

My First Baseball Game

I remember everything about my first Cubs game, although it was a few years ago. My uncle came to take me to it on a Saturday in spring, a bright sunny day. He drove all the way from Indiana to Chicago to pick up me and my brother. We didn't take his car to the game. We traveled by train to the ballpark because he said traffic would be impossible.

He was right about how crowded it would be. When we got there it was so crowded people were walking in the street, and the cars were moving so slowly. I was only 10, not very tall at all, so it was hard to see over all the people who crowded the street. Finally, we got to the entrance, and then we went to our seats after we handed in our tickets.

We had tickets that were for seats far back, and it seemed like I climbed forever to get to them. When we got there I realized that even though we were at the upper level, I could see everything clearly, the entire field. It was great—seeing it this way was much better than watching it on TV.

Then the game started, and everyone cheered when the Cubs came out on the field. People around us were clapping and shouting. The man next to me said, "This is going to be the year. This year they're going all the way."

My uncle said to him, "Let's hope this is the one." But then he whispered to me, "I think he is too hopeful. We'll have to wait and see. I always start the year thinking they'll win the World Series, but then I remember the last year. They started the season winning and then they had a long losing streak."

"Hey, Hey, Hey!" The Cub batter hit a ball that soared out of the ball park.

Just then I heard "Hot dogs!" "Peanuts!" I looked and saw a vendor with a big tray hanging from his shoulders full of hot dogs in plastic wrap and bags of peanuts.

"Two hot dogs," my uncle shouted, and he gave the man next to us \$4 to pass along down to the man with the hot dogs. He sent back two steaming hot dogs.

"This is great," I said to my uncle as I started to eat my hot dog.

"Not so great," he said. "We just struck out. This inning is not a winning one. Baseball is a game of predicting. The batter has to predict what the angle of the ball will be and determine if it will be a good one to swing at or if he should just let it go past because it's not a good one to hit. The batter has seconds to make that decision. The batter has to keep his eye on the ball and guess. So baseball is a game of skills and choices"

It continued that way for the rest of the game, with us enjoying the food, and my uncle saying "maybe next time" each time a player swung at a bad pitch. We bought peanuts, we even got another hot dog. I had never eaten such delicious hot dogs. We'd hope every time a batter started out, and then were disappointed as one by one they

struck out and retired back to the bench. Still, it was a really pleasant day with great food, fine weather, and special time with my uncle. The final score was 7 to 0, so it was nine innings of hoping and then losing. We were disappointed about that score, but otherwise it was a perfect day.

“Tomorrow, they’ll win, I’m certain!” I heard one person say as we left to go home. “Definitely,” another replied. “The pitcher tomorrow is terrific, they’ll get it done tomorrow.”

When we were returning, I asked my uncle, “Why were they so optimistic when the score was 0 today—how can they be sure that tomorrow the team will win?”

“That’s what it means to be a Cubs fan: we believe in tomorrow. When they win, it’s the best. If they lose we expect it will get better, even though experience may tell us it won’t. Every year, we hope; every game we hope, and we don’t abandon hope, that’s loyalty. It’s about supporting your team no matter what. Cubs fans are loyal. I’ve been coming to the Cubs games for 25 years, and I keep coming, win or lose. It’s about believing in the team, about being loyal to your team.”

“I see what you mean. Thanks for taking us, and thanks for being loyal to us.”

Guess what happened the next year. The Cubs won more games, including a game my uncle took us to. They were getting better at making those choices. We went to a few games that year. And the next year we were there, too, cheering, even if they lost.

Then, it was amazing what happened this year. The Cubs won the whole thing—they won the World Series. Their fans were so excited—I’ve never seen adults scream and jump up that way. I called my uncle the next day. His voice was like a whisper, and I could hardly hear what he said.

“Are you sick?” I asked.

“No way,” he answered. I was shouting so much last night I lost my voice. Win or lose, I always support that team, but it feels so good when they win. They may never win another World Series, but I’ll always remember this year. And I’ll always be loyal—they’re my team, win or lose.”

This story is an example of realistic fiction. Realistic fiction tells a story that could have happened. Some authors include facts about events that really happened in the story. This story does include an actual event. The Cubs did win the World Series in 2016. Their fans had been hoping for a very long time for that win. But that is an event, it is not the theme of the story.

Think More (Analyze a story to identify the theme—CCSSR2)

Which of these is the theme of the story?

never give up be loyal no matter what happens baseball is a game of skills and choices

Explain why you think that is the theme.