

## 2018 Baseball Book Review Contest Winners' Book Reviews

*Children and teens between the ages of 6 and 18 wrote a book review on any book about baseball or a baseball player. Entries were judged by BPL staff on the quality of the writing and demonstrated knowledge of and interest in baseball. One child and one teen were chosen to represent Brooklyn Public Library at the Summer Reading Yankee game on Thursday, August 16, 2018. Before the game, winners went on the field, met a Yankee and were congratulated on the video board. These are the first place winning reviews for each age group:*

**Winner, Ages 6-12: Frankie K, age 8**

**Sports Illustrated Kids' Big Book of Who: Baseball: The 101 Stars Every Fan Needs to Know** By Mark Bechtel

My name is Frankie K and this is a review of a book called Big Book of Who: Baseball. It features the really, really good players and what they did in baseball. The book does a really good job of describing special players.

I love this book because it tells the reader all about the superstars in baseball's history. Like Hank Aaron, who broke Babe Ruth's record for career home runs with 755. Babe Ruth had 714. Also, Cal Ripken, Jr. broke Lou Gehrig's record for consecutive games played. Cal Ripken, Jr. had 2,632 and Lou Gehrig had 2,130. The book also tells of Mariano Rivera's record for regular season career saves: 652. In the postseason, Mariano was great. He pitched 141 innings, gave up only 2 home runs, and his ERA was 0.70 during his entire career during the postseason.

This book is put together with photographs, stats, fast facts and a box that tells you what great things they did for the sport of baseball. I really like this combination because it gives you a good idea of each player and gives background information on the person. This book is broken up into five sections: Champions, Super Sluggers, Prime Pitchers, Cool Characters and Record Breakers.

This is my review of the Big Book of Who: Baseball.

**Winner, Ages 13+: Lucas M, age 13 ½**

**Baseball Genius** by Tim Green and Derek Jeter

Baseball has been my favorite sport for a very long time, and I've been playing in little league since I was five, with my dad coaching me. My favorite position is shortstop, but I like playing at every position. My favorite team is the Yankees due to their rich history, and the fact that my parents are both Yankee fans. My favorite player of all time is Derek Jeter because of his skill, work ethic, and ability to be a role model both on and off the field. He worked twice as hard as other players to become one of the best, and his grit, determination, and willingness to work hard make him a great player, and a great role model. Some of my other all-time favorites are Babe Ruth, Joe DiMaggio, Mickey Mantle, Don Mattingly, Yogi Berra, Lou Gehrig, and Aaron Judge. It has

## 2018 Baseball Book Review Contest Winners' Book Reviews

always been my dream to play for the Yankees one day, and my love for them was a reason I wanted to read *Baseball Genius*, co-authored by Derek Jeter, and about the Yankees.

In *Baseball Genius* by Tim Green and Derek Jeter, Jalen DeLuca, the main character, is an only child whose mother left, leaving him and his father, Fabio, to live off the little money his father makes working at his diner. This year was especially important for Jalen to play baseball because of the transition to a new age group. When he found out that his father wouldn't be able to afford the \$990 travel team fee, Jalen started contacting the foundation of Yankees' star second baseman James Yager (JY) for financial help. After several attempts went unanswered, Jalen decided to take drastic measures to get on the team. With the help of his best friends, Cat and Daniel, he decided to steal batting practice balls from JY and sell them for \$100 each. He made sure only to take ten, just enough to pay the travel team fee. He justified his actions by telling himself that James Yager's foundation was supposed to be doing the same thing: selling the batting practice baseballs and using the money to help pay for children's baseball fees. While this doesn't excuse Jalen's actions, I do feel that JY should have his foundation managed better, ensuring that children like Jalen receive the financial help they need to play baseball. It was very disheartening to Jalen not to have at least received a response to his requests, even if the answer had been no. However, Jalen should've been more responsible in his actions.

Instead, JY caught Jalen stealing and Jalen barely managed to escape a trip to the police station by Cat rescuing him. Unfortunately, he was only able to sell the balls for \$50 each. After lying to his dad about how he made \$500, he still finds himself \$490 short. His father must make a sacrifice to get Jalen on the team. The coach of the team Jalen is trying to play for, the Rockton Rockets, comes to the diner for sandwiches all the time. Jalen's father offers to make free sandwiches for the coach, for team events. The guilt that Jalen feels after this is understandable. He stole from someone, lied to his dad, and caused his dad to give up some of his income just so he could play baseball. I think that sometimes Jalen underappreciates his father and what he does for him. Fabio is a very selfless and honest person. For example, when a waitress at his diner told a customer that the fish was fresh, he came out to notify the customer that the fish, while tasty, is not fresh. Instead of buying the \$24 fish, the customer bought an \$8 hamburger because of Fabio's honesty. Sometimes, I think, Jalen takes advantage of his father's kindness, which is extremely selfish.

Later, when Jalen attends Cat's birthday party, the special surprise her mom planned was an appearance by James Yager. JY instantly recognizes Jalen and drives him home so he can tell Jalen's father about the stolen baseballs. However, the ride is interrupted by the Yankees' GM, Jeffery Foxx, telling JY that he'll be off the team unless he bats 1.000 for all three games of the upcoming series. Jalen reveals to JY that he is a baseball genius. He can predict what the next pitch is going to be. He offers to help JY by telling him the next pitch to help him bat 1.000, if JY won't tell anyone about the stolen baseballs. Later, JY also agrees to tweeting about Fabio's diner, to save the business by getting more customers. Lastly, he said his foundation would pay the last \$490 of Jalen's travel team fees.

## 2018 Baseball Book Review Contest Winners' Book Reviews

I didn't like this agreement from the start, for a few reasons. First, if it succeeds, Jalen would get away home free for stealing. Second, Jalen would actually benefit from this arrangement. I think this is both dishonest and unfair that Jalen would be receiving no consequences, while still receiving everything he wanted and more. Also, some people would consider Jalen helping JY cheating. I don't think it's ethical for JY to use Jalen to get his career back on track, because even if it doesn't break any official rules, it's dishonest. If JY, really wants to resurrect his career he needs to be able to perform well on his own.

The plan ended up working, but at a price. The stress took its toll on Jalen and he got in trouble when the GM discovered Jalen was sending JY signs. However, he still ended up getting away with stealing the baseballs. This sent the wrong message. We shouldn't be teaching children that talent in a sport can help them get away with unethical behavior. In my opinion, professional athletes get away with too much simply because they're famous and talented.

While I liked the book overall, because of the great storyline, intriguing plot, and a realistic combination of baseball and real life, I'm troubled by the fact that Jalen got away with what he did. Therefore, I give the book four out of five stars. I think his father should have learned what he did and there should have been consequences for those actions. Jalen could still have gotten the fees for his team, while learning a lesson. He shouldn't have gotten away with stealing just because he could predict pitches. We must teach children that lying and stealing are wrong, and that they come with consequences. To achieve this, we need our baseball players to be better role models for our children, like Derek Jeter was a role model for me.

[Click here for a list of all of the books](#) that Brooklyn kids and teens submitted book reviews for as entries in Brooklyn Public Library's 2018 Baseball Book Review Contest.