***Quarterback Season*** by Fred Bowen

(Grades 4-7, 144 pages)

Matt, an eighth-grade jock, expects to be the starting quarterback on his middle school team. But he’s got some serious competition from a new seventh grader. To make matters worse, his English teacher is on his case about a new class assignment: he has to keep a journal. He not only records the ups and downs of an exciting football season but he catches the writing bug.

Tracking the progress of the middle-school team he quarterbacks from tryouts to the championship game in an assigned journal, Matt shares both increasingly detailed and well-described accounts of each victory or defeat and his own changing opinion of a gifted but annoyingly self-confident new team member. With practice and frequent critical feedback from his English teacher, his entries go from “Paragraph 1. We had practice again today. We did a bunch of exercises and stuff” to gems like “The dark, the cold, the hard ground—it all made me realize that winter was coming.“ In the end, sharing an MVP trophy with his erstwhile rival takes the sting out of losing the last game, and he discovers that not everything is what it seems to be…

*~ Booktalk by Julie Bolin*