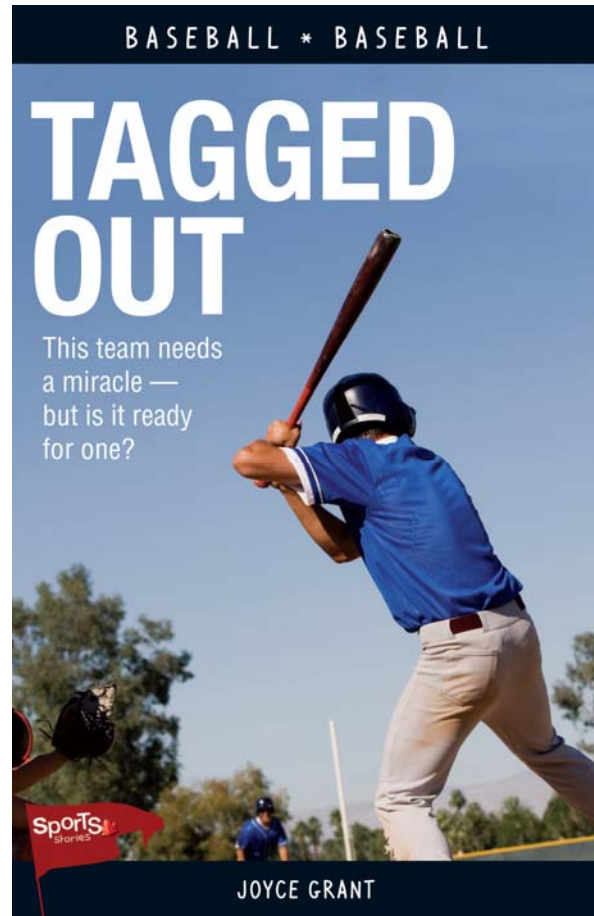


TAGGED OUT
TEACHERS' RESOURCE GUIDE



Joyce Grant

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WELCOME TO CHRISTIE PITS



This panorama of Christie Pits was taken by Joyce Grant in 2015.



This Is Christie Pits

You're standing at the northeast corner of Christie Pits, in Toronto. In front of you is the real-life diamond where the (fictional) Blues play.

- (1) To the far left is the larger diamond used by older players. That's where Jock's ball ends up when he throws with Gnash.
- (2) Far off, towards the top of the photo (southwest), are soccer fields.
- (3) Further south is where the Christie Pits riot took place on August 16, 1933.
- (4) The grey "box" structure near the diamond in front of you is actually bigger than it looks here — it's about 6 feet high. It's the cement equipment shed Raj crashes his bike into.
- (5) The dugout closest to you is where Gnash and Jock have their talk.
- (6) And where you're "standing," looking over the Pits? Look to your left — maybe you can see Jock giving Raj some "pointers."
- (7) Best of all, if it starts to pour rain, you can launch yourself right down the hill in front of you for a game of Mudball.

Welcome to Christie Pits. Now . . . let's *play ball!*

CHAPTER 1: THE PITS



READING PROMPTS

(Critical Thinking, Text-to-Real-Life Connections)

- 1) When Raj accidentally hit the batter, “his face fell.” What does that mean? How do you think Raj feels at that moment? How do you think the batter feels? The coach? The other Blues?
- 2) (a) At the end of the chapter, Raj is telling himself he’s not good enough. Gnash doesn’t reply. Why?
(b) If you were Gnash, is there something *truthful* that you could say to help to make Raj feel better? What?
- 3) Does anything happen in this chapter that you find funny? What is it, and why is it funny?

WRITING/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- 1) The coach tells Gnash to “take” the pitch — in other words, not to swing at it. Gnash ignores the coach’s signal. If you were Coach Coop, what would you say to Gnash after that happens?
- 2) With the help of an adult, look up “The Christie Pits riots.” Write down three interesting facts about this real, historic event.
- 3) Although the Christie Pits riot really happened, *Tagged Out* includes some fictional (made-up) facts. Using a T-chart, write down some facts from this chapter about the riot that are TRUE and some that are MADE-UP or FICTIONAL.

VOCABULARY

gnashing _____

noisily _____

turmoil _____

shoulda (Hint: this is a made-up word — but it does have a meaning.) _____

slumped _____

thwack _____

BASEBALL VOCABULARY

(These words may have a different meaning in non-sports usage.)

take _____

signal _____

strike _____

oh-for-two _____

diamond _____

“equal opportunity hit-by-pitch-er” _____

warming up _____

bullpen _____

dugout _____

GRAMMAR

Puns

A pun is a word or phrase that can have two meanings — often, the second meaning is humorous. For instance, in this joke:

He wanted to be a pitcher, but he threw his back out.

In this case, “threw” has two meanings: literally to throw a baseball (like a pitcher does) and to “throw your back out” means to hurt it.

The title of this chapter is “the pits.” Explain the two meanings of “the pits” and — this is harder — explain why it’s funny.

CHAPTER 2: NEW KID



READING PROMPTS

(Critical Thinking, Text-to-Real-Life Connections)

1) Raj gives his friends the impression that he's going to ask Jock if he's gay. Why do you think he does that? Does he ever actually ask Jock that question? Why or why not?

2) Why do you think Raj talks to Jock about where their teacher buys his clothes?

3) In the last scene of this chapter, no words are spoken, but we know exactly how Gnash is feeling.

Gnash clenched his fists and opened them. He did it again. He took a deep breath and shoved his books into his bag. He got up from his seat and went to talk to his teacher.

What tells us about his mood? Have you ever been in a similar situation that made you feel the way Gnash does?

4) After the cafeteria scene, and before the classroom scene, there are three asterisks: ***

Why are they there? What do they mean?

WRITING/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1) (a) When the Blues are chatting with each other at the beginning of the chapter (in the cafeteria), do you think Jock overhears them? What clues are there in the chapter that gives you that impression?

(b) Pretend that you know what Jock is thinking during that scene in the cafeteria. Write three thoughts he may have been thinking while the Blues were chatting and laughing at the next table.

2) This chapter includes a scene with a kindergarten boy going down a slide. Why do you think that scene was included? Does it tell you anything about Gnash? What?

3) Where is New Jersey? Find it on a map. Write about five things that you find interesting about New Jersey.

VOCABULARY

that-a-way _____

slouched _____

wolfed _____

slander _____

motley _____

mop-headed _____

droning _____

*** _____

GRAMMAR

Acronyms

An acronym is created by taking the first letter of each word to form a new word or a short-form. Like this:

Graphic Interchange Format = GIF

Light Amplification (by) Stimulated Emission (of) Radiation = Laser

Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus = scuba

On Jock's shirt are the letters CPS, which stand for **Crest Public School**.

Create acronyms by taking the first letters of these phrases. Ignore any words in (brackets):

Tagged Out _____

Mid-Toronto Public School _____

Giant Ovals Are Lovely _____

Baboons Are Silly (and) Early _____

Guys Laugh, Often Wildly _____

Create a few of your own acronyms using the name of your school; your first, last and middle names, or the title of a book in the library.

More than you probably ever wanted to know about acronyms: Typically, “acronyms” create a new word which can be pronounced like a word (for instance, *scuba*). Some acronyms (like *CPS* or *CBC*) are pronounced by their letters — those types of acronyms can also be called “initialisms.” And then, of course, there are acronyms that no one can agree on exactly how they should be pronounced, like *URL* or *SAT* — is it “*sat*” or *S-A-T*? Some acronyms are formed using initials and parts of words, like *Sunoco* (*Sun Oil Company*). Oh, and fun fact: the spelled-out form of an acronym is called the “*expansion*.” (Source: *Wikipedia*; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acronym>)

CHAPTER 3: AMERICAN DREAM



READING PROMPTS

(Critical Thinking, Text-to-Real-Life Connections)

1) Tami says she's been "stuck (throwing) with Coop." Coop is her coach! Doesn't she like him? Describe how Tami feels about Coop, and how you think Coop likely feels about the kids he coaches.

Fun fact: "Coop" is the name of a real-life baseball coach who the author (Joyce Grant) knows. Some of the characteristics (the nice ones!) of Coop in the book are like the real-life Coop, but most of his personality and all of the things he does in the book were invented by her. Joyce couldn't imagine any name for the coach that would be better than "Coop," so she asked him if she could use his name and he was kind enough to say yes! Thanks, Coop! (And by the way, the real Coop does not have a faux hawk.)

2) When Raj is late to practice, he has to run "penalty laps." Did you think that was fair? Why or why not?

3) Sebastian also has to run some laps, but the reader is probably less likely to think that *his* punishment was unfair. In your own words, describe what happened with Sebastian and why he had to run laps. In what way are the two punishments different? In what way are they the same?

WRITING/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1) The title for this chapter, *American Dream*, is a pun. What are the two meanings of American Dream that are implied here? (Bonus: There may even be more than two!)

2) There are lots of words describing Christie Pits in this chapter. Think about a few of the phrases that describe Christie Pits. See if you can draw some parts of the Pits, based on those descriptions.

VOCABULARY

pedalling _____

ancient _____

Olympian _____

tail wind _____

rumours _____

trademark _____

mock agony _____

BASEBALL VOCABULARY

(These words may have a different meaning in non-sports usage.)

diamond _____

long-toss _____

second-base line _____

laps _____

all-star _____

grounders _____

poles _____

GRAMMAR

Metaphor

A “metaphor” is when you say one thing to describe something else entirely.

“The infield was bumpier than a camel with the mumps.”

The infield is being compared with a camel. Weird, but it really does help you get a picture of just how bumpy that infield is. Here are a couple more from chapter three:

“They looked like the Bad News Bears on an off-day.”

That’s interesting, because you have to know who the Bad News Bears are — you have to understand that they’re a really bad and silly (fictional) kids’ baseball team. And then go one step further: it’s them on an off-day (on a *bad* day). Now that’s bad!

His trademark grin reappeared. (Pg. 29)

This is a tricky one, because the metaphor is only implied, it’s not stated outright. He didn’t really trademark his grin. But the implication is that his grin is so awesome, it could be trademarked.

Create some metaphors to describe:

The state of your bedroom (tidy, untidy) _____

Your shoes _____

Your singing voice _____

CHAPTER 4: HE'S OUT!



READING PROMPTS

(Critical Thinking, Text-to-Real-Life Connections)

- 1) In this chapter, something happens to Jock that we, the reader, don't see. What do you think happened? How do you know?
- 2) Raj and Gnash are trying to help Jock, but he gets angry at them, saying "You know, I never asked you guys to be my guardian angels. Do you mind?" Why isn't he acting more grateful?
- 3) Which players do you think are the strongest throwers on the Blues? How do you know? Which two are the most out of shape? How do you know?

WRITING/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- 1) In this chapter, we learn a bit more about Sebastian. Write down the sentences that tell us about Sebastian's personality. And then, reading them all, write a sentence or two describing how you feel about Sebastian now.
- 2) "Suddenly, Gnash had a terrible feeling about who the new player might be." Did you figure it out before Gnash and his teammates? Why or why not?
- 3) Why do baseball players usually run poles (warm up) together? Why don't the fastest kids just run ahead, and the slowest ones take their time?

VOCABULARY

slew _____

loped _____

demerit _____

comeback _____

inclined _____

kinda (*Hint: it's a made-up word, but it has a meaning*) _____

hand-me-down _____

search engine _____

relevant _____

Google _____

bearings _____

tersely _____

BASEBALL VOCABULARY

(These words may have a different meaning in non-sports usage.)

roster _____

shortstop _____

warm-up _____

outfield _____

GRAMMAR

Sarcasm

When you use sarcasm, you say one thing — but mean the exact opposite. For instance, in this chapter Sebastian is kidding around with his friends and he says, “And I want you to know that I hate each and every one of you.”

We know that he doesn't hate his teammates, and we're pretty sure that he's not hating them at that moment. He means just the opposite of what he said.

We become absolutely certain that Sebastian is being sarcastic when the narrator says, "But it was clear that he meant the exact opposite." But that's the problem with sarcasm — sometimes it can be difficult to tell when someone is being literal, and when they're being sarcastic.

Circle either S (sarcastic) or L (literal) beside these statements from this chapter, to show whether you think the statement should be taken literally, or is sarcastic.

S or L "I can never work this stupid lock," Raj whined, frantically spinning the dial.

S or L The two boys looked at each other — then grinned. "Yeah, *that's* a big concern," Gnash laughed.

S or L "You know, I never asked you guys to be my guardian angels. Do you mind?"

S or L "Holy crap," said Gnash under his breath. "He *is* gay."

S or L "Thank you," (Ms. Grimshaw) said, handing Gnash a demerit slip.

S or L "Well, at least it was in a straight line," said Gnash (describing Raj's throwing).

S or L "This . . ." huffed Sebastian, trying to keep up, ". . . is always the . . . *worst* . . . part of my . . . day!"

Chapter 5: SHORT BENCH



READING PROMPTS

(Critical Thinking, Text-to-Real-Life Connections)

- 1) Normally in the afternoon, Christie Pits is shady. But that day, “a shaft of golden sunlight was shining right on the Pirates. It made their white uniforms glow.” In an early edit of *Tagged Out*, that line was nearly deleted, but the author wanted it kept in. Why do you think she wanted that line in? (Hint: What does it tell you about the Pirates?)
- 2) One of the parents had to turn Jock’s t-shirt into a baseball jersey. How did he do that?
- 3) Before the game, the teammates huddle in a circle, then stick their hands in the middle, and together they say, “One-two-three, go Blues!” If you play or watch sports, have you ever done (or seen) that? Why do teams do that?
- 4) When Gnash tells everyone that Jock is gay, Jock’s laughter “didn’t quite reach his eyes.” What is meant by that?
- 5) On his way off the field, Jock angrily tells Coop, “I *told* you this would happen.” What do you think he is referring to — what’s the “this”?
- 6) At the very end of the chapter, Coop tells the umpire, “We forfeit.” That’s a small but important line. It means that, because of the fight — and Jock leaving — the team no longer has enough players to continue the game. Knowing that, think about the title of this chapter, “Short Bench.” What do you think “short bench” means, and how does it relate to the forfeit?

WRITING/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1) "The bench looked like a hospital emergency room." Using a T-chart, write down some descriptive words about a hospital emergency room, and the Blues' bench in this chapter.

ALTERNATIVELY, do this exercise comparing the same dugout to "a scene from a zombie movie."

2) Coop gave Gnash's position away to another player. Then, he tells Gnash, ". . . you've got wheels!" — meaning, he's fast so he'll be fine at centre field (a position that often requires someone who can run very fast). Why does Coop pay Gnash this compliment? Do you think Coop believes it? Does Gnash?

3) "It's like the kid has a magnet in his glove . . . and the ball is made of metal." This is a recurring metaphor in *Tagged Out*, to describe someone who can catch a ball really well.

Think of metaphors to describe someone who is:

(a) slow _____

(b) friendly _____

(c) angry _____

(d) a fast runner _____

(e) very tall _____

VOCABULARY

swig _____

awe-inspiring _____

zig-zagged _____

soared _____

arcing _____

faux-hawk _____

tamped _____

off-guard _____

combatants _____

orangutan _____

blotchy-faced _____

forfeit _____

BASEBALL VOCABULARY

(These words may have a different meaning in non-sports usage.)

fly ball

grounder _____

dugout _____

centre field _____

jersey _____

warm up _____

top of the fifth inning _____

belted _____

inning _____

home plate _____

GRAMMAR

Exaggeration

Gnash and Lin talk about how rich the Pirates are. Lin says the Pirates have maids to wash their uniforms, and Gnash says “even their maids probably have maids.” Lin says she heard “their water bottles are filled with Perrier.” Gnash thinks “they have gourmet pizza at their practices.”

Those statements are *exaggerations*. The Pirates likely have none of those things, and Gnash and Lin probably know that. But by using exaggerations, they make their point — that the Pirates come from a wealthy neighbourhood.

Think up some other exaggerations that could describe how rich the Parkhill Pirates are.

CHAPTER 6: COOP'S BREAK-UP



READING PROMPTS

(Critical Thinking, Text-to-Real-Life Connections)

- 1) Chapter 6 opens with a misunderstanding by Sebastian about the previous evening's events. What is the situation as Sebastian sees it? What do you think the actual situation is?
- 2) Tami and Lin point out that Jock has been absent all day. Why do you think he wasn't at school?
- 3) When the players arrive for their game against the Etobicoke Reds, Coach Coop is unusually quiet. Why do you think that is?
- 4) The chapter is called "Coop's Break-Up." Why do you think it's called that?

WRITING/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- 1) "Rubble" is a word that is usually used to describe discarded chunks of stone or brick. In this chapter, the word describes the state of Sebastian's locker. Why is this word used?
- 2) Sebastian says, "I mean, being gay's not a good thing, right?" How would you respond? Write a brief paragraph to answer Sebastian's question.
- 3) Coop tells Gnash and Raj that Jock has to put up with a lot of "crap." What "crap" do you think Coop is referring to? (Hint: Start with the conversation Jock may have overheard in the cafeteria in Chapter 2.)

4) Coop tells Raj and Gnash that, "I'm not sure that everyone fully understands what the problem is, do you?" Who might Coop be referring to?

VOCABULARY

rubble _____

voilà! (Hint: It's a French word) _____

apoplectic _____

sarcastic _____

dense _____

credit _____

uninformed _____

BASEBALL VOCABULARY

(These words may have a different meaning in non-sports usage.)

League _____

MVP _____

all-star _____

Etobicoke (It's the name of a real place in Ontario. How is it pronounced?) _____

Toronto (It's the name of a city in Ontario. What is someone from Toronto known as?) _____

GRAMMAR

Contractions

"Contract" means to shrink, or make smaller. Contractions are shortened forms of words or phrases. For instance, "does not" can be contracted to "doesn't." The two words become one word, and an apostrophe (') takes the place of a letter — in this case, the "o" in "not."

For the contractions below, write out the long version of the word or words. Note which letters have been replaced by apostrophes in the contraction.

I'm _____

He's _____

Shouldn't _____

I'll _____

Can't _____

Haven't _____

You're _____

It's _____

They'd _____

That'll _____

Aren't _____

BONUS FOR FIGURING OUT THESE UNUSUAL CONTRACTIONS

O'clock _____

Ma'am _____

'twas _____

Ain't _____

CHAPTER 7: SECOND CHANCE



READING PROMPTS

(Critical Thinking, Text-to-Real-Life Connections)

1) Once again, Coop wants Gnash to “take” the pitch and Gnash wants to swing. Have you ever been in a situation in which you were told to do something you didn’t want to do? How did you feel? What did you do? What were the consequences (i.e., how did things turn out)?

2) Raj gets angry about Gnash’s use of the word “gay.” He says to Gnash: “Keep saying that word. Maybe one day it won’t sound like an insult coming out of your mouth.”

How do you think Gnash said the word to make it “sound like an insult”? Write three descriptive words that describe the way Gnash might have said the word. (For instance: “clipped” or “harsh” or “loudly.”)

3) Raj said Jock is “maybe not the friendliest guy we’ve ever met.” What are some things that Jock has said or done that were unfriendly?

4) (a) Famous comedian Groucho Marx once joked that he “wouldn’t want to belong to a club that would accept someone like him as a member.” What does that mean, and why is it funny?

(b) Sebastian says something like that, in this chapter. Explain Sebastian’s comment, and why it made the other kids laugh.

WRITING/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1) At this point in the story, the Blues are beginning to realize what an asset Jock would be to their team. Write down three things they say that tell you what a good player Jock is. (Hint: They are in the first half of the chapter, before the asterisks ***)

2) After Sebastian's funny line, Gnash dropped his forehead onto his palm. Another word for that is a "face-palm." What does that look like? Try doing it (without hurting yourself). What emotion is a person who is doing that likely feeling?

VOCABULARY

rivalry _____

flourish _____

chorus _____

knitted _____

conference _____

teammates _____

BASEBALL VOCABULARY

(These words may have a different meaning in non-sports usage.)

three up, three down! _____

righty-shift _____

errors _____

line-up _____

a run _____

scoring position _____

fly ball _____

on-deck circle _____

warm-up pitches _____

plate _____

practice swing _____

outside (i.e., "the pitch was low and outside") _____

ump _____

GRAMMAR

Nouns and Verbs

A sentence needs to have a *noun* (person, place or thing) and a *verb* (action word). In each of the sentences below, circle the main noun and underline the main verb.

There were murmurs of agreement from the players.

“Righty-shift!” yelled the players.

The players each put one hand into the middle.

By the top of the fourth inning the teams were in a dead heat.

We missed that fly ball.

At the end of the bench, Gnash scowled.

The ball got lost in the clouds.

He shook his head at the coach.

He swung.

CHAPTER 8: FOOLED ON THE HILL



READING PROMPTS

(Critical Thinking, Text-to-Real-Life Connections)

- 1) Jock's mother was slightly away from the scene that takes place at the top of the hill. What do you think she thought when she saw the Blues charging at her son? Later, she talks to Jock and gives him a little hug. What do you think she said to him?
- 2) "He was giving him *pointers*, too!" said Sebastian, his eyes wide with alarm. What do you think Sebastian thinks "pointers" means? What does it actually mean?



"ARMY" SAYS:
"Hey, if The Blues ever need a pitching coach (and they definitely do!) I'd be happy to step in."

-RYAN (ARMY) ARMSTRONG, SILVER MEDALLIST, 2001 CANADA SUMMER GAMES AND HEAD PITCHING INSTRUCTOR, THE BASEBALL ZONE, MISSISSAUGA, ON.

- 3) The advice Jock gives Raj is based on real advice provided to the author by pitching coach Ryan ("Army") Armstrong (see left), and it really can help someone pitch better. What other questions would you like to ask a pitching coach?

WRITING/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- 1) Gnash and Sebastian see something happening at the top of the hill, but it's not what they think. Write two "timelines" of the events: What Gnash/Sebastian think happens, and what Jock/Raj say really happened. (A "timeline" in this case is a list of each thing that happened, in the order that it happened.)
- 2) A "prejudice" is when you feel a certain way about a person and you "pre-judge" them. Prejudice often makes you see things in a certain way. That way may not reflect reality.

For instance, at this point in the book Gnash has a bit of a prejudice against gay people. So when he sees Jock and Raj at the top of the hill, he misinterprets Jock's actions (kicking Raj's foot, for instance). How does Gnash's prejudice affect the way he interprets Jock's actions? List three ways.

3) The title of this chapter, "Fooled on the Hill," is a pun on a famous old Beatles tune. Find out the name of that tune, and explain the pun.

VOCABULARY

pointers _____
exertion _____
deny _____
pre-emptive _____
sue _____

BASEBALL VOCABULARY

third-base line _____
pitching stance _____

GRAMMAR

Exclamations/Exclamatory Sentences

When someone is yelling, chances are their sentence will end in an exclamation mark (!). Exclamation marks give someone's words a bit of extra "punch" or "emphasis." Sometimes, it means yelling but it can also mean they are surprised or delighted. Add an exclamation mark to these sentences and see how it changes them.

I love my new shoes. _____
Don't touch that vase. _____
Look out. _____
You're my best friend. _____
You're tall. _____
Don't run in here. _____
We can't go over there. _____

CHAPTER 9: SEEING RED



READING PROMPTS

(Critical Thinking, Text-to-Real-Life Connections)

- 1) Gnash describes one of the batters as “lanky” and says that “he was the kind of kid who could make it to first before anyone, even Jock, would be able to stop him.” Describe a person like that.
- 2) Jock tells Raj not to “worry about it so much.” How can “overthinking” cause a person to make mistakes? How can someone stop “worrying so much” about things?
- 3) The “mound remained piled with Blues.” What does that mean? What image does it create in your mind? Can you think of another, possibly better, way to say that?

WRITING/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- 1) What do you think “seeing red” means? Look it up and find out the dictionary’s definition of the phrase. Now, write it another way (use different words to mean “seeing red”).
- 2) Sebastian says he really liked the “dance-thing” Raj was doing — referring to the way Raj was twisting his foot before his pitch. Write a paragraph that describes Raj’s pitch, including the “dance-thing.”

VOCABULARY

threatening (to take third) _____

lanky _____

squatting _____

lamely _____

thigh _____

wounded _____

chummy _____

outcome _____

BASEBALL VOCABULARY

(These words may have a different meaning in non-sports usage.)

pitcher's mound _____

(pitching) rubber _____

chalk bag _____

inside fastball _____

man on first _____

get a piece of (the ball) _____

hit the target _____

umpire _____

"Steeeee-rike!" _____

time-out _____

infielders _____

Earned Run Average (ERA) _____

wind-up _____

fastball _____

inside-the-park home run _____

runs batted in _____

GRAMMAR

Direct and Indirect Speech

Here are two ways you can convey words that someone says: Direct speech and Indirect speech.

Simply put, Direct Speech is “repeated (or quoted)” and Indirect Speech is “reported.” Direct speech uses quotation marks around the words the person said. Indirect speech does not.

Direct speech (quoted):

“I want to play baseball,” he said.

Indirect speech (reported):

He said he wants to play baseball.

Circle D or I for each example below, depending on whether it is direct or indirect speech.

D or I “That was a pretty cool dance you were doing, Raj,” said Sebastian.

D or I “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Rani said.

D or I He said he’d try to steal home.

D or I He said he didn’t know what I was talking about.

D or I She said she thought I wasn’t pitching tonight.

D or I She said, “I will play shortstop.”

CHAPTER 10: MUDBALL



READING PROMPTS

(Critical Thinking, Text-to-Real-Life Connections)

- 1) Gnash's grandfather doesn't seem to have many nice things to say to him, unless he does something his grandfather thinks is good — like hitting a home run. How would that make you feel, if you were Gnash?
- 2) How did you feel when you read the first part of this chapter (with Gnash and his grandfather)? What made you feel that way?
- 3) "Are you gonna play baseball . . . or something *else* with your *pals*?" He smirked.
It's clear that Gnash's grandfather is implying (suggesting) something here — but what?
(Hint: It's not stated in the text exactly what Gnash's grandfather means, so there are no wrong answers to this question — it's up to you, the reader.)

WRITING/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- 1) The author's son made up the sport of Mudball. She told him, "It's muddy, there's a hill and a group of kids. The game is Mudball. What are the rules?"
Now it's your turn. Create your own fun game called: Hillball, Grass-Run or Mud Castle. Or make up your own name! (Hint: You can add anything you want to it, such as a ball or a Frisbee.)
- 2) There are a few personality differences between Gnash's grandmother and his grandfather. Write a list of personality traits for each of them. Now write a list of Gnash's personality traits. Are any of Gnash's personality traits on your other two lists?
- 3) (a) When Gnash gets to the ballpark, he learns that his teammates are going to play Mudball. They all seem keen to play — but Gnash gets angry. Why doesn't he just join in?
(b) Write a paragraph in which Gnash doesn't get angry, but instead happily joins in. Be sure to include some dialogue — things that Gnash and the other teammates say to each other.

VOCABULARY

sneered _____

sidle _____

smirked _____

petite _____

hunched _____

wiry _____

top-knot _____

notorious _____

geronimo! (or *geronimoooooooo!*) _____

occurrence _____

MUDBALL VOCABULARY

(These words may have a different meaning in non-Mudball usage.)

"called-it" rule _____

fall-down/knock-down _____

Mudball _____

"it" _____

"not it" _____

ready _____

target _____

half-roll _____

zig-zagged _____

GRAMMAR

Compound Words

Mudball is a good example of a compound word. It's two words together: mud and ball. Separately each word has its own meaning, and together they form a new word, meaning something else entirely.

For each of the words below, think of another word that could go with it to create a compound word. (Think of as many compound words for each one as you can.)

ball _____

house _____

up _____

out _____

bag _____

paper _____

light _____

table _____

CHAPTER 11: DOING THE MATH



READING PROMPTS

(Critical Thinking, Text-to-Real-Life Connections)

- 1) Gnash says he thinks teachers unfairly blame him for things. Do you think he's being treated unfairly by his teachers? Why or why not?
- 2) Have you ever been blamed for something you didn't do? What happened, and how did it make you feel?
- 3) Why do you think Jock gave Gnash the textbook with the drawing in it?
- 4) Gnash feels, "it was bad enough when people were mean to him — but for some reason it was so much worse when people tried to be nice." Why do you think that is?
- 5) The title, "Doing the Math," is a pun. What does it mean?

WRITING/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- 1) Gnash's teachers don't put up with much from him. But when Jock throws a pencil, he doesn't get punished. Retell that scene with Gnash being the one who throws the pencil. How does the teacher react?
- 2) Jock's math drawing is described in this chapter. Using those details, try to draw it yourself.
- 3) Why do you think Gnash pretends he isn't interested in Jock's catching diagram?
- 4) If Gnash dislikes Jock so much, why does he throw with him at the Pits?

VOCABULARY

dusk _____

exertion _____

arc _____

alibi _____

snitch _____

neutral _____

ruckus _____

unwritten rule _____

GRAMMAR

Past Tense

Tagged Out is written in the past tense. When you're writing, it's sometimes hard to remember to make sure the verbs are consistently in the past tense. Take a look at the paragraph below and circle each verb. Rewrite each one to put it into the past tense.

(Note: Written in the present tense, the scene is grammatically correct — the decision to put the book into the past tense was just that, a decision, made by the author and the editor. There's no right or wrong here, as long as you choose one tense and stick to it [except in very unusual grammatical circumstances, which we won't get into here]. But it's interesting to think about the way tense changes — or doesn't change — the telling of a story.)

Eventually Gnash looks over at Jock — this time, at least, he isn't going to get the blame.

Jock winks at him, turning so the teacher can't see them.

"Freak," Gnash says under his breath.

As Jock walks by Gnash, he lays his Math textbook quietly down on Gnash's desk and grabs Gnash's book.

Gnash can see a piece of paper sticking out of the textbook Jock has put in front of him. Before the teacher can spot it, Gnash quickly covers it with his hands.

CHAPTER 12: COMMON GROUND



READING PROMPTS

(Critical Thinking, Text-to-Real-Life Connections)

- 1) At some point in the last chapter and in this one, Gnash's feelings about Jock begin to shift. See if you can pinpoint when that happens, and why.
- 2) Why is Gnash so impressed with Jock's throws?
- 3) When Gnash asks Jock what it's like to be gay, his response is: "I don't know . . . what's it like to be straight?" Why do you think Jock answers a question with a question?

WRITING/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- 1) When Jock tries to explain what it's like to be gay, he talks about onions. What does he say that "onions" have to do with "being gay"?
- 2) Think of two things that are really different — for instance, "onions" and "being gay." Or "trees" and "tennis racquets." Or "baseballs" and "cars." Now, write a sentence that connects those two things. For instance, "The baseball was white, the same colour as his mom's car." Try to use two things that are so different, it doesn't seem possible to connect them — and then connect them!
- 3) At the end of the chapter, a boy uses a "gesture that, in other circumstances would have meant 'hello.' Tonight it did not." What does the author mean by that, and how can a gesture mean two completely opposite things? Try to imitate what that gesture looks like.

4) Here are two sentences the author struggled with when she was writing the book. It describes something that really happens at baseball parks, when suddenly the lights go out and everything is in total darkness. The author wanted to convey the sense of bright lights . . . followed by sudden and complete blackness.

In an instant, the floodlights went out. Darkness immediately descended on Christie Pits.

Maybe you can do a better job. Try rewriting those two sentences, to convey brightness . . . followed by utter darkness. Think about words you can use that describe “brightness” and then “darkness.”

VOCABULARY

gesture _____

whoop _____

circumstances _____

descended _____

GRAMMAR

Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is a complicated-looking word, but it simply means: “Words that sound like the sound they make.” For instance:

Buzz — When you say “buzz” you’re actually making a buzzing sound.

Other onomatopoeiaic words are:

Thump, splat, slap, burp, click, ding, purr, squeak, whoop, clank and squish.

Try to think of more onomatopoeiaic words and write them here:

CHAPTER 13: HISTORY REPEATS



READING PROMPTS

(Critical Thinking, Text-to-Real-Life Connections)

- 1) The title of this chapter is “History Repeats.” What does this phrase mean (the whole phrase is “history repeats itself”)? What “history” is being “repeated” in this chapter?
- 2) At the end of the chapter, “Gnash didn’t know why he was crying.” Why do you think he was crying?
- 3) Jock says to Gnash, “If you hadn’t—” but he doesn’t finish his sentence. What do you think the rest of his sentence was going to be?

WRITING/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- 1) The use of repetition can be a powerful writing device to provide emphasis. For instance:

It was more than half an hour before Gnash would be able to do that. Half an hour of keeping his tears in check so he didn’t cry in front of his grandfather. Half an hour of waiting until he could get away.

What do the repeated words “half an hour” do for this scene? Why do you think the author used them?

VOCABULARY

lanky _____

outnumbered _____

taunted _____

guttural _____

menacingly _____

bat-wielding _____

contracting _____

bluster _____

GRAMMAR

Rhetorical question

Gnash picks up a bat in anger, and asks the bullies, “Do you want to do this . . . ? Do you want to finish this?” He’s not really expecting answers to these questions.

When you ask a question you don’t want or expect an answer to, that’s known as a rhetorical question. Some other examples of rhetorical questions are:

Don’t you think I know that?

Who in the world doesn’t like candy?

Why don’t you go jump in the lake?

Think of some more examples of rhetorical questions — questions that don’t require an answer.

CHAPTER 14: DISAPPEARING ACT



READING PROMPTS

(Critical Thinking, Text-to-Real-Life Connections)

- 1) “Sebastian was eating a sandwich that was half tuna and half salami. It looked exactly like Tami’s sandwich.” What does that line mean?
- 2) “You’re doing Health already?” Sebastian asked. “Suck-ahs! We don’t start that until next week. We’re still finishing up basketball.” From that line, how do you think Sebastian feels about Health class? How does he feel about sports?

Even though Sebastian is the only one who talks here, we also learn something about how the other kids probably feel about Health class and about sports. How do you think the other kids feel about Health class and about sports — and how do you know that?

- 3) When he’s talking about Jock’s absence, Gnash puts on a British accent. Why do you think he does that?

WRITING/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- 1) Tami says she was proud of her sandwich because “it contained nearly all of the food groups!” Research the “food groups” and list them. Now, write the ingredients of a sandwich that would contain all of the food groups.
- 2) In this chapter, Gnash has a major realization about himself. What is it? How does he come to that realization? Do you agree with the decision Gnash makes about himself?

VOCABULARY

secretary _____

macaroni _____

appointment _____

exasperated _____

dawned _____

GRAMMAR

Ellipsis

An "ellipsis" (plural = ellipses) is three dots, like this . . . that usually mean something has been left out of the sentence or paragraph.

For instance, when someone is unsure about what they want to say, they might leave some words out, and talk like this:

"Why did I break your vase? Um . . . well . . . I was going to . . . I don't know."

It can also make a person's words seem more mysterious, as they just trail off into nothingness. (That kind of ellipsis is known as an *aposiopesis*.) Like this:

"But I didn't expect you to . . ."

Use an ellipsis to help someone say something about:

Where's my money? _____

A messy room _____

Putting on someone else's shoes by accident _____

Spilled milk on the couch _____

Someone doesn't want to say what they're getting you for your birthday _____

Hey! Who ate my chocolate? _____

CHAPTER 15: DISCUSSION AT HOME



READING PROMPTS

(Critical Thinking, Text-to-Real-Life Connections)

1) "Hey Raj," he said. "I think we need to go find Jock — what do you think?"

In the last chapter, Gnash has just come to realize that he has been bullying Jock. Now, he wants to find Jock. Why do you think he suddenly wants to find Jock?

2) Gnash wants to beat up the Parkhill Pirates who had bullied them, but Raj tells him there's a better way to get back at them. What does he say is the better way? Which "way" do you think would appeal more to Gnash? Why?

WRITING/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1) Coop gives the boys (Raj and Gnash) Jock's address. Later, we learn that Coop probably isn't supposed to give out the addresses of the kids on his team. Why shouldn't a coach give out a kid's address? Why did Coop do it anyway, even though it is against the rules?

2) (a) This chapter includes a description of Jock's apartment building and his apartment. Write down as many of the sentences as you can find that describe his building and apartment.

(b) Once you have a good idea of the kind of place Jock lives in, add some of your own descriptions. Describe Jock's kitchen, his couch, his television set and his bedroom. Try to make your description fit in with the description of the rest of Jock's apartment, in the book.

3) Raj tells Gnash that “what you send out into the universe comes back at you, man.” What does he mean by that? Look up the word “karma.” Write down the definition of the word “karma.” Do you believe in karma?

VOCABULARY

threadbare _____

homophobic _____

provincials _____

transferred _____

GRAMMAR

Apostrophes

The apostrophe (') can be used to show “possession.” One thing “owns” another thing. That can be meant literally (*The man's shirt* — he owns the shirt), but in most cases “possession” is more of an attachment than ownership. For instance, the coach's sign. Coop doesn't “own” his signs — but they're his just the same. (Not that Gnash always listens to them!)

One thing to remember: If the word has an “s” at the end, just add the apostrophe, not apostrophe-s. Like this: Visitors' bench or Pirates' uniform-cleaning service.

Make these words possessive, using apostrophes. The thing that is being “possessed” is in brackets:

Gnash (bat) _____

Home team (diamond) _____

Raj (pitch) _____

Teammates (chants) _____

Tami (sandwich) _____

Teachers (lessons) _____

Christie Pits (lights) _____

Coach (uniform) _____

Coaches (uniform) _____

Coaches (uniforms) _____

CHAPTER 16: BATTLE IN THE PITS



READING PROMPTS

(Critical Thinking, Text-to-Real-Life Connections)

- 1) At the beginning of the chapter, Gnash is moving a hot dog wrapper around the outfield. Why is he doing that?
- 2) Before heading out onto the field for the final game against the Pirates, Gnash asks Coop to let him switch spots with Jock. Why do you think he does that? Does it affect the outcome of the game? How?
- 3) In this chapter, Miguel says some encouraging words to Raj. They're phrases that might typically be heard at any baseball game.

"You can do it, Raj!"

"It's all you, buddy!"

"You got this!"

Write out some other encouraging, sports-type phrases. (If you can't think of any, make some up. You got this!)

WRITING/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1) By now, you've "met" most of the kids on the Blues. See how many you can name. Beside each name, put the position they play most often. (Good luck, this won't be easy!)

2) Gnash asks Jock if he wants him to . . . And then he doesn't finish his sentence. But Jock knows exactly what Gnash is talking about. What is Gnash not saying? Finish Gnash's sentences in this section:

"Are you sure you don't want me to—"

"I mean, I could just get him alone and—"

"Not even just one little—"

VOCABULARY

awkward _____

backtracked _____

casually _____

furiously _____

flexed _____

BASEBALL VOCABULARY

(These words may have a different meaning in non-sports usage.)

pop fly _____

the clean-up spot _____

scoring (in baseball) _____

Time! _____

Balk _____

shake it off _____

GRAMMAR

Alliteration

Alliteration is when two or more words in a row begin with the same letter. For instance, Parkhill Pirates. You can add as many words as you want to create a super-alliterative sentence, like this:

The Parkhill Pirates probably play past the Pits.

As you can see, it doesn't have to make perfect sense. In fact, it can get downright silly!

Create a long sentence that has a lot of alliteration, using these words:

baseball bat _____

tree _____

silly string _____

three thimbles _____

four forks _____

successful snake _____

giraffe (*careful with this one — the “g” sounds like “j”*) _____

CHAPTER 17: DOUBLE PLAY



READING PROMPTS

(Critical Thinking, Text-to-Real-Life Connections)

1) The title of this chapter, Double Play, is a pun. What are its two meanings?

WRITING/DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1) The third paragraph of this chapter says:

“That noise just sounds like ignorance to me,” said Jock to Gnash over the Pirates’ hollers. “And that’s on them, not me.”

What does this paragraph mean to you? Explain.

VOCABULARY

singsong _____

ignorance _____

plowed _____

rebounding _____

momentum _____

cartwheeled _____

BASEBALL VOCABULARY

(These words may have a different meaning in non-sports usage.)

pitch-count _____

relieved _____

strike zone _____

lead-off _____

charging _____

double play _____

closed the top of the inning _____

on-deck circle _____

time-out _____

steal home _____

tag _____

safe _____

winning run _____

GRAMMAR

Pathetic Fallacy

Have you ever noticed that when you're in a bad mood and it starts to rain, it seems like the rain is sad? Or that it pelts down on you angrily?

Or maybe when you're in a *good* mood and it rains, suddenly the rain feels playful? Or funny? Or maybe it even drizzles down on you cheerfully?

Of course, rain can't really be sad or angry, cheerful, honest or playful — except in a book!

When you're giving something in nature human emotions in your writing, that's known as "pathetic fallacy." (By the way, both of those words are from relatively *Olde English*. Don't expect this literary device to be either "pathetic" or "a fallacy" as we know those words to mean today.)

Here are some types of weather or natural events. For each one, add human-emotion words to make it happy or sad. In other words, add some *pathetic fallacy*.

a storm at sea _____

a blizzard _____

a hurricane _____

raindrops _____

an earthquake _____

a volcano erupting _____

sleet _____

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Joyce Grant is a freelance editor and writer, and the author of the *Gabby* picture book series. *Tagged Out* is her first novel.

"My son lives, eats, sleeps and breathes baseball. Since he was three years old, playing T-ball at Christie Pits in Toronto — and running around the bases the wrong way — until today as a dedicated Bantam player, baseball has always been what he loves most. He's given me an appreciation for the sport, and a love for it.

"I'm usually at the diamond with him, because I love watching him play. And I became interested in the dynamics between the players.

"This book is entirely fictional, but I have included a couple of baseball plays that really happened — right in front of me. In one case, I wrote a baseball scene at the ballpark . . . and then it happened, right on the field, just as I'd written it! That was a pretty pivotal moment for me as a writer, and as

a baseball fan.

"I hope you enjoy reading *Tagged Out* and, more importantly, I hope that some kids who maybe don't love reading, but really love sports, will read it and discover how wonderful it is to get lost in a book."

Please visit Joyce's website, JoyceGrantAuthor.com, for more information about *Tagged Out* as well as teaching resources. It's also where you can download this Teachers' Resource Guide.

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