

## Literature Circle Questions

Use these questions and the activities that follow to get more out of the experience of reading *The Boy Who Saved Baseball* by John H. Ritter.

1. How is Doc Altenheimer going to decide whether to sell his property to developers?
2. Dante Del Gato has long been a fascinating but mysterious person to Tom. Who is Del Gato, and why is Tom so interested in him?
3. Why are the people of Dillontown so eager to see the outcome of the game? And why do so many reporters, photographers, and television crews, including some from ESPN, come to watch the big game?
4. Tall tales fill this story. What is it about Cody's story concerning Del Gato's electric fence that doesn't make sense? Can you come up with any other examples of "stretching the truth" in this novel?
5. What does "earthen knowledge" mean? What about a "starborne hunch"? How do hunches and knowledge contribute to Tom's character? Cruz's character? Del Gato's character? To the outcome of the novel?
6. Do any members of the Wildcats team remind you of anyone you've known before? Which of the Wildcats team members – besides Tom – did you like the best?
7. In the beginning of the story, Tom struggles with feeling confident, especially when playing baseball or talking to others. What advice would you give to Tom to help him with these struggles?
8. Evaluate the handling of the game of baseball in this book. Is there a culture of baseball? If so, does it have its own separate social rules, vocabulary, value system? How would you describe it?
9. What do you think the title of this book means? Who is "the boy who saved baseball," and how do you know?
10. What are some of the lessons that Tom learns through the course of this book – about baseball, about himself, about life?
11. What kind of person does Dante Del Gato turn out to be in the end? Does he change through the course of the story, or does Tom just begin to know him better?

12. How would you define the word, "hero?" Is a person a hero if no one knows or witnesses what the person did? Have you ever thought someone was called a hero without justification--that is, to you the person was no hero? What part does the person's motivation (or hidden agenda) play in determining whether one is actually a hero?
13. The author writes, "A boy kept distant from the earth is a boy dissatisfied." How does this philosophy play out in the novel? Find physical, concrete signs of it as well as mental ones. To what extent does Tom come to see this to be true?
14. After saving the town of Dillontown, inheriting Doc Altenheimer's fortune, and beginning a business with HitSim, imagine what Tom Gallagher's life will be like ten or twenty years into the future. How has he handled his success and his wealth? Is he playing baseball? Did he keep his friends from the Wildcats? Is he still writing in his Dreamsketcher?
15. In the baseball lexicon, a substitute or "relief" pitcher--such as Tom in the Big Game--may get credit for a win, a loss, or a save. Make an argument supporting the idea that in this story, Tom seems to have done all three. What did Tom win, what did he lose, and what did he save?

*Note: These literature circle questions are keyed to Bloom's taxonomy as follows: Knowledge: 1-3; Comprehension: 4-5; Application: 6-8; Analysis: 9-10; Synthesis: 11-12; Evaluation: 13-15.*

### **Activities:**

1. Make a set of baseball cards - one for each member of the Wildcats' team. On each card include a drawing of the character as you imagine him or her. Instead of listing statistics for each player, describe each player's strengths on the team as well as important personality traits.
2. What do you think the front page of the Dillontown newspaper looked like the day after the big game? Write newspaper-style articles telling the story of the big game, Doc Altenheimer's death, and the town's reaction to both. Use headlines and photos to make your articles look like a real newspaper.
3. Imagine that a few days after the big game Tom received a letter from Cruz de la Cruz. What would the letter say? How does Cruz explain his absence from the game? How does he feel about the Wildcats and their win?

### **Other Books by This Author:**

*Choosing Up Sides*, Philomel, 1998

*Over the Wall*, Philomel, 2000

**Please visit the Author's Web site for further questions, lesson plans, and activities:**  
[www.johnhritter.com](http://www.johnhritter.com) Find an especially recommended activity on “neologism”—the art of creating new words.

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