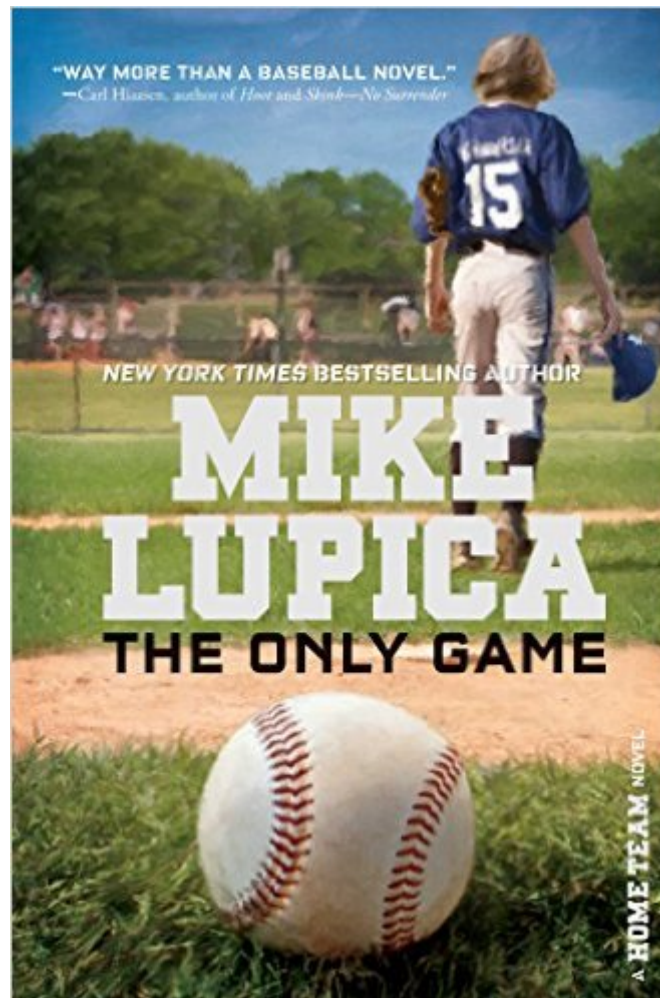


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# The Only Game (Home Team)



## Synopsis

Can a young baseball star maintain his love of the game after the loss of his brother? Find out in this start to the Home Team series about a small town with high hopes, from New York Times bestselling author and sportswriting legend Mike Lupica. Jack Callahan is the star of his baseball team and seventh grade is supposed to be his year. Undefeated season. Records shattered. Little League World Series. The works. That is, until he up and quits. Jack's best friend Gus can't understand how Jack could leave a game that means more to them than anything else. But Jack is done. It's a year of change. Jack's brother has passed away, and though his family and friends and the whole town of Walton thinks baseball is just the thing he needs to move on, Jack feels it's anything but. In comes Cassie Bennett, star softball player, and the only person who seems to think Jack shouldn't play if he doesn't want to. As Jack and Cassie's friendship deepens, their circle expands to include Teddy, a guy who's been bullied because of his weight. Time spent with these new friends unlocks something within Jack, and with their help and the support of his family and his old friends, Jack discovers sometimes it's more than just the love of the game that keeps us moving forward—and he might just be able to find his way back to The Only Game, after all.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 790 (What's this?)

Series: Home Team

Paperback: 336 pages

Publisher: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers; Reprint edition (January 12, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1481409964

ISBN-13: 978-1481409964

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 1 x 7.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (43 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #31,288 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) [#49 in Books > Children's Books > Sports & Outdoors > Baseball](#) [#58 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Death & Dying](#) [#911 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Friendship](#)

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

## Customer Reviews

Most kids have a dream. Some want to be a firefighter or police officer when they grow up. Others want to be a famous singer or dancer. Some kids decide to become a doctor or teacher. Still others love sports. Twelve-year-old Jack Callahan lives for baseball. Cassie Bennett is a star softball player. They have big plans for their seventh-grade year. Life is not turning out the way they had expected, however. In *THE ONLY GAME*, a middle grade novel by New York Times Bestselling Author Mike Lupica, Jack has a secret. He should be leading his baseball team, the Rays, to the Little League World Series this year. Instead, he's not even playing ball. What has happened in Jack's life that's horrible enough to make him give up his dream? No one understands, except Cassie. For me, the characters in a book make the story, and in *THE ONLY GAME* the author got the characters just right. When Jack faces a situation that's tough even for an adult to accept, he deals with it the way he believes is right. He makes mistakes. Or does he? In Cassie, he finds a friend who doesn't pity him, but gives him encouragement, in her own way. As much as I like Jack, Cassie is my favorite character. She has an attitude, but she supports Jack one hundred percent. There's also Teddy that the other boys make fun of. When Jack sets out to help him face his fears, Jack learns to face his own, as well. *THE ONLY GAME* is a story of hope and giving your dreams your all. It's a story of friendship and being at the right place at the right time. Mike Lupica has written about children that could be your neighbors or even your own children. About their dreams and the obstacles they face and how they overcome them. I recommend this novel for middle school classrooms and libraries as well as your own private library. Even adults will enjoy this novel. This is the first book in the author's new *HOME TEAM* series. I'm looking forward to the second novel for young readers in my family. The publisher provided me with an ARC of this novel for my honest review.###

Summary: 12-year-old Jack is a baseball superstar, part of a team that is poised to go all the way to the Little League World Series this year. So it comes as a shock, to say the least, when he tells his coach after the first practice that he is quitting. His parents wonder if his decision is related to his older brother's fatal accident the previous fall, but Jack assures them it isn't. His old friends from the team are upset, so Jack starts hanging out with some new friends: Cassie, the star of her softball team, and Teddy, a boy who gets picked on for being overweight and unathletic. With

their help, he slowly finds his way back to baseball and healing from the loss of his brother. Pros: Like all Mike Lupica books, this story has a winning combination of likeable characters, an emotionally charged plot, and plenty of sports action. Cons: Like in all Mike Lupica books, the junior high characters talk like they are about 27 years old.

There are few perfect games, and fewer perfect people, but Mike Lupica's writing is the perfect place for them all to come together. His blend of human strengths and weaknesses, wrapped up in a tale from the baseball diamond, provides reality with a big dose of excitement. The three main characters in *The Only Game* all have hopes and dreams, but they need each other to ever have a chance at them. As they work to take on whatever life can throw their way, they learn that wins and losses are all a part of the real world. And that friendship and teamwork are the true victories. An excellent read for the middle school mind - no matter how old!

My two boys ages 8 and 11 both really liked this book. Took the older one (a sometimes reluctant reader) a couple chapters to get hooked, but once he did he couldn't put it down. Both boys have quite a bit of baseball knowledge and experience so I think that helped them get into this book. Note- I think this book is most appropriate for 4th -7th grade. My 8 year old is an advanced reader.

Great book for all ages! A sweet story for boys and girls who play baseball or softball. You know the storyline, so well done and touching. Lupica surprised me since I only know him from NY Daily News. Excellent writer. I would put this book in every kid's hand. Enjoy!

First I wondered about a young fellow reading about a lost brother. But then I found out it was a good lesson for a child to realize how to deal with his lost brother. I'm ordering this book to give to my 12 year old grandson that loves baseball.

My 10 year old son and I read this together. He's not a fan of reading, but he loves baseball so he really enjoyed this book! We've already pre-ordered the next one in the series, and are excited that the same characters seem to be in the next story as well. Looking forward to reading it together!

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