

Contenders: Two Native Baseball Players, One World Series

Discussion Guide

Grades 1st – 4th

Before Reading: to activate schema, build background knowledge, and set a purpose.

- Using a [Frayer Model](#), define the word “contenders” using examples and non – examples to support students’ learning.
- With your students, preview the title and cover. Ask: Have you ever played a sport before? What type of qualities make a strong team player? (Optional: Think, Pair, Share)
- Explain to your students that this story uses vocabulary that may seem unfamiliar. Frontload Tier 2 vocabulary words and definitions: *strike, persisted, heritage, reservation, vicious*
- Disclose to your students that you will be reading a story about two baseball players who faced prejudice due to their Native heritage.

During Reading: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections.

- Who are John Tortes Meyers and Charles Albert Bender?
- Why were John and Charles discriminated against? Use details from the story to support your answer.
- What are some of the similarities and differences between John and Charles?
- How might John and Charles feel when people discriminate against them?
- Who do you think will win the baseball game? (Optional: keep track of the score with your students!)
- Discuss picture on last page and how it reflects the racism present in baseball.

After Reading: to summarize, question, and reflect.

- What do you think the author wanted you to learn from this story?
- John and Charles never gave up on their dreams despite the prejudice they faced. What dream have you achieved despite people telling you that you could not do it? What have you done that others thought you could not?
- **Extension:** Using the timeline in the back of the book, share with students that John and Charles were inducted into the American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame. Create your own classroom Hall of Fame. Have students draw a self-portrait and write 2-3 sentences answering the prompt, “If you were in the hall of fame, what would it be for?”

If your students enjoyed this book...

- Encourage them to continue to discuss it and refer to it in other lessons and conversations.
- Let them explore more about the topic by reading other books with similar themes, structure, characters, or content.