

# WINNERS TAKE ALL

By Fred Bowen

## Writing Prompts and Whole Group Discussion Questions

### Reading Aloud

Boys and girls enjoy listening to *Winners Take All* by Fred Bowen. The cliffhangers keep them engaged and eager to know what is going to happen next. And the plot turns on a kid-sized moral dilemma that gets them thinking and talking. Before you begin reading, you may want to introduce the story with these words:

*Winners Take All* is a baseball story about kids who play on rival baseball teams. Some of them play for the Reds and the others play for the Cubs. As the story begins, the kids are in a tight game. The Cubs are at bat and leading by one run. The kids on the Reds team are very nervous. They are worried that they are going to lose the game.

### Writing Activity

The chapter-by-chapter writing prompts here give students a chance to pause and think about the story and the important issues it raises. Their written responses provide a great opportunity to practice their writing.

### Class Discussion

After you have read aloud to your students and they have finished answering the prompts, gather them together for a whole-class discussion. They have already thought a lot about the story and will have a lot of opinions. Use the Wrap-Up Questions at the end to jumpstart the conversation.

# Writing Prompts

for  
Winners Take All By Fred Bowen

## Chapter One and Chapter Two

Choose A or B and write your response:

A) Kyle's favorite place in the world is the town baseball field, especially when his team is playing the Cubs. Describe your favorite place in the world.

B) The Cubs players, coaches, and fans yell at the umpire when he rules against them and they lose the game. What do you think the umpire is thinking when everyone is yelling at him? (Think about how you feel when someone is yelling at you.)

## Chapter Three and Chapter Four

Choose A or B and write your response:

A) Teamwork is an important part of sports. Describe the kind of person who would make a good teammate. Now describe the kind of person whose behavior would hurt the team.

B) Let's say that Kyle decides to tell his teammates right away that he faked the catch. Think about what he would say. Think about how Nate or Claire would react. Write a short scene starting with this line: *Kyle's teammates gathered around and tried to lift him up on their shoulders, but he twisted free and said:*

## Chapter Five and Chapter Six

Choose A or B and write your response:

A) Think about the setting of this chapter. What kind of mood does the author set? What words or phrases does he use to set that mood?

B) Kyle says, "I'm not a cheater. I made a mistake, that's all." What do you think about that statement?

## Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight

Choose A or B and write your response:

A) How important is attitude in sports and in school? Write about a time when you had a bad attitude and things turned out badly, or when you had a good attitude and did better than expected?

B) Nate and Kyle play in a playground basketball game against Bryan Ford. There are no referees. Do you think that kids' games can be fair without grownups enforcing the rules? Why or why not?

## Chapter Nine and Chapter Ten

Choose A or B and write your response:

A) Kyle is hoping that the caller didn't really see Kyle drop the ball. He wants to keep his cheating a secret. Can you think of a time that you were keeping a secret from somebody? How do you think Kyle will feel if he keeps his cheating a secret?

B) Honsey loves baseball. If you could see into her brain, you would see a lot of baseball facts. Write about what someone would see if he or she could look into your brain.

## Chapter Eleven and Twelve

Choose A or B and write your response:

A) It looks as if the Cubs coach is going to publicly accuse Kyle of faking the catch. Write a short letter to Kyle and tell him what he should do.

B) Kyle's team has won the championship. He didn't cheat this time, but he doesn't feel like celebrating. Why not?

## Chapter Thirteen and Chapter Fourteen

Choose A or B and write your response:

A) How would you feel if you were one of the Reds or one of the Cubs standing in the room when Kyle admits that he really didn't make the catch?

B) Do you think the commissioners made the right decision? Should they have benched Kyle (not let him play) in the final game? Why or why not?

## Chapters Fifteen and Chapter Sixteen

Choose A or B and write your response:

A) Circle two words from the list here and tell why you think they best describe Kyle.

Honest   Sneaky   Happy   Sad   Good   Bad   Kind   Mean

B) Kyle spots Jason right after the game, but he doesn't care. Why doesn't seeing Jason bother Kyle anymore?

## The Real Story (Bonus Section at the end of the book)

A) Honsey admires Hall of Famer Christy Matthewson. Write about a ball player or other grownup whom you admire.

B) Christy Matthewson would tell the truth *even if the truth helped the other team*. What do you think his teammates thought about him?

## Wrap-up Questions for a Group Discussion

- A) What do you think is the worst part of Kyle faking the catch?
- B) Kyle almost told Claire that he had faked the catch. How do you think Claire would have reacted if he had? How would you have reacted?
- C) Would Kyle have ever told the truth if Jason had never discovered the cheating and told Coach Rolfe about it?
- D) How does this famous expression apply to Kyle: Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive?
- E) Playing to win is exciting and fun. And winning a tight game is especially thrilling. But Kyle wants to win so much that he makes a bad decision. Why does he feel so much pressure to win?