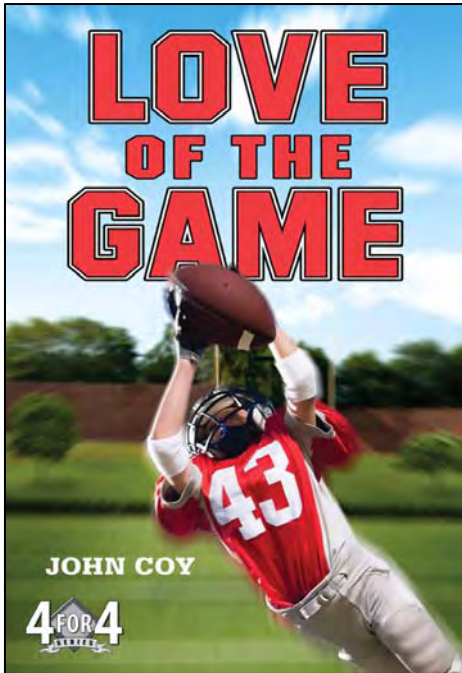


DISCUSSION GUIDE



Love of the Game
by John Coy
(Book Three in the *4 for 4* series)

Grades 3-6 / Ages 8-12
ISBN: 978-0-312-37331-3

About the Novel

Middle school is full of new challenges for Jackson, Gig, Isaac, and Diego, four sports-loving friends who have always stuck together. Lockers that won't open, older (and bigger) kids, classes that are far apart, tons of homework—there's a lot to get used to. One thing the boys are looking forward to, however, is making the football team. Not every one will get what he wants, though, on the field and at home.

Discussion Questions

1. *"In middle school, people pay attention to who you hang out with."* (p. 30)
Where does Jackson fit into the middle school hierarchy? How does he see himself in relation to his friends and his classmates?
2. What new friends do the boys make in middle school? How does that change them? Does it have any impact on their friendship or how they see themselves?
3. How does Jackson deal with the bullies he encounters? Does he avoid them, fight them, befriend them or use another method to make the attacks stop? What should he do when bullies confront him and make demands?
4. Why does Jackson avoid Mr. Amodt, the librarian, when he tries to get him to sign up for READ Club? Why doesn't he want to join the group, and why does he change his mind later?

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5. Gig's guidance counselor tells him that "different family members handle these things differently." (p. 84)

How do Gig and Sydney's responses to their father's deployment in Afghanistan differ? What do their responses suggest about their personalities?

6. *"This was never our house, just a place we were staying while Mom's friends were gone. Even so, it felt like home. I've never even seen Ted's house. There's no way that's going to feel like home."* (p. 74-75)

Jackson's family is house-sitting for friends, and though they live in a nice place, it doesn't feel like home. What makes a place feel like home? What would have to change in order for Jackson to feel like the place he lives is his home? Try to define "home."

7. At first, Jackson sees Tiny and Nick Speros as potential bullies, but eventually he sees them in a more positive light. Why did he see them that way in the first place, and why did his opinion of them change? What did they do or say to change his idea of them? See if you can find specific passages where changes occurred.

8. *"I don't care if Gig gives me a hard time about Ruby. He's just jealous because no girl came to watch him."* (p. 180)

In *Eyes on the Goal*, Jackson had a crush on Angela, but eventually he gave up on her. Why? How are his interactions with Ruby different from those he had with Angela? What do you think will come of Jackson and Ruby's relationship?



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