



SCHOOL PROGRAM

# ATHLETE STORIES

**Joannie Rochette —  
Courage // Grade 6+**

## About Joannie

**BORN** January 13, 1986

**BIRTHPLACE** Montréal, Quebec

**SPORT** Figure Skating

**OLYMPIC GAMES** Vancouver 2010,  
Turin 2006

**FAVORITE RECESS ACTIVITY**

Stretching and staying fit

**ADVICE ABOUT BEING COURAGEOUS**

Always persevere, never give up

**FAVORITE SUBJECT IN SCHOOL**

Math, Biology, Chemistry



# Joannie Rochette — Courage

Joannie Rochette gazes down at the Olympic bronze medal that hangs gracefully around her neck. It glimmers in the bright lights of Vancouver's Pacific Coliseum and she is instantly transported back in time.

"Holding that medal I was suddenly a little girl again. I used to always draw pictures of myself winning an Olympic medal and now that dream had come true."

A tear rolls down her cheek. This victory is bittersweet. Just two days before Joannie began her competition, her mother, Therese, died suddenly of a heart attack. She had just arrived in Vancouver to watch and support her daughter.

"There was no question of not skating. My mother had been my main support, my rock. She always pushed me hard to be a great skater. Being a figure skater is challenging and she helped me get over many obstacles. I knew that she would tell me to be courageous, so I dedicated my competition to her memory."

Joannie knows this was her mother's dream as well, seeing her daughter on the podium at the Olympic Games. It's never been an easy ride. She's not from a big city, with lots of support and clubs, but from a small town. It would have been easy to give up as there have been many injuries, falls and missed jumps along the way.

"Overcoming self-doubt is one of the biggest challenges. You can't think about failure when you skate. You must prepare as best as you can. Doubt can help you train harder, but you have to fight against it and be confident in yourself as well."

There was even the time Joannie had a falling out with her long-time coach. They broke up right before a big competition and Joannie had to move to a new town for her training. It was her mother who stepped in to help Joannie bounce back.

"She told me to be brave. She told me that the coach doesn't make me who I am as a person or a skater. I have to do that. It made me stronger to know that I had that responsibility."

Joannie looks into the crowd and sees her father, Normand. She sees the courageous man who has put aside his own grief to be here supporting his daughter. She remembers

the way he has worked numerous jobs over the years to help pay for her training, to help her Olympic dreams come true.

Hundreds of cameras begin to flash as all the fans and photographers in the rink begin to capture the moment. Joannie's determination to compete, her courage, is the most moving story of the Olympic Winter Games.

"All the support was great, but it also added pressure. One of the hardest things was knowing that everyone was looking at me, that everyone knew what I was going through. For me, I had to try as hard as I could to lose myself in my own world."

That has not been easy. Each of her performances was met with a standing ovation. Stories about her loss have been beamed around the world. It's something she can't ignore. Years of living in the public eye help Joannie deal with the range of emotions she's feeling in Vancouver.

"As a skater, I am all alone on a sheet of ice with a pretty costume and makeup. In hockey, if someone falls they just get back up. If I fall, everyone sees that. You have to be tough, even a little selfish to be a skater. You can't worry about what other people are thinking about you, good or bad. You have to be yourself."

The anthems begin to play and the flags, including the Canadian flag, are raised to the ceiling. Joannie takes a deep breath. Everyone in attendance and watching at home would have understood if she'd fallen, or if she'd pulled out of the competition. But with her courage and self confidence she didn't, and now she is an Olympic bronze medallist.

Joannie thinks back one more time to the pictures she drew of herself when she was a child. In those pictures she is always smiling. Joannie does allow herself a smile now, to celebrate this achievement for herself and her family.





# Joannie Rochette — Courage



2. Create a poster or collage to inspire yourself to have courage, to persevere, and be motivated to get through a difficult time. In creating your posters or collage, you should consider the following:

- The importance of demonstrating positive character traits
- The importance of trying one's best; participation
- Use personal examples or examples of people in the media
- Placement of words and images (layout)
- Use of colour

