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PEACHTREE  
**DISCUSSION GUIDE**

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## Throwing Heat

Written by Fred Bowen

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Also available in e-book

Ages 7–12 | Realistic Fiction  
Fred Bowen Sports Stories Series  
AR • AC • Lexile • F&P • GRL R; Gr 4



### 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

Jack throws the fastest pitches in the league, but his blazing fastballs are all over the place. He's racking up a lot of walks instead of strikeouts. A coach tries to show him some new pitches, but Jack loves bringing the heat. Will his fastball be his downfall, or can he change his game and start winning?

### THEMES

Friendship | Sports | Baseball | Pitching  
Professional baseball pitchers  
Working hard to get better | Being open to change  
Not being so quick to judge others

### WRITING PROMPTS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**aligned with Common Core Reading Standards**

#### DIRECTIONS

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

#### CHAPTER 1

Describe the setting and what is happening. What does the first chapter already tell you about the main character Jack?

#### CHAPTER 2

What do you learn about Jack in this chapter? How is that different from what you learned in chapter 1?

#### CHAPTER 3

Why is Jack suddenly interested in his sister's new boyfriend Finn? What do they have in common? How can Finn help Jack?

#### CHAPTER 4

At the end of the first pitching lesson, Finn tells Mr. Lerner that Jack "could be a real good pitcher if he works at it." But when Jack hears this, he "rolls his eyes." What does that expression mean? Why does Jack roll his eyes?

#### CHAPTER 5

What does Jack find out about Finn? How will that

affect whether he wants Finn to help him anymore?

## CHAPTER 6

What do the statistics tell Jack about his pitching in this game? Compare his first inning statistics with the statistics in his next two innings. What might have helped him pitch better?

## CHAPTER 7

Think about the way Jack pitches. How does that compare with the way he plays Ping-Pong? How does his style compare with Andy Wong's, the new guy who is also an excellent Ping-Pong player?

## CHAPTER 8

Why does Finn tell Jack about Steve Dalkowski and Sandy Koufax? What is the biggest difference between Finn's idea about pitching and Jack's? Who do you think is right?

## CHAPTER 9

Jack's teammates congratulate him after he is taken out of the game. What is Jack's reaction to their congratulations?

## CHAPTER 10

Andy Wong beat Jack in the Ping-Pong tournament. How did the way Andy played help Jack understand what Finn has been trying to tell him all along? How does Jack's e-mail to Finn show that he is starting to change his opinion about Finn?

## CHAPTER 11

Compare Jack's reaction to Finn's coaching now with his reaction to Finn's coaching in chapter 8. What has changed?

## CHAPTER 12

Examine the statistics for Jack's fastballs and change-ups. How do the statistics show that he is getting better? Look at his stats for May 8. Nine fastballs out of 40 pitches were strikes, and eight change-ups out of 20 pitches were strikes. Was he more successful with his fastballs or his change-ups? Explain your answer.

## CHAPTERS 13–14

The last line in chapter 14 is "Jack couldn't wait to tell Finn." Why is he excited to tell Finn about the game? What does that last line show about Jack and his relationship with Finn?

## CHAPTER 15

What is the big, overall lesson Jack learns from his pitching sessions and talks with Finn?

## 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?

## REVIEWS

"The prolific Bowen serves up a baseball tale that should appeal equally to middle-grade fans and less-able older readers."

—*Booklist*

"...sports-minded readers should find the brisk pacing and simple vocabulary to their liking."

—*School Library Journal*

## 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.

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