ForeWord Reviews

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

Pick Up Game: A Full Day of Full Court
Marc Aronson
Candlewick Press
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Pick Up Game is a unique collection of short stories, with each one picking up where the previous one left off, and written by a different author and from a different character's perspective. While occasionally confusing because of all the divergent viewpoints, the book is an entertaining read that brings the game to life.

A single, real-life location serves as the main character: a high-spirited place of wonder, "the cage" is a basketball court at the corner of West 4th Street and Sixth Avenue in Manhattan, where players from disparate parts of the city gather to play pick-up ball, challenge each other, learn new skills, and live the game. Every day, competitions run one after the other, from early morning until sundown. The court attracts everyone from future college athletes to rank amateurs. Male, female, young, old, black, white, Latino: all walks of life are represented.

No blood, no foul, the rough-and-tumble world of street basketball is captured perfectly here. The short tales include stories within stories, some true, others make-believe. There is a virgin looking for a good man; a homeless boy who finds love; and a player too short to make a college team who nonetheless teaches a shallow-baller to play. Looking for revenge for an embarrassing loss, another character finds unexpected redemption; a nerd discovers his love of the game through science; and a writer with a bum knee must take a three-point shot to decide the most important game of his life.

All stories are well written. Authors Marc Aronson, Bruce Brooks, Joseph Bruchac, Robert Burleigh, Sharon G. Flake, Robert Lipsyte, Walter Dean Meyer, Willi Perdomo, Adam Rapp, Charles R. Smith Jr., and Rita Williams-Garcia are young-adult fiction writing all-stars. Each person's story reflects what they think of the game, with perspectives as diverse as the characters they create. For example, Sharon G. Flake, an award-winning writer who doesn't play basketball, focused on things that happen outside of the game—how players interact with girls, look for love, and find companions.

You don’t have to like basketball or even understand it that well to appreciate this book. It is superbly written and aimed at readers aged eleven and up.

Joey A. Kane