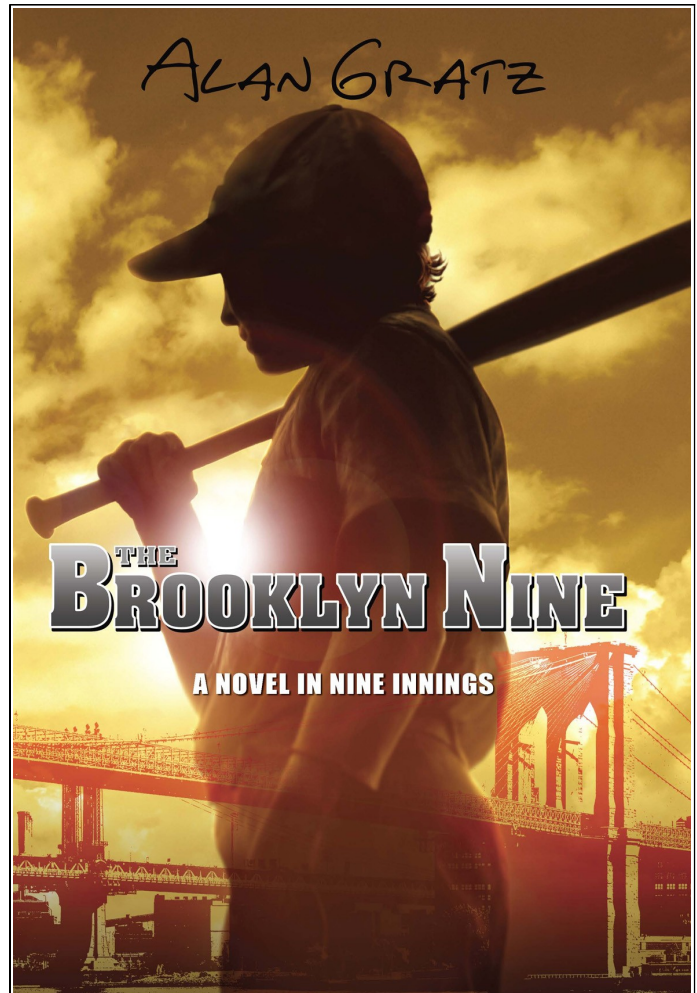


The Brooklyn Nine

DISCUSSION GUIDE

“A wonderful baseball book that is more than the sum of its parts.”

The Horn Book



About the Book

1845: Felix Schneider cheers the New York Knickerbockers as they play Three-Out, All-Out.

1864: Union soldier Louis Schneider plays baseball between battles in the Civil War.

1893: Arnold Schneider meets his hero King Kelly, one of professional baseball's first big stars.

1908: Walter Snider sneaks a black pitcher into the Majors by pretending he's Native American.

1926: Numbers wiz Frankie Snider cons a con with the help of a fellow Brooklyn Robins fan.

1945: Kat Flint becomes a star in the All-American Girls Baseball League.

1957: Ten-year-old Jimmy Flint deals with bullies, Sputnik, and the Dodgers leaving Brooklyn.

1981: Michael Flint pitches a perfect game in a Little League game at Prospect Park.

2002: Snider Flint researches a bat that belonged to one of Brooklyn's greatest baseball players.

One family, nine generations.
One city, nine innings of baseball.

Make a Timeline

Create a timeline with pictures of important events from baseball and American history that correspond to the eras in each of the nine innings in *The Brooklyn Nine*. Use these dates, and add some from your own research.

First Inning: 1845

1835 - First Great Fire in Manhattan

1840 - First wave of immigrants leave Europe for the United States

1845 - Felix Schneider

1852 - Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* published

Second Inning: 1864

1861 - US Civil War Begins

1864 - Louis Schneider

1869 - Cincinnati Reds, first pro baseball team, is founded

1865 - Slavery is abolished

Third Inning: 1894

1879 - Edison invents the electric light bulb

1883 - Brooklyn Bridge completed

1887 - King Kelly is sold to the Boston Beaneaters for a record \$10,000

1894 - Arnold Schneider

Fourth Inning: 1908

1903 - Wright Brothers' first flight

1908 - Walter Snider

1914 - World War I begins

1920 - First Negro Major League founded

Questions for Discussion

First Inning: Play Ball

Who was the first of your ancestors to come to America? Where is your family from? Could you have left your home to make a new life in a foreign land?

How is baseball different today from the way it was played by Felix and the New York Knickerbockers in 1845?

Felix's dreams are derailed by the injury he suffers during the Great Fire of 1845, but he resolves to succeed anyway. Have you ever had a dream dashed? How did you respond?

Second Inning: The Red-Legged Devil

Why does Louis go back for his father's baseball? What does it symbolize for him, and for his father?

After risking his life to go back for his father's baseball, Louis trades it away. Why? Was it a good one? What is your most valued possession, and what would it take for you to trade it for something else?

Many people think Abner Doubleday invented baseball, a myth perpetuated for many years by baseball authorities. Why was the myth created, and why did people keep believing it?

Third Inning: A Ballad of the Republic

Basketball star Charles Barkley famously argued that sports figures shouldn't be role models. Is he right? Argue the case for and against sports stars as heroes.

Who are your heroes? Why do you respect them? Have you ever had a hero who did something you disapproved of? How did you react?

Before there was television and movie theaters, there was vaudeville. What performers today do you think would have been successful at vaudeville? Put together a poster advertising a modern vaudeville line-up.

Fourth Inning: The Way Things Are Now

What is prejudice? What is a stereotype? How did prejudice and stereotyping affect the Jew and blacks in the 20th century? What stereotypes and prejudices do Americans have today?

At the end of the story, Walter chucks his beloved Brooklyn hat into the ocean. Have you ever been disillusioned by someone or something? How did you respond?

An unwritten "Gentleman's Agreement" kept black players out of Major League Baseball for almost a hundred years. Discuss the idea of "separate but equal" that lasted until the 1950s.

Questions for Discussion

Fifth Inning: The Numbers Game

John Kieran argues that numbers can “lie.” How can numbers and statistics be made to tell different stories?

Frankie tries to cheat the numbers game to help neighbors in need. Is it ever right to lie? Was Frankie right or wrong?

To what extent can we trust reported facts? Whose job is it to make sure reporting is accurate? How has blogging and reporting on the Internet changed how we trust news?

Sixth Inning: Notes of a Star to Be

What historical conditions made the 1940s right for women's professional baseball, and why did it fold in the 1950s?

Are you superstitious? What leads people to become superstitious, and why do superstitions persist?

Kat is encouraged to keep notes about her impending stardom. Do the same thing! Write about what your life will be like once you're famous. How will your life change, for better and worse?

Seventh Inning: Duck and Cover

Watch “Duck and Cover” online. Do you think the film has useful advice? Does the film do more harm than good? Why?

Why was it such a big deal for the Dodgers and Giants to leave New York for California? How were their moves representative of what was happening in American cities in the 1950s?

Have you ever been bullied? Have you seen bullying in action? How can you deal with bullying in the moment, and what can we do to prevent bullying in general?

Eighth Inning: The Perfectionist

Did Michael throw a perfect game or didn't he? And why didn't the author say so?

Why does no one talk to a pitcher who is throwing a perfect game? Does this help, or hurt?

Have you ever been in a high-pressure situation? How did you respond?

Ninth Inning: Provenance

What connection does each of the items in the box Uncle David gives Snider have to other “innings” in the book?

Why is it important for us to remember where we came from? What bearing does the past have on the present and future?

Make a Timeline

Fifth Inning: 1926

1926 – Frankie Snider

1927 – Babe Ruth hits 60 HRs

1927 – Charles Lindbergh flies solo across the Atlantic Ocean

1929 – Stock market crashes

Sixth Inning: 1945

1941 – US enters World War II

1943 – First women's pro baseball league founded (AAGPBL)

1945 – Kat Flint

1947 – Jackie Robinson breaks baseball's “color barrier”

Seventh Inning: 1957

1957 – Federal troops sent to Arkansas to enforce integration

1957 – USSR launches Sputnik I, beginning the Space Race

1957 – Jimmy Flint

1957 – Dodgers leave Brooklyn

Eighth Inning: 1981

1980 – US boycotts Moscow Summer Olympics

1981 – Michael Flint

1985 – Pete Rose breaks Ty Cobb's all-time hit record

1986 – Space Shuttle Challenger explodes

Ninth Inning: 2002

2001 – 9/11 terrorist attacks

2002 – Snider Flint

2005 – Hurricane Katrina

Further Reading

Middle Grade Baseball Fiction

All the Broken Pieces by Ann E. Burg

The Girl Who Threw Butterflies by Mick Cochrane

Free Baseball by Sue Corbett

In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson
by Bette Bao Lord

The Boy Who Saved Baseball by John H. Ritter

Over the Wall by John H. Ritter

Baseball in April and Other Stories by Gary Soto

Middle Grade Baseball Non-Fiction

Heroes of Baseball by Robert Lipsyte

A Whole New Ball Game by Sue Macy

We Are the Ship: The Story of Negro League Baseball by Kadir Nelson

About the Author



Alan's first novel, *Samurai Shortstop*, was named one of the ALA's 2007 Top Ten Best Books for Young Adults. His teen mystery *Something Rotten* was a 2008 ALA Quick Pick for Young Adult Readers, and a sequel, *Something Wicked*, was among the *Christian Science*

Monitor's Best Children's Books of 2008. His first middle grade novel, *The Brooklyn Nine*, was among Booklist's Top Ten Sports Books and Historical Books for Youth, and was followed in 2011 by the fantasy/sports mash-up *Fantasy Baseball*. His short fiction has appeared in Knoxville's *Metropulse* magazine, *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*, and the anthologies *Half-Minute Horrors* and *Tomo*, a story collection to benefit young survivors of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. A native of Knoxville, Tennessee, Alan is now a full-time writer who lives in Western North Carolina with his wife and daughter.

Internet Resources

Knickerbocker Base Ball Club Rules

<http://www.19cbaseball.com/image-knickerbocker-baseball-rules.html>

Brooklyn Public Library's "Brooklyn in the Civil War" site

<http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/civilwar/index.html>

Mike "King" Kelly's Page at the Baseball Hall of Fame

<http://baseballhall.org/hof/kelly-king>

Coney Island History

<http://www.westland.net/coneyisland/>

Ebbets Field: Brooklyn's Lost Shrine

<http://www.ebbets-field.com/index1.html>

All-American Girls Professional Baseball League

<http://www.aagpbl.org/index.cfm>

All-American Girls

Professional Baseball League

<http://www.aagpbl.org/index.cfm>

"Duck and Cover" on YouTube

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0K_LZDXp0I

Text of the last inning of Vin Scully's radio call of Sandy Koufax's 1965 perfect game

http://entertainment.salon.com/1999/10/12/scully_koufax/

Auction page for Babe Herman's bat

<http://www.robertedwardauctions.com/auction/2006/1083.html>

Special Thanks

to Tracie Below at Hope Middle School in Greenville, NC for letting me borrow from her terrific One Book, One School *Brooklyn Nine* Teacher Guide