

Ω
PEACHTREE
DISCUSSION GUIDE

Perfect Game

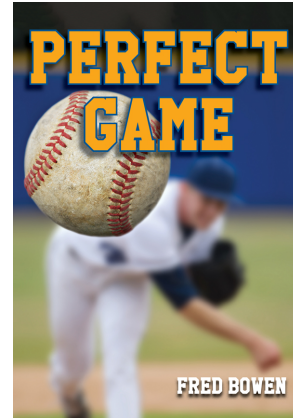
Written by Fred Bowen

HC: 978-1-56145-701-4

PB: 978-1-56145-625-3

Also available in e-book

Ages 7–12 | Realistic Fiction
Fred Bowen Sports Stories Series
AR • AC • Lexile • F&P • GRL O; Gr 3



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

Isaac is a serious pitcher and he’s determined to pitch a perfect game: no hits, no runs, no walks, and no errors. He gets close a couple of times, but then a batter gets on base and Isaac totally loses his cool on the mound. He gets so mad that his pitches start missing their mark and he can’t get his head back in the game. Then Isaac learns about a Special Olympics Unified Sports team and meets an interesting athlete who shows him a new way to think about being perfect.

THEMES

Inclusion | Diversity (intellectual abilities)
Friendship | Sports | Baseball | Basketball
Special Olympics Unified Sports
Problems with perfectionism
Hurtfulness of the word “retarded”

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 Isaac. What does the author tell you about him just by showing you how he puts on his baseball uniform? What is a perfect game in baseball?

CHAPTER 2

Look at your description of Isaac. What more can you say about him? What scene in this chapter supports your description?

Note: Some baseball terms may be unfamiliar, but don’t worry. Almost all these words can be defined through the use of context clues. Examples:

- **Error:** missing a catch during a game
- **Patter:** talking done by players on the field to keep themselves pumped up
- **Dugout:** area where the team sits

CHAPTER 3

What does the scene with Isaac and his dad in the backyard tell you about the dad and their relationship?

CHAPTER 4

Isaac thinks he pitched a strike, but the umpire calls out, “Ball one.” Later Coach Park says to Isaac, “I thought you were going to lose it when the umpire made that call.” What does Coach Park mean by “going to lose it?”

Note: More baseball terms that can be defined with context clues:

- **Bullpen:** area near the field where pitchers warm up by throwing practice pitches
- **Infielders:** the players who play close in, near the bases
- **Foul ball:** a ball hit by a batter into foul territory, off the playing field.

CHAPTER 5

Coach Park’s basketball team is part of Special Olympics Unified Sports. Why is this kind of team called Unified Sports? Why do you think Coach Park wants Isaac to be part of the team? What is Isaac’s first impression?

CHAPTER 6

Why is Isaac glancing around the field while he is talking with Kevin? Why does he just want the conversation to end?

CHAPTER 7

How is Kevin changing? How is Isaac changing? How are they similar to each other?

CHAPTER 8

Isaac says that the way he plays sports is a lot different from the way Special Olympics athletes play sports. What reasons does he give? Maya completely disagrees. What reasons does she give?

CHAPTER 9

Why does Coach Park tell Isaac about pro baseball players who pitched perfect games? What does Maya mean when she tells Isaac to “just be perfect enough”?

CHAPTER 10

What scenes in this chapter show that Kevin is changing in important ways?

CHAPTER 11

Compare chapter 3 with this chapter. They are both about Isaac and his dad practicing pitching. What gives

you clues that things are different for Isaac in this chapter?

CHAPTER 12

Mrs. Canavan tells Isaac a lot of details about Kevin that he didn’t know. How do you think that changes the way Isaac thinks about Kevin?

CHAPTER 13

In chapter 5, Isaac used the word “retarded” to describe the Special Olympic athletes. But in this chapter, he gets mad when Jackson uses the word. Why does Isaac feel so differently about the use of that word now?

CHAPTER 14

When Kevin makes a basket at the end of the chapter, Isaac is so thrilled that he feels like he pitched the last out in a perfect game. Why is Isaac so excited?

CHAPTER 15

Do you think Isaac would have made the Thunderbolts if he had tried out before he joined the Unified Sports team? Why or why not?

CHAPTER 16

Reread the last two paragraphs. Earlier Isaac told Coach Park that he really didn’t bowl much, but when Kevin says, “I’m a bowler,” Isaac says, “Then I am too.” Why does he say that?

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 QUESTIONS

What did you learn about Special Olympics Unified Sports that you did not know before? What did you learn about pro baseball players who pitched perfect games? How did the information in “The Real Story” relate to the theme or plot of the book?

REVIEWS

“*Perfect Game* is about the important lessons sports can teach: How to play for the love of the game.”

—**Tim Shriver, Chairman and CEO,
Special Olympics**

“A combination of fast-paced action, sports savvy young characters and authentic situations makes this novel a winner.”

—***Washington Parent***

“The scenes with the Special Olympics Unified Basketball Team were spot on... The story will generate much discussion on what is normal and perfect. The story also teaches compassion, patience, and puts the topic of giving back or helping others at the center of any discussion of the book. I could not put it down. Any kid who reads this, boy or girl, will enjoy Isaac’s determination, spunk, spirit, and transformation.”

—**Kid Lit Reviews blog**

“As always, Bowen provides the ‘real story’ behind his novel at the end of the book, and it makes for fascinating reading.”

—***Standard-Examiner***

“A ‘perfect’ read for sports buffs. Fred Bowen combines likeable characters, realistic dialogue, and believable character growth with plenty of sports details, statistics, and lingo. Isaac’s personal development and understanding of the players on the Special Olympics team is impressive and rewarding.”

—**Good Reading Guide blog**

AWARDS

- Massachusetts Children’s Book Award (master list)
—Salem State College
- Kansas State Reading Circle Recommended Reading List (starred, intermediate) —Kansas National Education Association
- Land of Enchantment Book Awards (Children’s Book) —New Mexico Library Association, New Mexico Council of IRA
- Great Kids Can Read Award (nominee) —Greater Kansas City Association of School Librarians
- Maud Hart Lovelace Award (nominee, grades 3–5 and grades 6–8) —Minnesota Youth Reading Awards

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
Lucky Enough
Perfect Game
Playoff Dreams
Throwing Heat
T.J.’s Secret Pitch
Winners Take All

FOOTBALL:

Double Reverse
Quarterback Season
Speed Demon
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

Discussion Guide prepared by Peggy Jackson

Copyright ©2019 by Peachtree Publishing Company Inc. All rights reserved. For instructional uses only and not for resale. Except for the printing of complete pages, with the copyright notice—no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other without written permission. Requests for permission to use any section of the work should be mailed to: Permissions Department, Peachtree Publishing Company Inc., 1700 Chattahoochee Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30318-2112.