

ZACHARY HYMAN

— Illustrated by —  
ZACHARY PULLEN

The

# Bambino

and Me

Includes a CD narrated by  
JASON ALEXANDER



## TEACHER'S GUIDE

ALIGNS WITH COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

TUNDRA BOOKS

# DEAR EDUCATOR

*The Bambino and Me* perfectly conjures 1920s New York and is ideal for fans of baseball, Babe Ruth, or any young mind with a dream. George, a young baseball enthusiast and ardent fan of “the Great Bambino,” meets his hero and learns a valuable life lesson along the way. This fun and relatable story will particularly appeal to many reluctant young male readers.

Teachers can use the text in a number of ways, including

- Exploring conceptual and thematic connections such as perseverance, heroism, fame, inspiration, perspective, loyalty, sport, baseball
- Stand-alone enrichment in whole class, small group, or independent studies
- Thought-provoking and engaging read-aloud experience

This activity guide includes discussion questions, writing activities, and prompts to elicit a meaningful understanding of the text. Where applicable, activities have been aligned with Common Core State Standards and all activities can be adapted to suit your student’s needs.

## ABOUT THE BOOK

It's 1927, and ten-year-old George Henry Alexander is full of the joys of summer: long days, warm nights and baseball, especially the greatest player in the game: Babe Ruth—the Bambino.

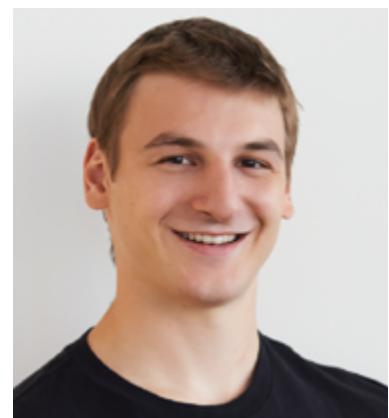
When George's parents surprise him with tickets to a game between his beloved Yankees and their rivals, the Boston Red Sox, he couldn't be more excited. A real baseball game, and his first chance to see his hero in the flesh!

But when the big day arrives, things don't quite go according to plan. On what is supposed to be the best afternoon of his young life, George finds himself doing the one thing no true Yankees fan should ever do. He's so low, he'd rather kiss a girl! How can he face his hero when he feels like the biggest traitor in the world?

In this magical story that perfectly conjures 1920s New York and the nostalgia of childhood summers, an unexpected encounter shows George the value of never giving up.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Zachary Hyman** is an author and amateur athlete, currently studying at the University of Michigan on a hockey scholarship. He's published two books for children, *The Bambino and Me* and *Hockey Hero* (also illustrated by Zachary Pullen). Both books reflect Zach's dual passion for sports and writing, and his conviction that children who believe in themselves can accomplish anything they set their minds to.



© Sam Sciarrino

# ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**Zachary Pullen's** stylized, fun-filled illustrations have won several awards and earned many starred reviews. He is the illustrator of a number of books for children, including *Francis and Eddie: The True Story of America's Underdogs*, *Lipman Pike: America's First Home Run King* and *Friday My Radio Flyer Flew*. His work has also been featured in *The New York Times Book Review*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *Sports Illustrated*. Zak lives in Wyoming with his wife and son.



© Adam Amick



# ABOUT THE NARRATOR

**Jason Alexander** is best known for his role as George Costanza on the TV series *Seinfeld*, but his acting credits span from the Broadway stage to film to music videos. His list of awards is long and varied, and includes a Tony Award and Magician of the Year at the esteemed Magic Castle in Los Angeles. He's also an award-winning author, librettist and director; a noted cabaret artist and comedian; and a poker enthusiast. A true renaissance man, he lives in Los Angeles with his wife and sons.

## PRE-READING DISCUSSION / ACTIVITIES

1. As a class, discuss what makes somebody a hero. Together, brainstorm a list of heroes. What qualities or characteristics do these people have in common? In small groups, ask students to compose their own definition of what it means to be a hero, and share these definitions with the class.
2. Draw a picture or write a short paragraph describing a personal hero. What makes this person heroic in your eyes?
3. Reveal the title of the story, *The Bambino and Me*, to the class. What does the word "bambino" mean? What language is it? Does anybody know a famous sports hero with the nickname "the Great Bambino?"
4. Make a list of sports heroes, either present day or from the past. What makes them heroic? Is there a hero on the list that all students are familiar with? If so, which one? Why do you think everybody knows this person?

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES

### 1. Real and Imagined

- Although a work of fiction, there are several non-fiction inclusions in the story. Using a t-chart, make a list of at least ten people, places, and events, noting if they were real or imagined. What do you think the benefit might be of combining real and imagined elements in a story?
- Review the illustrations in the story. How does the illustrator show that the story does not take place in present day, but rather in the late 1920s? Find five examples to support your answer.
- Retell the main events of the story in pictures, in sequence.

(RI.2.1)

# LEARNING ACTIVITIES (continued)

## 2. Fame and Heroism

"I always dreamt of meeting him, but I knew that would be tougher than finding a four-leaf clover. The Babe was more famous than Tarzan. He was every kid's hero!"

- What does it mean to be famous? What was Babe Ruth famous for? Do you think it is true that he was "every kid's hero"? Why or why not? Think back to the pre-reading discussion.
- As a class, debate the following question: If you had to choose, is it better to be heroic or famous?
- What do you think some of the positive and negative aspects of being famous are? Use a t-chart to record your thinking. How might being famous have both helped and hindered Babe Ruth's success?
- Write a real or imagined story about meeting one of your own personal heroes.

(W.2.3)

## 3. Nicknames

- What is a nickname? Why do you think people are given nicknames? Do you have a nickname?
- Babe Ruth had several nicknames. These included the Great Bambino, the Colossus of Clout, the Behemoth of Bust, the Sultan of Swat, and the King of Crash. Do you think these nicknames played a role in Babe Ruth becoming famous or do you think he was given these nicknames because he was famous already?
- Think about some of your special talents, abilities, and/or interests. What would be a good nickname for you? Design a poster about yourself introducing you and your new nickname. Remember to include the talents/abilities/interests/characteristics that landed you this nickname in the design.
- Visit <http://www.baberuthcentral.com/kids-clubhouse/babe-nickname/> to learn how Babe Ruth came to have the nickname, "the Babe." In your own words, retell how this nickname came about.

(W.3.7)

## 4. Range of Emotions

- On George's birthday, he experienced a range of emotions. Why was he so excited and then immediately upset? Look up the definition of "loyalty" in the dictionary. What part did George's loyalty to the New York Yankees play in the story?
- Make a list of the different emotions he felt on his birthday. Read the birthday scene aloud and ask students to silently act out what George was doing and feeling. Discuss how the use of facial expressions and body position can convey certain emotions. Ask students to freeze in position, as George, at the following points in the story:
  - eating his porridge
  - after his brother added more porridge to his bowl
  - when he discovered the mystery envelope under his bowl
  - choking down the porridge
  - after he opened the envelope to discover the tickets
  - opening the gift from Uncle Alvin
  - realizing the gift is a Boston Red Sox jersey and cap
  - refusing to wear the jersey
  - after having his mouth washed out with soap

(RL.2.3, RL.3.3)

# LEARNING ACTIVITIES (continued)

## 5. Good Advice

- Babe Ruth whispers a meaningful piece of advice to young George near the end of the story:

"Listen, kid. Don't let the fear of striking out hold you back. I swing big, with everything I've got. I hit big or I miss big. Every strike brings me closer to the next home run." He straightened back up and gave me a wink. "If you try hard enough, you're bound to come out on top!"

What does the Bambino mean when he says, "I hit big or I miss big?"

How did every strike bring him closer to his next home run? How did Babe Ruth apply this advice to his own career as a baseball player?

- "It's hard to beat a person that never gives up." Write a journal-style reflection on this Babe-ism. What does it mean to persevere? What connection does the word persevere have to this saying?
- Think about something you have always dreamed about being able to do. In a short paragraph, describe your dream, what you think you need to do to achieve your dream, and how the Babe's advice may apply to you being able to achieve this dream.

(W.2.1, W.2.3)

## 6. Language

- From whose perspective is the story told? How do you know? Do you think the story would have been different for you, the reader, if it had been written in third person narration? If so, how? If not, why?
- Select a different character in the story (Babe Ruth, George's mother or father, Freddy) and write the same story from their perspective. Include all of the major events in the story, but remember the chosen character may not have actually been physically present for all of the events. How will they know what has happened?
- Language can be used literally or figuratively. Literal language is when the words mean exactly what they say. Figurative language uses literary devices such as metaphors, similes, and imagery to describe events or feelings. Can you find examples of a metaphor, a simile, and imagery within the story? Rewrite each of the examples using literal language. Which is more interesting to read? Why?

(RL.2.6, RL.3.4, RL.3.6, RL.4.6)

## 7. Change

- Compare pictures of baseball players in Babe Ruth's era (including illustrations from the story) to baseball players today. Using a Venn diagram to organize your thoughts, show how professional baseball players' uniforms of yesterday and today are the same and different.
- Do you think baseball uniforms will look the same twenty years from now? How might they change again? If you could add or amend anything to a professional baseball player's uniform, what would you do?

(RL.2.7, RL.3.7)

# EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Visit <http://www.biography.com/people/babe-ruth-9468009/videos> for a selection of videos about Babe Ruth.
- Research pictures of the Bronx in the late 1920s. Is it as you pictured it was from reading the story?
- Babe Ruth was famous for making memorable statements. Research some of his more famous, and often humorous statements. Draw a portrait of the Babe and write your favorite quote underneath.

(RL.2.7, RL.3.7)

## WRAP-UP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Revisit the pre-reading discussion about heroes. In your opinion, do you think Babe Ruth is a good example of a hero? Why or why not?
2. Of all the nicknames you have heard for Babe Ruth, and given what you now know about him, which nickname do you think is the most fitting? Make up your own nickname that you think would have suited him.
3. What is the overarching lesson that can be learned from this story? How might you apply this to your own life and experiences?

## LINKS

[www.tundrabooks.ca](http://www.tundrabooks.ca)

[www.zacharypullen.com](http://www.zacharypullen.com)

<http://mlb.si.com/2013/07/11/99-cool-facts-about-babe-ruth/>

<http://www.biography.com/people/babe-ruth-9468009/videos>

<http://www.baberuthcentral.com/>

## ALSO AVAILABLE

Listening Library Audiobook

ISBN 978-1-101-91653-7

# PRAISE FOR *The Bambino and Me*

"The tale is entirely fictional, but it manages to capture the essence of that extraordinary time and the larger-than-life persona that was Babe Ruth. Hyman invests George's voice with boyish enthusiasm and conversational language filled with contemporary syntax. Pullen's oddly proportioned, compelling illustrations, rendered in oil paint and walnut oil, are in perfect tandem with the nostalgic spirit of the text and wonderfully depict every aspect of the characters' emotions ... Lively, fun-filled and altogether delightful."

– Starred Review, *Kirkus*

"Pullen's oversize oil paintings memorably capture the farcically exaggerated emotions. Falling between caricature and cartoon, they're an inspired complement to the wry humor. Mixing just the right amount of nostalgia, pitch-perfect storytelling, and baseball fantasy, Pullen and Hyman have crafted a winning tale for readers, young and old—even Red Sox fans will find it irresistible."

– *School Library Journal* (Audio - Starred)

"The sounds of city streets, jazz music, and clattering tableware transport the listener to a modest Bronx kitchen in 1927, where 10-year-old George Alexander receives the birthday present of his dreams—a ticket to see the New York Yankees. Jason Alexander (Seinfeld), with his well-known accent, enthusiasm, and love of baseball, is the perfect narrator, playing up George's jubilation and then his outrage as he learns he must wear a Boston Red Sox jersey to the game."

– *AudioFile Magazine's Earphones Award*

## APPENDIX: Common Core State Standard

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2** Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.3** Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.6** Acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters, including by speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue aloud.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.7** Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.3** Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.6** Distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator or those of the characters.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.7** Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting).
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.6** Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.2.1** Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply reasons that support the opinion, use linking words (e.g., because, and, also) to connect opinion and reasons, and provide a concluding statement or section.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.2.3** Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.7** Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.