

# Jack and Larry

## Jack Graney and Larry, the Cleveland Baseball Dog

### THEMES IN *JACK AND LARRY*

#### **1. Bull Terriers and Baseball Players**

Throughout this book the author makes comparisons between Jack and Larry. Do your own research on the characteristics of the bull terrier and then write an essay in which you explain further how Jack and Larry are alike. How is Jack Graney a bull terrier? How is Larry a Cleveland team member?

#### **2. Team Spirit and Hard Work**

Over the course of the book both Jack Graney and Larry help to build team identity and spirit for the Cleveland American League team. Discuss some of the ways each of them does this. Look up the meaning of the word *steadfastness*. How does steadfastness figure into this?

#### **3. Defeat**

Defeat and disappointment are a part of this story. There are many losses both for Jack and for the Cleveland team. What are some of the ways the different characters in this book handle defeat? What do you think this says about each character?

#### **4. A Mosaic of Stories**

This book consists of many short stories, just as a mosaic consists of many small tiles. All the different tiles in a mosaic fit together to make one complete picture. Explain how all these individual stories form a complete picture of Jack the man, Larry the dog, and the Cleveland team of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## THE USE OF LANGUAGE IN *JACK AND LARRY*

1. This book is written using a form of poetry called **free verse**. In free verse there are no specific rules governing the meter or rhyming patterns of the poem. Discuss the ways in which you think free verse works for this story. Look at the following examples and explain how the physical layout of the words enhances their meaning.
  - p. 25 . . . but somebody wants to take Larry away from Jack.
  - p. 60 . . . the bull terrier keels over.
  - p. 63 . . . reach first base.
  - p. 77 . . . they will not spit on it.
  
2. **Imagery** is language that is very descriptive. *Jack and Larry* contains a lot of strong imagery. Discuss your reaction to the following examples.
  - p. 4 Jack watches Larry . . . hurl himself against sweaty shoes and socks in ecstasy.
  - p. 9 Jack and the bench spend the rest of the season together.
  - p. 11 But even star players pulsating immense volumes of heat and energy cannot always ignite their teammates.
  - p. 46 . . . and a mouth wide enough to swallow a bat sideways.
  - p. 56 Will Speaker spark the fire that burns a path to the pennant?
  - p. 68 Bad hops do not send telegrams saying they are on the way.
  - p. 71 Heavy rain batters Jack's heart.
  
3. A **metaphor** is a figure of speech in which a comparison is made between two things usually considered not alike at all. (She is my sunshine.) A **simile** is a form of metaphor that uses the words *like* or *as*. (Her eyes are like the sun.) Which of the following are metaphors, which are similes? In each example explain what two objects are being compared and why you think the author chose to make each of these comparisons.
  - p. 9 The ball plummets earthward too soon, like a one-winged goose calling it quits.
  - p. 28 . . . barking louder than a hot dog vendor.
  - p. 30 . . . reporters rush out stories as if bulldogs were biting the seats of their pants.
  - p. 34 . . . no need to derail yourself.
  - p. 46 The dogs whirl around like a load of black and white laundry.
  - p. 63 Second base is icing.
  - p. 73 . . . life is a tornado that swoops us up, slaps us around, and drops us, black and blue but still standing.
  - p. 78 Spring is a forward-pointing arrow.
  - p. 81 Cleveland chomps down and gets a grip on the pennant — a grip as strong as that of a bull terrier.

4. **Homonyms** are words with the same pronunciation but different meanings. Sometimes the author uses several homonyms one right after another. Look at the following examples. What are the different meanings of the repeated words? What effect does this writing have on you?
- p. 1 Jack bats left, throws left, plays left field . . . and feels left out – left behind.
  - p. 59 players wear uniforms, they wear attitudes, and they wear down . . . but they do not wear names or numbers.
5. Write your own poem. Have it tell a story. Decide whether your story can be told best in free verse or with rhyming.

– Teacher's Guide developed by Vicki Hayes

