

## DISCUSSION GUIDE



### ***Eyes on the Goal*** **by John Coy** (Book Two in the *4 for 4* series)

Grades 3-6 / Ages 8-12  
ISBN: 978-0-312-37330-6

#### **About the Novel**

Just before they're due to start middle school, Jackson, Gig, Isaac, and Diego, four sports-loving friends, all attend the same weeklong soccer camp. Diego is an experienced soccer player, and Gig has a natural ability for the sport he never realized. But Jackson and Isaac are split into another group of players—a group with younger, smaller kids. For the first time, both boys aren't the stars of their team. In fact, they can't seem to get a handle on soccer. At the same time, Jackson is having a hard time getting a handle on his mom's deepening relationship with her boyfriend, and her suggestion that they move in with him. And Gig is worried about his father's deployment to Afghanistan.

#### **Discussion Questions**

1. Every time Jackson sees them, he thinks Heather and Haley are quiet and overdressed. However, he's surprised to hear about Heather's wilderness canoe camp. How has he misjudged her? How has he misjudged other characters? How willing is he to admit when he's wrong about someone?
2. Different father figures, including Jackson's dad, G-Man, Gig's dad, and Ted, interact with Jackson in both *Eyes on the Goal* and *Top of the Order*. How does Jackson feel about all of them? Which ones does he look up to and which ones does he doubt? Do you think he is fair to all of them? What lessons, if any, do they teach Jackson?
3. How do Jackson, Gig, Isaac, and Diego deal with having to split up to play on different teams? What conflicts does their separation create? Are any of them jealous of each other? Do they learn anything from having to spend time teaming up with new people and seeing each other as opponents?

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**4.** *“In baseball, basketball, and football, I’ve always been pretty good. I never paid much attention to the kids who weren’t. Now I’m one of them.”* (p. 63)

How does this change the way Jackson sees himself or others? Have you ever felt like Jackson feels when he plays at soccer camp? How does feeling like a pro or feeling unskilled at an activity change how you interact with others who may be better or worse than you are?

**5.** *“When it comes to soccer, I don’t know what I want.”* (p. 78)

How does Jackson learn how to keep his eyes on the goal and focus on what he wants in soccer? In life? Do you ever feel like you don’t know what you want? How do you find goals to focus on?

**6.** *“They think only ‘real’ soccer players should score. So now they freeze me out.”* (p. 104) Why don’t Gig’s teammates consider him a ‘real’ soccer player? What consequences will excluding Gig have on his team? What should Gig do to deal with the situation?

**7.** How does Jackson apply his baseball skills to soccer? Why won’t the coach let him play goalie at first? How does he prove himself?

**8.** When Jackson’s team ties the score during their last game, why do they see it as a victory? Have you ever had the experience of a tie feeling like a victory? A loss?

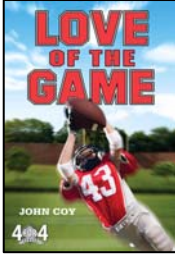
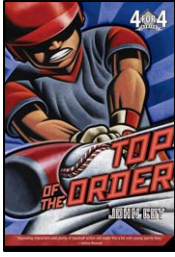
**9.** How have the Cobras changed or improved throughout the week? What do you think was the main reason?

**10.** How has Jackson changed during camp? What has he learned? Have you ever been to a camp like the one the boys go to? Would you like to be at a camp like this with friends?

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### Overarching Questions and Activities

**4 for 4 Series  
by John Coy**



*Top of the Order:* 978-0-312-37329-0

*Eyes on the Goal:* 978-0-312-37330-6

*Love of the Game:* 978-0-312-37331-3

*Take Your Best Shot:* 978-0-312-37332-0

Grade Range: 3-7 grade; Age Range: 8-12 years

### Discussion Questions

1. *"I don't notice day-to-day changes, but when I think back to fifth grade, a lot has changed."*(*Take Your Best Shot* p. 125)

The 4 for 4 series covers seven months, from May of the boys' fifth grade year to November of their sixth grade year. How have Jackson, Gig, Isaac, and Diego changed between *Top of the Order* and *Take Your Best Shot*? What specific events in each book changed them or taught them something? Who do you think has changed the most?

Think back to seven months ago. How have you changed since then? What have you learned? What events in your life have caused you to change? Have you changed as much as Jackson, Gig, Isaac, and Diego have?

2. *"You have to know what you want. Otherwise, he'll decide for you. . . He'll push, but if you stand your ground with him, he'll respect your decision."* (*Top of the Order* p. 56)

The four boys sometimes clash with authority figures like parents, teachers, and coaches, but at times they have to stand up for what they believe in or what is right for them. When do they admit that they were wrong, and admit that adults were right? When do they stand up for themselves because they know what they want? How do their decisions change them and help them grow?

3. How do Jackson's first impressions of people change after he gets to know them? Does he ever misjudge people, and think a person is different from how he or she actually is? Why? How does he discover what they're really like?

For example, why is Jackson surprised when Ted comes through for him? (*Love of the Game* p. 151-152)

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4. “Right now my best chance to start is switching to defense. I don’t care what Gig and Isaac think. I’ve got to do what’s best for me.” (*Love of the Game* p. 77)

Throughout the books, Jackson, Gig, Isaac, and Diego talk a lot about how important it is for them to stick together. However, they sometimes realize that they need to make decisions on their own, even if their friends disagree. How do they each learn to make decisions independently? What do they each decide to do that the others don’t approve of?

5. Do each of the boys have a different sport that they’re best at and enjoy the most? Which sport is it for each character? Do you have a favorite sport? Is it the same as the one you are best at?

6. What are their different strengths and weaknesses of each of the characters, in sports and in life? Do you find that some of the things that you are strong with in sports are also things that you’re strong with in other areas of your life? Do some of the things you struggle with show up in other areas. Or is there a difference between success in sports and success in other areas of life?

7. What new challenges do you think will face the boys during the rest of the school year? The rest of middle school? How do you think baseball will go for them in sixth grade? Will Sydney come out for the team?

8. Which of the characters do you relate to the most? Why? Do the other characters remind you of people you know? Do you think you and some of the people you know would make good characters in a book?

### Author Bio

John Coy is the author of many acclaimed books for young readers and teens, including *Night Driving*, *Crackback*, *Eyes on the Goal*, *Love of the Game*, and *Take Your Best Shot*. He lives in Minneapolis, where he writes full-time and teaches writing workshops for children and adults. He travels all over the world promoting his books and literacy. Visit John at [www.johncoy.com](http://www.johncoy.com).



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