



TJ and the Sports Fanatic

Hazel Hutchins

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Consider the following question as you read *TJ and the Sports Fanatic*:
How do you measure a best friend?

Story

TJ Barnes is back, playing with his crazy cats, T-Rex and Alaska, helping out in his parents' hardware store and goofing around with his best friend Seymour. When Seymour announces that he has signed them both up for a football team, TJ fears the worst, but Seymour is determined to be a star. With the help of a stack of library books, TJ starts to understand not only the game but also his best friend's strange behavior.

Author

Hazel Hutchins has never been a sports fanatic, but she played basketball in junior high school and she still remembers the single basket of her career. Everything she knows about football she's learned from a coach friend, from books and from watching other people play. Hazel is the author of three previous Orca books about TJ. She lives in Canmore, Alberta.

Curricular Integration

Language Arts

- At the beginning of *TJ and the Sports Fanatic*, TJ has just invented a new game for his cats called “chase-the-crazy-light-spot.” Have students create a new game based on this one or some other event they read about in *TJ and the Sports Fanatic*. Write the rules/instructions for playing and then have a play day where students learn about all the games.
- The game of football is one of teamwork and cooperation, as well as skill. Coach Billings lectures his team using the following words: responsibility, teamwork, spirit, rewards, determination and dedication. Brainstorm as a group how these qualities are reflected on the football field. Then have students list examples found in the classroom and school that connect to these qualities.
- Using a glossary or other resource, make a dictionary of vocabulary and meanings related to the game of football. For example: touchdown, pigskin, wide receiver, sidelines and uprights.
- Invite a local football coach and/or players to come talk to your class. Have them bring some of the equipment players must wear in the game. Write about their presentation as if you were a sports reporter.

- TJ's parents may lose their hardware store due to an increase in their rent and competition from a big new store. But his father “decided to stop looking at the down side and start looking for possibilities.” Brainstorm situations in which this might work. For example; you don't have enough money to buy football jerseys, the school is planning to end the sports program or a developer is going to demolish a playing field.

Mathematics

- Display football team logos for the teams in the CFL or NFL. Have students vote on their favorite ones and graph the results.
- During football season, bring in your local newspaper to gather game results and statistics. Divide your class into groups and use this information to create math problems for other groups to solve.
- *Force = Mass X Acceleration* is Newton's second law of motion. Research Sir Isaac Newton and his laws of physics.
- In Chapter 5, TJ reads up on heartbeat rates for different creatures. Have students take their resting pulse and chart the results. Have them chart the ones TJ refers to as well. Have a doctor or medical professional come in to talk to the class about the role of heartbeats per minute and health.

Art

- Most schools have a team logo on their jerseys just as the professional sports teams do. Have students draw team logos using events or favorite things in their lives as a guideline for their artwork.
- Use football equipment, like helmets and pads, as still-life objects for students to draw. Display their work.
- Using the words of Coach Billings listed above under Language Arts, divide your class into six groups and assign one word per group to turn the meaning into a motivational poster.
- Sportsmanship is an important quality in *TJ and the Sports Fanatic*. Have students draw or paint a picture showing what sportsmanship looks like.

History

- Soccer, football and rugby are games which probably originated from the same source. Soccer type games have been played for centuries in many countries around the world. Charles Goodyear invented the first rubber based soccer ball in 1855. Find out about the different materials soccer, rugby and footballs were made of and how they are made today.

- There have been many famous football players. Find out about the ones who are famous in your area or on your professional team and write about them.
- In the CFL, the teams vie for The Grey Cup. It is named after Lord Albert Henry George Grey. In the NFL, the winner of the Super Bowl receives the Lombardi trophy named after Vince Lombardi. Find out more about who these men were. Look up other football awards and find out why they have the names they do.

P.E.

- Challenge your students to come up with cooperative games or activities using footballs. Take turns teaching these to the class.
- Learn the rules to touch football and play a mini tournament.

Selected Resources

Fiction

Alborough, Jez. *Duck in a Truck*.

Allard, Harry. *Miss Nelson has a Field Day*.

Bloor, Edward. *Tangerine*.

Christopher, Matt. *Fighting Tackle; The Dog That Stole Football Plays; Long Arm Quarterback, Crackerjack Halfback*.

Dadey, Debbie. *Bogeymen Don't Play Football*.

Davis, Aubrey. *The Enormous Potato*.

Dygaard, Thomas J. *Gameplan*.

George, Jean Craighead. *Nutik and Amaroq Play Ball*.

Halliman, P.K. *Let's Play as a Team!*

Hutchins, Hazel, *TJ and the Rockets, TJ and the Haunted House, TJ and the Cats*.

Kessler, Leonard P. *Kick, Pass and Run, Old Turtle's Soccer Game*.

Kidd, Ronald. *Grandpa's Hammer*.

Korman, Gordon. *The Zucchini Warriors*.

Lish, Ted. *It's not my Job!*

Martin, Bill, Jr. *Little Granny Quarterback*.

Muir, Stephen. *Albert's Old Shoes*.

Murphy, Stuart J. *Lemonade for Sale*.

Olsen, Sylvia. *Murphy and Mousetrap*.

Pope, Judy. *Who Said Girls Can't Play Football*.

Nidey, Kelly. *When Autumn Falls*.

Root, P. *One Duck Stuck*.

Vornholt, John. *Mascot Mayhem*.
Wagner, Michael. *Crunched!; Slammed!; Flattened!; Smashed!; Twisted!; Stretched! ; Winded! and Dogged!*
Wallace, Rick. *Fast Company*.

Nonfiction

(Dewey Decimal Classification numbers appear in parentheses where applicable.)

Allen, Tony. *Isaac Newton*. (530)
Bowman-Kruhm, Mary. *A Day in the Life of a Coach*. (307.3)
Buckley, James Jr. *Great Moments in Football*. (796.33)
Cecil, Nancy Lee. *For the Love of Language: Poetry for Every Learner*. (372.6)
Dubois, Muriel. L. *I Like Sports: What can I be?* (796)
Fortin, Francois. *Sports: The Complete Visual Reference*. (796)
Gay, Timothy. *The Physics of Football*. (796.3)
Hall, Susan. *Using Picturebooks to Teach Character Education*. (370.11)
Kerr, Bob. *Mechanical Harry*. (531.1)
Hopkins, Lee Bennett. *Sports! Sports! Sports! A Poetry Collection*. (811)
Korch, Rick. *Pro Football Hall of Fame Playbook*. (796.33)
Korman, Gordon. *The Last Place Sports Poems of Jeremy Bloom: A Collection of Poems About Winning, Losing and Being a Good Sport*. (811.54)
Parker, Steve. *Isaac Newton and Gravity*. (530.09)
Savage, Candace. *Wizards*. (Isaac Newton).
Stead, Tony. *Is That a Fact? Teaching Nonfiction Writing K-3*. (372.62)
Wargin, Kathy-Jo. *Win one for the Gipper: America's Football Hero*.

Online

Official NFL Site for Kids
www.playfootball.com/
Canadian Football League
www.cfl.ca/
The Science of Football
www.sciencenetlinks.com/tools.cfm?DocID=96&Grade=3-5
Super Bowl Blitz: Football related activities for fans of all ages
www.education-world.com/a_lesson/lesson096.shtml
Newton
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newton
Isaac Newton's Life
www.newton.cam.ac.uk/newtlife.html

Forces and Moments

www.univie.ac.at/cga/teach-in/forces.html

Football

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Football

Football Rules

library.thinkquest.org/C0130702/footballrules.html

The Physics of Football

entertainment.howstuffworks.com/physics-of-football.htm

How EyeVision Works

electronics.howstuffworks.com/eyevision.htm

How NFL Equipment Works

people.howstuffworks.com/fb-equip.htm

Pop Warner Little Scholars

www.popwarner.com/

Football Glossary

football.about.com/od/football101/l/bl_glossary.htm

Offensive Football Positions

football.about.com/cs/football101/a/positionoff.htm

Defensive Football Positions

football.about.com/cs/football101/a/positiondef.htm

Forces and Newton's Laws

library.thinkquest.org/10796/ch4/ch4.htm

How the Physics of Football Works

entertainment.howstuffworks.com/physics-of-football.htm

A Letter from the Author

Hello everyone,

A friend of mine pestered me into writing this book! “Write about football,” he kept saying. “When are you going to write about football?” It seemed crazy to even think about it. Yes, two of my own children played football and rugby. Yes, I liked listening to my friend's stories about the game—they were great stories. But I'd never played the game myself.

And there was another thing that was bothering me. When I was a kid in school, I was lousy at sports. I was always told to “try harder,” but no matter how hard I tried I always came in second last in every single race I ever ran, I

always knocked over the bar on the high jump and I only scored one basket in my entire basketball career. Hadn't I tried hard enough? Was I some kind of "sports-slacker"?

The friend kept bugging me. I became more and more intrigued. I began doing research, first into football and then into a much more general subject—what makes a good athlete. Suddenly I was lost in a world of binocular vision, fast-twitch vs. slow-twitch muscle fiber, reaction times and something my friend loved to talk about as well—physics.

I began to relate that research to my own experience. It was true that I'd been lousy at the sports we'd done in school, but later when my husband introduced me to sports with different physical requirements—hiking, biking, canoeing and cross-country skiing—I was able to head out on some great long trips and have a wonderful time.

Different sports for different body types.

Different sports for different personalities.

And the pure joy of pushing oneself to become physically stronger and more capable, the focus of working toward a goal, the delight in finding you can achieve that goal and push yourself farther, are the same no matter what activity you do or at what level you operate.

I could write about sports after all!

Some favorite characters of mine—TJ, Seymour, Amanda and Meg—were waiting in the wings, eager to become involved. Even the cats had something to contribute. Suddenly the book that had seemed like a "crazy idea" became the book I most wanted to write.

I hope you enjoy reading *TJ and the Sports Fanatic* as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Best Wishes,

Hazel Hutchins