

DISCUSSION GUIDE



T. J.'s Secret Pitch

Written by Fred Bowen

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

T. J. desperately wants to be a pitcher, but he's small and his pitches don't pack any power. Then he discovers a crazy pitch used by a real-life major leaguer in the 1940s. When he tries it out, his teammates laugh—until they try to hit it! But will T. J. get the chance to use it in a real game?

THEMES

Perseverance | grit | friendship | baseball history
flexibility | innovative thinking | learning

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

What is T. J.'s problem? Why is he so frustrated? How do his teammates treat T. J. at practice? Compare and contrast how T. J. pitches at baseball practice and how his father pitches at the softball game.

CHAPTERS 4–6

Compare and contrast how T. J. pitches in chapter 1 and how he pitches in chapter 4. Why does T. J. get a chance to pitch in a real game? Describe Mr. Upton's reaction to T. J.'s pitching in chapter 6.

CHAPTERS 7–9

Look at the statistics on page 48. What do the statistics tell you about Rip Sewall? Did Sewall win more games than he lost? Did he strike out more batters than he walked? Describe the Pirates reaction when T. J. wants to pitch against the Cardinals. Compare that reaction with how they feel *after* T. J. pitches at the Pirates practice.

CHAPTERS 10–12

Describe the game between the Pirates and Cardinals. Compare the two pitchers: T. J. and Chris Elmer. What does Kevin Vincent say when the Pirates carry T. J. off the field after the game? Compare this to what Kevin has said about T. J.'s pitching in chapters 1 and 8.

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?

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REVIEWS

“Bowen is quickly joining the rank of today's most popular sports-fiction authors... he skillfully interweaves fact and fiction and uses historical sports plays and concepts as a backdrop for the story.”

—*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*

“[Bowen's] pace is excellent and he has a knack for efficient evocation...”

—*Washington Post*

“A heartwarming and suspenseful story about the value of friends, family, and perseverance, it's a sure hit with both kids and parents...” —**Family Channel**

AWARDS

- Seal of Quality —The Family Channel

**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

**Available in the
Fred Bowen Sports Story series**

BASEBALL:

Dugout Rivals
The Golden Glove
The Kid Coach
Perfect Game
Playoff Dreams
Throwing Heat
T.J.'s Secret Pitch
Winners Take All

FOOTBALL:

Double Reverse
Quarterback Season
Touchdown Trouble

BASKETBALL:

The Final Cut
Full Court Fever
Hardcourt Comeback
Off the Rim
On the Line
Outside Shot
Real Hoops

SOCCER:

Go for the Goal!
Out of Bounds
Soccer Team Upset

Peachtree Teacher's Guide for
T.J.'S SECRET PITCH
prepared by Peggy Jackson

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