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.


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?

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**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

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)
- [“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)

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.

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