

I remember everything about my first Cubs game, although it was two years ago. My uncle came to take me to it on a Saturday in spring, a bright sunny day. He drove a great distance from Indiana to Chicago, but we did not travel in his car to Wrigley Field. We traveled by train to the ballpark because he said traffic would be challenging.

He was right about how crowded it would be; in fact when we arrived it was so crowded that it was difficult to walk from the train. I was only 10, not very tall at all, so it was hard to see over all the people who crowded the sidewalk. 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 about 200 steps 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, this expansive view was much better than watching it on TV.

Then the game started, and everyone cheered when the Cubs took the field. This really was going to be a great experience, so much better than watching it on TV. The man next to me said, "This is going to be the year. They are playing really well."

My uncle said to him, "Let's hope this is the one." But then he whispered to me, "I think he is overconfident, we'll have to wait and see. I am optimistic but remember 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 sizzled all the way to the wall.

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 with condiments.

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

"Not so great, Jerome," he said. "We just struck out, this inning is not a winning one."

While I had been watching the hot dogs, the batter had misjudged the pitches and swung at them. "Baseball is a game of predicting," my uncle said. "The batter has to predict what the trajectory of the ball will be and determine if it will be a good one to swing at or if it's going to be a mistake. There's no certainty, it's a guess; the batter has seconds to make that decision."

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 misjudged the pitch and returned to the bench. We purchased peanuts, we even got another hot dog, and I believe 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 remarkably pleasant day with great food, fine weather, and special time with my uncle. The final score was 7 to 0, so in conclusion it was nine innings of hoping and then losing, so we were disappointed about the result but delighted in the food and fascinated with the way each batter attempted to get a hit.

"Tomorrow, they'll win, I'm certain!" one person exclaimed. "Definitely," another replied. "The pitcher tomorrow is outstanding, they'll reverse course then."

When we were returning, I asked my uncle, "Why was everyone so optimistic when the score was 0 today—how can they predict a winning performance tomorrow?"

"That's what it means to be a Cubs fan: we believe in tomorrow. When they win, it's the best, and 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 see what you mean. Thanks for taking me, and thanks for being loyal to me."

## Identify and Analyze Tone, Mood, Voice, Plot, and Setting - Fiction

Questions developed by Center for Urban Education for use by Chicago Public Schools 2008-2009.

*Choose the best answer for each question.*

1. Whose voice do you hear in most of the story?

- a. Jerome
- b. Jerome's uncle
- c. the fan
- d. the writer

2. What is the mood of the story?

- a. worried
- b. sad
- c. hopeful
- d. angry

3. Why does the story end the way it does?

- a. to show you the theme
- b. to thank Jerome's uncle
- c. to end happily
- d. to tell people to hope

4. Why does most of the story take place at the ballpark?

- a. to make it interesting
- b. because the Cubs lost
- c. to show what happens
- d. Jerome's uncle likes baseball

5. *Write your own answer to this question. How does the writer show how Jerome feels?*

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### **TEACHER NOTES: Develop Students' Skills: Exercise Thinking**

These questions have not been validated, so decisions about student's achievement should not be made based on their responses. They are intended to exercise skills. Recommended activities include: students work in pairs to choose the best response; give students the questions without the responses so they generate their own answers; students make up additional questions; students make up questions like these for another passage.

**Answers:** *You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.*

Item	1	2	3	4
Answer	a	c	a	a

Question 5 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.  
Jerome says what he feels.