

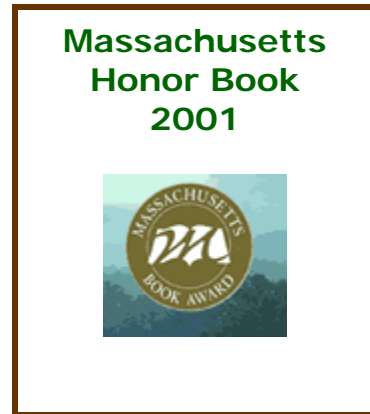
Zachary's Ball

By Matt Tavares

Candlewick Press

A Reading and Discussion Guide

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Memorial Hall Library, Andover, MA



SUMMARY:

The excitement of attending his first baseball game grows when Zachary's dad catches a fly ball. When he gives it to Zachary, the boy begins to discover the magic of the game. This book is a must read for children preparing to attend their first baseball game and for those fans who still believe in the magic of baseball.

Suggested Age Level: 4—9

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Before reading this story aloud, ask if the children have ever been to a baseball game. Talk about the sights, sounds and smells one might find there.
2. While reading the story, include some of the sounds you might hear at a game such as cheering, the crack of the bat, and the umpire yelling "You're out!" or "Strike Three!"
3. Talk about what it might be like to play for a professional team such as the Boston Red Sox. Ask the children which positions they would choose to play.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Baseball card collecting (start your own or have someone speak about their collection)
2. Choose a favorite team and follow their games and statistics by clipping articles and information from the newspaper. Keep a scrapbook about this team.
3. Sing "Take me out to the ballgame" or another baseball song.

4. Craft: *Personal Pennant: make your own special flag.*

Supplies

Poster board

Construction paper

Markers

Scissors

Glue

Magazines

Photos (optional)

Use the poster board to make a pennant shape. Decorate it with things that remind you of you, or make one to cheer on your favorite sports team.

5. Activity: “Why does a curve ball curve?” (from *Sportworks* by the [Ontario Science Centre](#))

When pitchers throw a curve ball it often baffles the hitter because the ball seems to “drop” all of a sudden. This is because the pitcher has put a spin on the ball which causes it to break suddenly from its path. Using a beach ball you can see how a ball spins which is the reason behind why a curve ball curves.

Hold the beach ball on your outstretched hand.

Bring your other hand up fast, the way you would when hitting a volleyball. Instead of hitting the ball right on, let the flat of your hand hit it on the side as you pass it.

Watch it curve

Try doing the same thing but hit it on the top for a top spin

Try spinning and throwing it to the floor

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Reprinted from <http://matt-tavares.com/main.html>

ZACHARY'S BALL, a classic picture book about a boy's baseball fantasies coming true, began as Matt Tavares's senior art thesis at Bates College in Maine. The subject was a natural choice for the author and illustrator, who had spent his childhood growing up in Boston as a Red Sox fan and always wanted to be a baseball player. "I've never been anywhere that feels more magical than Fenway Park," he says. "In this age of AstroTurf and retractable dome stadiums, I wanted to create a story that portrayed baseball in a simple, timeless way--a child going to an old-time ballpark with his fielder's mitt, hoping to catch a foul ball, or maybe even see his hero hit a home run."

Matt Tavares lives with his wife in Ogunquit, Maine. Catching a foul ball at a Red Sox game, he says, remains a fantasy.

HELPFUL LINKS:

Matt Tavares web site: <http://matt-tavares.com/main.html>

Major League Baseball: Kids' Dugout: <http://mlb.mlb.com/NASApp/mlb/mlb/kids/index.jsp>
Surfing the Net with Kids: Baseball Fun: <http://www.surfnetkids.com/ballfun.htm>

Suggested Reading:

Casey at the Bat by Ernest Thayer. Illustrated by Christopher Bing (Caldecott Honor Book, 2001) The original verses about baseball star Casey and the ill-fated Mudville nine appeared in the San Francisco Examiner on June 3, 1888, and Bing captures the spirit of the age with pen-and-ink illustrations that look like carefully preserved newspaper clippings, complete with slightly torn and yellowed edges.

Players in Pigtails by Shana Corey. Katie Casey, a fictional character, helps start the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, which gave women the opportunity to play professional baseball while America was involved in World War II.



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