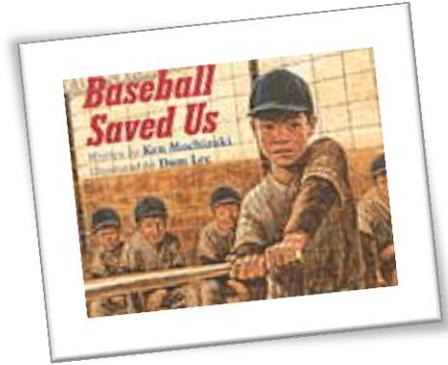


Title: Baseball Saved Us
Author: Ken Mochizuki
Grade Level: 2nd Grade



SUMMARY

In 1942, the U.S. Army required people of Japanese descent to move to internment camps in the middle of deserts because the government thought they could not be trusted. *Baseball Saved Us* will fascinate your family with the story of a young boy and his family who were sent to an internment camp for several years. As tension starts to develop between people in the camp, the boy's father decides they need something to do in the camp, so they build a baseball field and start playing baseball. After returning home from the camp, the boy is teased at school because of his Japanese heritage. Your child will be cheering on the narrator as he overcomes obstacles, joins the baseball team, and makes friends with the other kids on the team. *Baseball Saved Us* is appropriate as a 2nd grade read aloud or a 3rd grade independent read. Your family will be intrigued as you learn about the challenges Japanese American citizens experienced during this time period.

QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT WHILE READING

VOCABULARY

It's important to make sure that your child has an understanding of key words in the book. Talking about words while reading is a great way for your child to learn new words.

In this book, you might talk about these words:

- descent (Author's Note)
- endless (pg. 2)
- barracks (pg. 5)
- guardhouse (pg. 15)
- drowning (pg. 23)

You might use a question like:

What is the meaning of the word drowning, as it is used on page 23?: "The crowd roared each time I missed, drowning out my teammates." What other words and phrases on this page help you to figure out the meaning?

KEY IDEAS and THEMES

In addition to words, it's important to talk about key ideas and themes and how they develop over the course of the book. Here are some examples to get you started:

- 1) Ask your child who is telling the story. How does she or he know? What details in the text are helpful in finding out the narrator's perspective?

- 2) The author talks about the camp in the "Author's Note" (located at the beginning of the text) and the first two pages. Talk with your child about how the author describes the camp. What kind of place does it seem like? Does it sound like a place you'd like to visit? Why or why not? What words and phrases are used to help you imagine what the camp is like?

- 3) Baseball certainly is a central feature of the book, but its role changes as the story progresses. Talk with your child about how the role of baseball changes from beginning to end. For example, how is baseball used in the camps? How is it described? Now, how does this compare to how baseball is used later on in the book when the family is back at home?

- 4) The author describes lots of challenges in the book. What are some that stood out to you? What challenge does the boy's dad confront when he creates a baseball field? Talk with your child about the challenges the boy faces after his family returns from the camp. Are they similar or different from the ones he encountered at the camp?

- 5) In this story, the author shows the negative effect of stereotypes. When someone believes stereotypes, it means they believe certain things about people solely because of their race, religion, culture, age, or gender. Often these ideas are untrue and harmful. During World War II many people had negative stereotypes of Japanese Americans. Using words and phrases from the story, what did people believe about the boy just because of his culture? How did he prove them wrong?

- 6) The title of the book is *Baseball Saved Us*. What does baseball save the boy and his family from? Ask your child what theme he or she thinks the author develops through the boy's experiences at the internment camp and playing baseball.

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

1. *Baseball Saved Us* is sure to peek your family's interest about this time in US history. Use the primary sources from the Library of Congress to learn more about the Japanese American Internment Camps during World War II:
<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/internment/>
2. After exploring the materials, select a picture of one of the people from the site. Now, write a letter from the perspective of a person in the photo to describe the camp to a friend. Be sure to use details from the pictures, *Baseball Saved Us*, or other documents from the Library of Congress website to help you explain the conditions of the camp.