

A Whole New Ballgame

By Phil Bildner
Illustrated By Tim Probert

Annotation

Rip and Red are best friends whose fifth-grade year is nothing like what they expected. They have a crazy new tattooed teacher named Mr. Acevedo, who doesn't believe in tests or homework and who likes off-the-wall projects, the more "off" the better. They also find themselves with a new basketball coach: Mr. Acevedo! Easy-going Rip is knocked completely out of his comfort zone. And for Red, who really needs things to be exactly a certain way, the changes are even more of a struggle. But together these two make a great duo who know how to help each other—and find ways to make a difference—in the classroom and on the court.

Book Talk

Do you love basketball, have a best friend, or hate tests and homework? You will find something in this book you love! There's a crazy teacher with long hair, tattoos, and piercings who says tests are not important, despite what the school and even some parents say! Rip and his best friend Red have to adjust to such a crazy teacher who also becomes their basketball coach. The best friends help each other out in dealing with all the changes.

Book Trailers

- Posted by Phil Bildner: <https://youtu.be/q3voygGsPqs>

Author on the Internet

- Website: <https://philbildner.com/>
- Twitter: [@PhilBildner](https://twitter.com/PhilBildner)
- Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Phil-Bildner-Author-Teacher-School-Visits/51391027331>
- Tumblr: <http://philbildner.tumblr.com/>
- Instagram: <http://instagram.com/philbildner>

Items to use in a library display

- Basketball items
- The "No Worksheet Zone" sign (p. 14)
- The directions for the handshake (p. 31)
- A bathtub to read in or another fun reading spot
- A 'That's Nasty!' list or interactive display where students can add to the list (p. 85)

Book Club Discussion Questions/Topics

- Questions retrieved from Macmillan
<http://images.macmillan.com/folio-assets/teachers-guides/9780374301309TG.pdf>
1. List everything you learn about Rip and Red in the first ten pages. What do you think are the most important aspects of both of these students?

2. Do you think Mr. Acevedo will be a great teacher or not? Explain why you would or would not want him to be your teacher.
3. Why does Rip feel like he's been "hit by a bus?" What are these phrases called? Who has trouble understanding them? Do you ever find some of them confusing?
4. What does the scene in the bathroom show the reader about Rip and Red's friendship?
5. What's the next surprise in the gym? What clues help the reader learn that Red is nervous?
6. How does Rip distract Red from all the changes? What does Coach Acevedo promise the boys?
7. Why do you think Mr. Acevedo has kids stand on the tables to improve their writing? What's the most important thing Rip notices?
8. Which word does Mr. Acevedo not permit in room 208? Why? How does he plan to get around it?
9. How does Rip and Avery's getting-to-know-you meeting go? Do you agree with her views on things or not?
10. What is Fix It Friday? What do they fix and why?
11. What is Red's mom's advice about the project and working with Avery? Explain what she meant. Have you ever had to work with someone you found difficult? How do you get around it?
12. What does Avery learn from Rip about rolling over things in her wheelchair? Have you ever thought about this before?
13. Even though they lost the first game, why is Coach excited by the quarter breakdowns? Also, why is Coach impressed with Red? What does he embody?
14. Why might back-to-school be rough for Mr. Acevedo? Would your parents agree more with Ms. Irving or the other parents?
15. Explain Mr. Acevedo's position on test preparation. What are his arguments? Do you agree?
16. Why does Red lose it after changes are announced? How is Red trying to calm himself after becoming upset? List his worries and then rank them from most to least important.
17. How do Mr. Acevedo and the kids feel about Millwood's coach? Why? Would you want to play for Millwood?
18. What three important things come out of the conference with Mr. Acevedo for Rip?
19. What is the writing topic for Happy Writing Day? What do you like to write about? What do you do when you're stuck?
20. What does Rip figure out about Avery's name? How does she feel about it and why?
21. Analyze the aspects of Rip and Avery's presentation that made it so awesome. List ideas for giving a great presentation based on their success.
22. Explain how Red ends up in the game? Why is it ironic? What is the outcome?

First Line of the Book:

- "I bolted toward the chain-link fence."

Non-Fiction Companion Title(s)

- *Autism* by Ann O. Squire

What to Read Next

- *Rookie of the Year* by Phil Bildner
- *Tournament of Champions* by Phil Bildner
- *Geeks, Girls, and Secret Identities* by Mike Jung (mentioned in *A Whole New Ballgame* on page 107)
- *Out of my Mind* by Sharon Draper (mentioned in *A Whole New Ballgame* on page 107)
- *Lawn Boy* by Gary Poulson (mentioned in *A Whole New Ballgame*)
- *I Survived* series (mentioned in *A Whole New Ballgame*)

Other Books by this Author:

- *Sluggers* series (6 chapter books in series)
- *Martina & Chrissie: The Greatest Rivalry in the History of Sports*
- *Turkey Bowl*
- *The Shot Heard 'round the World*
- *Shoeless Joe & Black Betsy*
- *Derek Jeter Presents Night at the Stadium*
- *Marvelous Cornelius: Hurricane Katrina and the Spirit of New Orleans*
- *The Soccer Fence*
- *The Hallelujah Flight*
- *The Greatest Game Ever Played*
- *Twenty-One Elephants*
- *The Unforgettable Season: The Story of Joe DiMaggio, Ted Williams, and the Record-Setting Summer of '41*

Additional Resources

- Music: The Beatles
- Art/craft activity: Create a secret handshake with a friend, make your own “Do Not Disturb- I’m Reading” signs
- Lesson ideas:
 - On page 190, Mr. Acevedo prompts the students “Today, we’re going to write about what makes us different, what makes us unique. Today is Writing Day!” Have a writing day and let kids answer this prompt.
- Interview with Phil Bildner: <http://readwriteandreflect.blogspot.com/2015/08/interview-with-phil-bildner-author-of.html>
- Teacher’s Guide (from the publisher): <http://images.macmillan.com/folio-assets/teachers-guides/9780374301309TG.pdf>