

# DISCUSSION GUIDE



## Playoff Dreams

Written by Fred Bowen

PB: 978-1-56145-507-2 | Also available in e-book

Ages 7–12 | Realistic Fiction | Series: Fred Bowen Sports Story  
AR • RC • Lexile • F&P • GRL P; Gr 3

ALIGNED with  
COMMON CORE  
STANDARDS

### ABOUT THE SERIES

Fred Bowen's fast-paced middle-grade stories offer readers themes of competition, cooperation, facing change, gender roles, overcoming challenges, and new experiences. In addition, they feature play-by-play action, snappy dialogue, and engaging plots. Bowen's books are not the usual sports-fiction fare; each book loops in a little sports history and includes back matter with fascinating glimpses into that history and the heroes who made it happen.

### ABOUT THE BOOK

Brendan is a crackerjack center fielder on a team going nowhere. He's frustrated and he's mad. His parents are no help. His father is a jazz musician and his mother is a doctor. When it comes to sports, they are clueless. But then Brendan's sports-crazy uncle takes him to a game at Wrigley Field in Chicago. He tells Brendan some interesting stuff about the hard-luck Cubs and suddenly Brendan starts to see his situation from a different angle.

### THEMES

Dealing with disappointment | Grit  
Persistence | Effort | Friendship  
Being a good teammate  
Baseball history | Family connections | Music

### WRITING PROMPTS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

aligned with Common Core Reading Standards

#### DIRECTIONS

Use details from the text to support ALL of your responses.

#### CHAPTERS 1–3

How does the author show the reader that Brendan is a very good baseball player? How does author show that Brendan is not a very good teammate? What does Brendan want to happen this baseball season? Why does he think it will be difficult to accomplish this? Describe Brendan's mother and father. Do they seem interested in Brendan's baseball team at the beginning of the book?

#### CHAPTERS 4–6

What mistake does Brendan make at the end of the game against the Marlins? Why does he make the mistake? Brendan's father compares playing music to being on a team. What are some of the similarities? Can you think of some more? Compare and contrast Uncle Jack and Brendan's dad. How are their personalities different? How are they similar?

#### CHAPTERS 7–9

List the details the author includes about Wrigley Field. Why do you think he included them? Why does Uncle Jack throw back the home-run ball that Brendan caught? How does this make Brendan feel? Compare and contrast the advice Uncle Jack gives Brendan in chapter 8 to the

advice his father gave Brendan in chapter 6. Who would always say, “Let’s play two?” What does the phrase mean?

### CHAPTERS 10–12

What Cub players get hits in the last inning of the game against the Yankees? Who does not get a hit during that inning? What lesson does that teach Brendan? Compare and contrast how Brendan plays with his teammates in the game against the Reds in chapters 12 and 13 to how Brendan played with his teammates in the game against the Reds in chapter 1.

### CHAPTERS 13–15

The ending of the game in chapter 13 is a surprise. What does the author do to create this surprise? The sentence “The ball was gone” is used at the end of chapters 7 and 13. Compare and contrast what the sentence means in each chapter. Compare what Brendan says about what “Let’s play two” means to the advice he received from his father and Uncle Jack.

### OVERALL QUESTION

In just a few words, write down what this whole story is about (the overall theme or big idea). Explain your response.

### “THE REAL STORY” FOLLOW-UP QUESTION

How does the information in “The Real Story” relate to the theme or the plot of the book?



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fred Bowen is the author of Peachtree’s popular Fred Bowen Sports Story series. A lifelong sports fanatic, he has coached youth league baseball, softball, soccer, and basketball. His kids’ sports column “The Score” appears each week in the

KidsPost section of the *Washington Post*. Bowen lives in Maryland.

[www.fredbowen.com](http://www.fredbowen.com)

### REVIEWS

“Long-suffering Cubs fans of all ages (especially kids) will identify with the plight of a young Chicago boy whose knothole team can’t seem to make the grade. Then the presence of a Wrigley Field legend and his sunny-side-up approach to baseball changes everything.”

—*USA Today Baseball Weekly*

“This is the fourth book in a series that uses actual sports heroes to reinforce a positive attitude among young athletes.”

—*School Library Journal*

“Bowen is a natural when it comes to writing sports stories and informing his readers about the past. These books are perfect for kids ages 8 to 12.” —*Newsday*

### AWARDS

- Maryland Children’s Book Award (nominee, intermediate level) —State of Maryland International Reading Council

Peachtree Teacher’s Guide for

### PLAYOFF DREAMS

prepared by Peggy Jackson

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