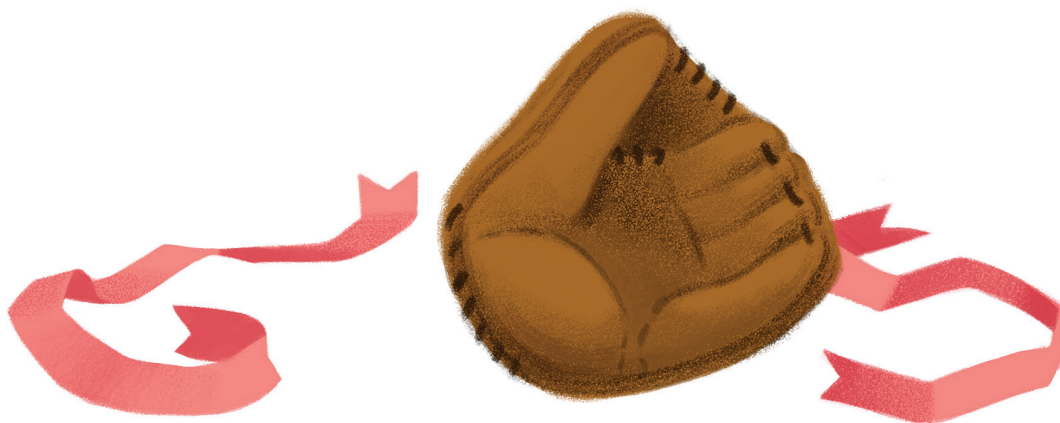


A Teacher's Guide to

# Anybody's Game

*Kathryn Johnston, the First Girl to Play Little League Baseball*



Heather Lang

pictures by  
Cecilia Puglesi

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Ages 4–8 // Grades PreK–3

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# About *Anybody's Game*:

*Kathryn Johnston, the First Girl to Play Little League Baseball*



In 1950, Kathryn Johnston wanted to play Little League, but an unwritten rule kept girls from trying out. So she cut off her hair and tried out as a boy under the nickname “Tubby.” She made the team—and inspired future generations. An inspiring and suspenseful story about what it means to want to do something so badly you’re willing to break the rules—and how, sometimes, breaking the rules can lead to change.

## About Heather Lang

Heather Lang loves to research and write about real women who overcame extraordinary obstacles and never gave up on their dreams. Her picture book biographies include, *Swimming with Sharks: The Daring Discoveries of Eugenie Clark*, *Fearless Flyer: Ruth Law and Her Flying Machine*, *The Original Cowgirl: The Wild Adventures of Lucille Mulhall*, and *Queen of the Track: Alice Coachman, Olympic High-Jump Champion*. When she is not writing or doing detective work for her next book, she loves to go on adventures with her husband and four children. Visit her online at [www.heatherlangbooks.com](http://www.heatherlangbooks.com).

## About Cecilia Puglesi

Cecilia Puglesi was born in Argentina and has spent many years in Europe working as an illustrator and visual developer for animation. After receiving a Fulbright grant, she completed an MFA in computer arts at the School of Visual Arts in New York. She currently lives in Spain. Visit her online at [www.carbonomonono.com](http://www.carbonomonono.com).



# Prereading Activities

## Predictions

Share the book's cover with your students. Then ask them to look at the illustration. Invite students to make predictions about the setting of the story, including time period and place (this could mean state, city, town, or rural vs. urban area). Next read aloud the entire title and subtitle: "*Kathryn Johnston, The First Girl to Play Little League Baseball.*" Ask students to think more specifically about the time period that this story may have happened.

# After Reading

## Definitions

*Anybody's Game* includes some baseball-specific vocabulary. Introduce these terms to your students:

**Mitt:** The glove used to catch a baseball.

**Sweet Spot:** The middle section of a baseball bat that leads to hitting the ball so it travels faster and farther.

**Sacrifice Bunt:** When a player positions their bat (and does not swing it) so the ball hits the bat and then dribbles off right in front of home plate. This allows runners on first or second base to run to another base without getting thrown out.

**Lefty Glove:** Right-handed players wear their glove on their left hand, so they catch with their left but throw with their dominant right hand. The opposite is true for left-handed players, so they wear their mitt or glove on their right hand.

**Stitches:** When students first hear the word "stitches" they may think of the medical stitches that are used to help close a cut. But baseballs have stitches to keep the ball together.

Invite students to write a sentence using each baseball term. Guide students to construct a sentence that may give a reader enough context clues to figure out the meaning of the baseball term.

## Author's Craft

Developing readers need to gain practice with the skill of recognizing topic-specific vocabulary when reading a text. This story has baseball-related vocabulary that is either related to baseball, specific to baseball, or exclusively specific to baseball. There are two instances in the text where the author uses topic-specific vocabulary incorporated into the author's craft of similes, which may make understanding the simile difficult for some readers. (Remind students that similes compare two different things using "like" or "as" to make a description more vivid.)

*"...tears welled up like the roar of a crowd."*

*"Her stomach danced like a knuckleball."*

Invite students to get into groups to discuss the meanings of these two similes. Invite the groups to create a drawing that illustrates what is happening in each simile.

### Compare Similes vs. Metaphors

The author uses many similes. But there is

one instance where the author wants to make a comparison that is even more powerful than a simile. She uses a metaphor.

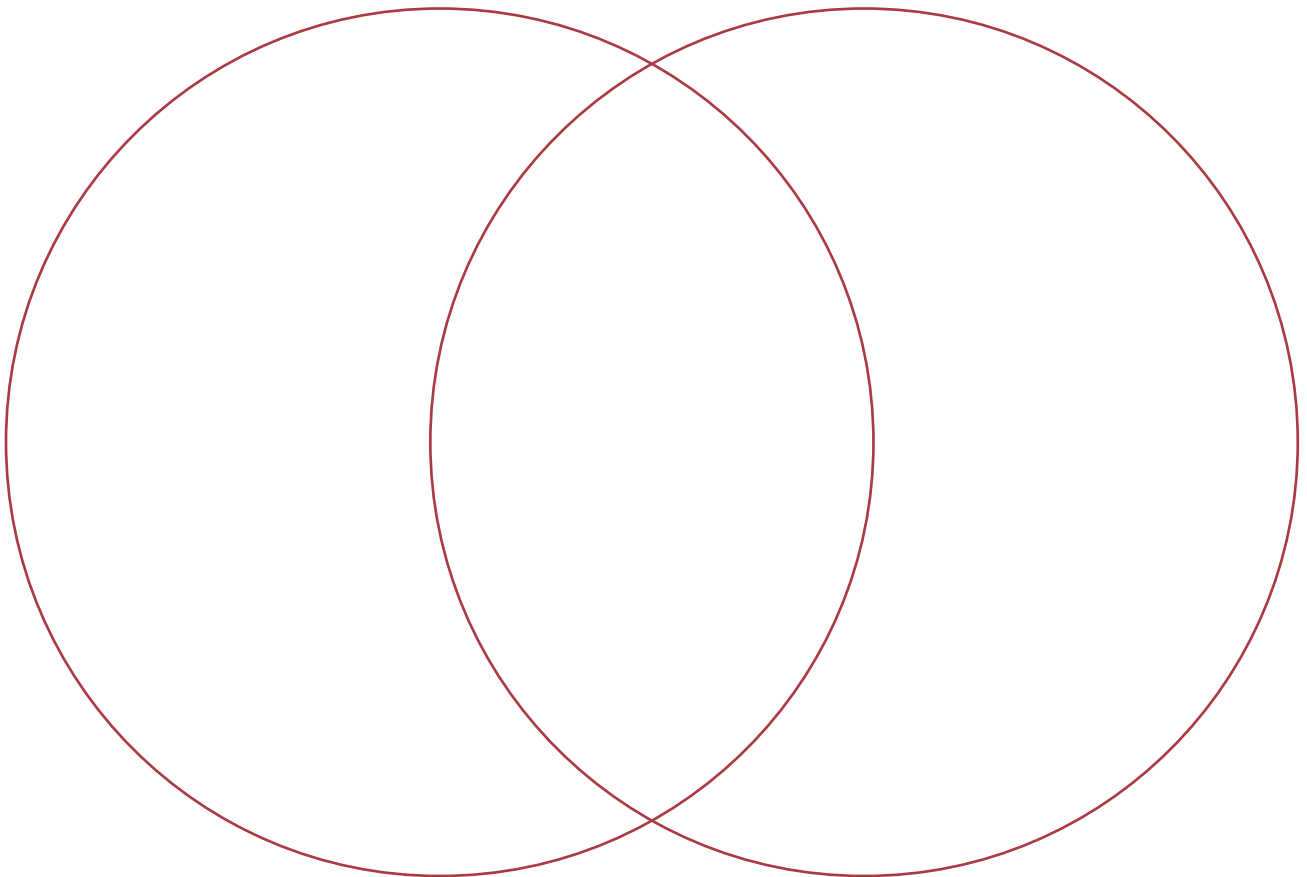
*“Playing baseball on a team was heaven.”*

Explain to students that metaphors can be more powerful because it does not use “like” or “as” to highlight a similarity.

## Compare and Contrast

Students can work in groups to choose another “famous first” female from history who broke barriers. The list is long: Clara Barton, Hillary Clinton, Mae Jemison, Sally Ride, Sarah Hale, Elizabeth Blackwell, Harriet Tubman, Alice Paul, Phillis Wheatley, Marie Curie, Jane Addams,

Susan B. Anthony, Amelia Earhart, Aretha Franklin, Becky Hammon, etc. Students can research one of these heroes (through online research or discovering books in their library) and compare and contrast their experiences, traits, examples of persistence, etc., using a Venn diagram.



# Extension Activities

## Create Inspirational Mini Posters

Kathryn Johnson persisted! Invite students to join in groups to discuss instances from the book when Kathryn Johnston demonstrated persistence. Invite them to create inspirational mini posters that illustrate scenes from the story. Students can work together or individually to create slogans or sayings that showcase one of Kathryn's examples of persistence. To ensure that the posters have a variety of words other than "persistence" have students research with a thesaurus or an online thesaurus to find synonyms for "persistence." Examples: "Be like Kathryn Johnston and stick with it!" or "Persevere like Kathryn Johnston" or "Show tenacity just like Kathryn Johnston". Consider showing students vintage posters from the same era that Kathryn was fighting for her right to play Little League baseball. Simply searching "Women Work Poster" in a search engine will produce classic images of posters like the "She Can Do It!" poster.

# Research Questions

- When did women get the right to vote in the United States?
- Investigate the Equal Rights Amendment. Discuss Alice Paul's efforts in making it into a law. Consider showing this video: <http://eraeducationproject.com/what-is-the-equal-rights-amendment/> which explains where the ERA stands today. Students will likely be shocked that it *still* has not become a law.
- Investigate the Civil Rights Act of 1964. With students, discuss Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s efforts.
- Investigate Title IX with students and discuss that this legislation came into existence about twenty years after Kathryn Johnston's efforts to play baseball. It had a big impact on girls being able to play sports in schools and colleges.

After researching these topics, invite students to write about their opinions. Ask students to consider whether they believe that females have the same opportunities in all areas that males do.



# Common Core Standards

## Comprehension and Collaboration

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.1.** Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 1 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.1.a.** Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.1.b.** Build on others' talk in conversations by responding to the comments of others through multiple exchanges.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.1.c.** Ask questions to clear up any confusion about the topics and texts under discussion.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.2.** Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.3.** Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to gather additional information or clarify something that is not understood.

## Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.4.** Describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly.

## Vocabulary

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.6.** Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal precise actions, emotions, or states of being (e.g., quizzed, whined, stammered) and that are basic to a particular topic (e.g., *wildlife*, *conservation*, and *endangered* when discussing animal preservation).

## Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.4.** Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 4 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.4.a.** Use context (e.g., definitions, examples, or restatements in text) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

## Craft and Structure

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.5.** Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.5.a.** Explain the meaning of simple similes and metaphors (e.g., *as pretty as a picture*) in context.

## Key Ideas and Details

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.3.** Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).