can't I do what I want? Boys do anything they want.' Every day, I cried, but after crying, I would feel stronger and new thoughts would come."
- 16 Gond started to win skateboarding competitions. When she skateboarded in a TV advert, her parents accepted that she didn't want an arranged marriage.
- 17 "My grandfather came to my house and said: 'We can find a boy for your daughter.' My father said: 'Let her be successful in her life, then we'll see'," says Gond.
- 18 Janwaar Castle has created a new divide: between skaters and non-skaters. After school, as some children get back on skateboards, a young girl walks by the park carrying wood on her head. Some parents want their children to do housework, not go to school or do skateboarding. But for many children in Madhya Pradesh, the skate park has been positive.

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3 Comprehension check

Answer the questions using the information from the article.

1. Where is the skate park?
2. What is it called?
3. What is it next to?
4. Who set it up?
5. Who runs it now?
6. Who is the skate park for?
7. What two rules do the children who use the skate park have to follow?

4 True or false?

Are these sentences true or false? Correct any that are false.

1. Boys can use the skate park in the morning and girls can use it in the afternoon.
2. All the parents in the village allow their children to use the park.
3. Asha Gond runs the skate park.
4. She is training to be a teacher in Germany.
5. Asha Gond got married when she was 11.
6. She has won skateboarding competitions.
7. All the village children go to school every day.
8. Since the skate park opened, more children go to school.

5 Using the key words

Use some of the key words from task 2 to complete these sentences.

1. There are fifteen adults _____ in the evening class.
2. In the summer, I usually walk around _____.
3. She is a good _____ for young girls who want to play football.
4. The _____ of this dictionary is to help students of English.
5. There are many _____ tower blocks in the city.
6. The world of engineering is often still very _____.

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6 Discussion

Circle Yes or No after each question about the skate park. Compare your answers with a partner or in a small group. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Do you think it is a good idea? Yes / No
2. Do you think it might be bad for some children? Yes / No
3. Do you think that all the families in the village should send their children to school every day? Yes / No
4. Should the boys be made to share the park and the skateboards with the girls? Yes / No