

DISCUSSION GUIDE



Eyes on the Goal

by John Coy

(Book Two in the *4 for 4* series)

Grades 3-6 / Ages 8-12
ISBN: 978-0-312-37330-6

About the Novel

Just before they're due to start middle school, Jackson, Gig, Isaac, and Diego, four sports-loving friends, all attend the same weeklong soccer camp. Diego is an experienced soccer player, and Gig has a natural ability for the sport he never realized. But Jackson and Isaac are split into another group of players—a group with younger, smaller kids. For the first time, both boys aren't the stars of their team. In fact, they can't seem to get a handle on soccer. At the same time, Jackson is having a hard time getting a handle on his mom's deepening relationship with her boyfriend, and her suggestion that they move in with him. And Gig is worried about his father's deployment to Afghanistan.

Discussion Questions

1. Every time Jackson sees them, he thinks Heather and Haley are quiet and overdressed. However, he's surprised to hear about Heather's wilderness canoe camp. How has he misjudged her? How has he misjudged other characters? How willing is he to admit when he's wrong about someone?
2. Different father figures, including Jackson's dad, G-Man, Gig's dad, and Ted, interact with Jackson in both *Eyes on the Goal* and *Top of the Order*. How does Jackson feel about all of them? Which ones does he look up to and which ones does he doubt? Do you think he is fair to all of them? What lessons, if any, do they teach Jackson?
3. How do Jackson, Gig, Isaac, and Diego deal with having to split up to play on different teams? What conflicts does their separation create? Are any of them jealous of each other? Do they learn anything from having to spend time teaming up with new people and seeing each other as opponents?

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4. *“In baseball, basketball, and football, I’ve always been pretty good. I never paid much attention to the kids who weren’t. Now I’m one of them.”* (p. 63)

How does this change the way Jackson sees himself or others? Have you ever felt like Jackson feels when he plays at soccer camp? How does feeling like a pro or feeling unskilled at an activity change how you interact with others who may be better or worse than you are?

5. *“When it comes to soccer, I don’t know what I want.”* (p. 78)

How does Jackson learn how to keep his eyes on the goal and focus on what he wants in soccer? In life? Do you ever feel like you don’t know what you want? How do you find goals to focus on?

6. *“They think only ‘real’ soccer players should score. So now they freeze me out.”* (p. 104) Why don’t Gig’s teammates consider him a ‘real’ soccer player? What consequences will excluding Gig have on his team? What should Gig do to deal with the situation?

7. How does Jackson apply his baseball skills to soccer? Why won’t the coach let him play goalie at first? How does he prove himself?

8. When Jackson’s team ties the score during their last game, why do they see it as a victory? Have you ever had the experience of a tie feeling like a victory? A loss?

9. How have the Cobras changed or improved throughout the week? What do you think was the main reason?

10. How has Jackson changed during camp? What has he learned? Have you ever been to a camp like the one the boys go to? Would you like to be at a camp like this with friends?



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