

**THE BOY WHO SAVED BASEBALL
BY JOHN H. RITTER**

**Louisiana Middle School Readers' Choice Award Nominee 2006
Grades 6-8**

Submitted by Dorothy L. Grimsley, Instructor
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Title: The Boy Who Saved Baseball

Author: John H. Ritter

Publisher: Philomel Books, 2003

Pages: 224

Summary

The very future of a small town in rural California is at stake. An elderly rancher, Doc Altenheimer, is ready to sell his 320 acres to big developers. This land includes a good part of Dilltown and its baseball field – Lucky Strike Park. After young Tom Gallagher visits the rancher, Doc proposes that his decision will be determined by a baseball game between the locals and the well-equipped summer camp team down the road in Lake View Mesa. If the locals, the Dilltown Wildcats, beat the summer camp team, Doc will not sell his land to the developers. The odds are against the Dilltown Wildcats because the summer camp team had beaten them in the annual challenge game for three years by at least ten runs. The fate of Dilltown rests on the outcome of one baseball game. The situation seems hopeless until a mysterious boy, Cruz de la Cruz, arrives on horseback with a baseball bat in the rifle holster on his saddle and a self-designed computer game that simulates the delivery of any pitch. Tom and Cruz also convince Dante Del Gato, a renowned Major Leaguer, to coach the team. Del Gato is a recluse who years ago walked away from baseball in disgrace just before his team played in its first World Series. More intrigue is added when Cruz disappears on the day of the game. The plot includes lots of action, humor and a triumphant ending.

Awards and “Best Book” Lists

Children's Book Council Notable Children's Book Award 2003

Child Magazine Best Book of 2003 Award

New York Public Library's Books for the Teen Age List

Author's Biography

Baseball novelist John H. Ritter is also a naturalist and an inspirational speaker. He grew up in the rural hills of eastern San Diego County along the Mexican

border. Because the neighbors lived so far away, he grew up playing “one-on-one” hardball with his brothers. He still plays hardball in an amateur league in San Diego. His father was a sports writer who moved the family from Ohio to the San Diego area. He was only four when his mother died, but he remembers that his mother sang constantly to her four children and even made up some of the songs to fit their personalities. John was inspired by Bob Dylan, the songwriter, to write songs during his years in high school. He attended the University of California at San Diego. He was a custom painting contractor for 25 years, but he always set aside time to write. After the sale of his first book *Choosing Up Sides* in 1997, he retired from house painting and became a full-time writer. More information about John H. Ritter, including interviews and home photos of John growing up can be found on his web page. <http://www.johnhritter.com>

Other Titles by John H. Ritter

Choosing Up Sides

Over the Wall

“Old School/Fu-Char”, a short story, is included in *Big City Cool*, a collection of 14 short stories, which address issues that concern adolescents.

Related Titles

Babe and Me by Dan Gutman

Baseball in April and Other Stories by Gary Soto

Baseball Saved Us by Ken Mochizuki

Baseball's Best: Five True Stories by Andrew Gutelle

Eyewitness: Baseball by James E. Kelley

Game Day: Behind the Scenes at a Ballpark by Robert Young

Glovesmen: Twenty-Seven of Baseball's Greatest by George Sullivan

Great Moments in Baseball History and other baseball books by Matt Christopher

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

The Physics of Baseball by Robert Kemp Adair

Shakespeare Bats Cleanup by Ron Koertge

Teammates by Peter Golenbock and Paul Bacon

That Sweet Diamond: Baseball Poems by Paul B. Janeczko and Carol Katchen

This Is Baseball by Margaret Blackstone

Classroom Connections

A Teacher's Guide for the book *The Boy Who Saved Baseball* is available on Ritter's website, http://www.johnhritter.com/TBWSB_TeachersGuide.sht

It includes questions and activities based on Bloom's Taxonomy. It includes questions for class discussion, a collaborative simulation project, writing prompts on individual research and inquiry, examples for literary and language examination and two word studies – one for specialized vocabulary and one for neologisms and word origin trees.

Web Sites

Baseball Almanac

<http://www.baseball-almanac.com>

Includes Fabulous Feats, Famous Firsts, Legendary Lists, Rules and more.

Baseball Almanac – Baseball Humor

<http://www.baseball-almanac.com/humor4.shtml>

Abbot and Costello's Who's on First (Text only).

Fun Brain – Math Baseball

<http://www.funbrain.com/math>

Baseball activities to help improve math skills.

John H. Ritter

www.johnhritter.com

Author's web site is excellent and includes chapter excerpts and in-depth reviews of his three books, a biography, news items and other interesting facts. Readers are encouraged to e-mail John and submit messages on the Message Board.