

Magic Bat Day

Kevin Christofora

Dale Tangeman, Illustrator

Clarens Publishing (Jul 6, 2015)

Hardcover \$12.99 (32pp)

978-0-9863493-1-7

Magic Bat Day will spread a love of baseball and really engage young readers who are already interested in learning the game.

Magic Bat Day, the latest installment in the Hometown All Stars series, is an interactive picture book that engages young readers' love of baseball while giving valuable instruction for how to play the game.

A young boy gets ready for school and is stoked to be able to wear his baseball team jersey to class and attend his second practice ever after school. Kevin Christofora passionately and effectively recreates the child's excitement for the sport. The boy is so excited to get to practice that he can hardly concentrate at school. Once there, the coach tells the kids about the legendary Babe Ruth before outlining specific techniques to become great hitters themselves.

Illustrated by Dale Tangeman, *Magic Bat Day* involves an ethnically diverse team of children, who are all clearly excited to be involved in baseball. Tangeman's visuals zoom in when the coach gives detailed instructions, such as how to line up one's hands on the bat or how to aim at the very center of the baseball.

Targeted at readers three to seven years old, *Magic Bat Day* is unique in that it provides interactive activities in the midst of the story. For instance, readers are asked to search out hidden baseballs on a page layout, answer short questions about facts learned in the story, and at the end, are reminded of key words used throughout the book.

However, there are a few inconsistencies that detract from the story. In one scene, the young boy remarks that he "still had the white hat," making reference to a past detail unknown to the readers. Additionally, a few pages in, a floating baseball with a hat and a face appears in the corner of the page, providing omnipresent commentary such as "Parents help out by picking up the equipment and returning it to the shed, so Coach can focus his time on the kids." This could be a valuable and whimsical feature, but it needs to be introduced or used more consistently in order to be truly effective.

Overall, *Magic Bat Day* will spread a love of baseball and really engage readers who are already interested in learning the game.

AMANDA MCCORQUODALE (October 9, 2015)

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