

GAME

by Walter Dean Myers



TextProject Background Builders

Staircase of Automaticity: Violet



Basketball Talk: Words You Need to Know

Ever feel lost when people talk basketball? Here are some key terms that will help you follow the game better:

Fast Break: When a team gets the ball and races down the court before the defense can get set up. Teams try to create a numbers advantage (like 3-on-2) to score easy baskets.

Double-Team: When two players on one team guard one player on the other team. Teams do this against star players to force them to pass the ball. It leaves someone else open but stops the best player from getting good shots.

Pivot: When a player keeps one foot planted firmly on the floor (the pivot foot) while moving the other foot in any direction. This lets you turn, spin, or change direction without getting called for traveling.

Intentional Foul: When a player on purpose fouls someone on the other team. Teams often do this when time is almost up and they're losing. It stops the clock and makes the other team shoot free throws. Coaches tell players to foul the players who aren't good at making free throws.

Screen or Pick: When a player stands still to block a defender from guarding their teammate. The screener must stay still or the referee will call a foul. The "pick and roll" is when a big player blocks for their teammate and then runs to the basket for a pass.



Basketball Positions: The Players on the Court

Basketball has five main positions, each with a special job on the team. Think of it like everyone having a different role in a video game.

Point Guard (PG): This is the team's leader on the court, like the quarterback in football. They bring the ball up the court and call plays. Stephen Curry of the Golden State Warriors is one of the best point guards today. He's known for his amazing three-point shooting and ball-handling skills.

Shooting Guard (SG): These players are usually great shooters who score a lot. They play alongside the point guard in what's called "the backcourt." Devin Booker of the Phoenix Suns is a shooting guard who can put up tons of points when he gets hot.

Small Forward (SF): These players aren't actually small! They're called "small" only compared to power forwards and centers. LeBron James is probably the most famous small forward ever. At 6'9" and 250+ pounds, he's bigger than most players but has the skills to play this position.

Power Forward (PF): These players are bigger and stronger than small forwards but usually not as tall as centers. They grab rebounds and play near the basket but can also shoot from outside. Giannis Antetokounmpo of the Milwaukee Bucks is a power forward who's nearly impossible to stop when he drives to the hoop.

Center (C): The tallest and strongest players on the team are the centers who are usually 6'10" to 7'+ tall. Their main jobs are to block shots, grab rebounds, and score close to the basket. Traditional centers like Shaquille O'Neal were dominant inside but rarely passed or shot from outside. Modern centers like Nikola Jokić of the Denver Nuggets are changing the game. Jokić, or the Joker as he's called, can shoot from anywhere and passes like a guard!



Othello

Othello is a play by Shakespeare about a Black general who leads the army of Venice. Even though some people are racist toward him, Othello is respected because he's a good fighter.

The story begins when Othello secretly marries Desdemona, a white woman from a rich family. This makes some people mad, especially a man named Iago who acts like Othello's friend but really hates him.

Iago makes a plan to hurt Othello. He tricks Othello into thinking Desdemona is cheating on him with another soldier named Cassio. Iago puts Desdemona's special cloth (a gift from Othello) in Cassio's room as fake proof.

Othello gets very jealous and stops believing Desdemona when she says she didn't cheat. His jealousy gets so bad that he kills Desdemona by covering her face with a pillow. Right after, Othello learns that Iago lied about everything. When Othello realizes what he's done, he kills himself.

The play shows how racism and jealousy can ruin a person's life, even someone as strong and successful as Othello.



Drew Sees Himself Like Othello

Drew feels a strong connection to Othello in Shakespeare's play. He sees himself as a skilled Black basketball player facing blocks, just like Othello was a good Black general dealing with racism. In English class, Drew stands up for Othello being Black, even when his teacher doesn't agree.

When Coach House starts giving more playing time to Tomas (the white player from Europe) instead of Drew, it feels unfair. Drew has worked hard and has skills, but now he's being pushed aside. This reminds him of how Iago worked against Othello in the play. For Drew, basketball is his way to college and maybe the pros—just like being a general was Othello's path to respect. Both use their skills to try to beat the blocks in their way.

The good news is that Drew handles things better than Othello did. Instead of letting anger destroy him, Drew learns to work with Tomas. He sees that his real fight isn't against Tomas but against the few choices for young Black men from his area.



The Game of Getting to College and Beyond

Want to play college ball? It's not just about your jump shot! Coaches look at more than just how you play. They want players who make their school look good both on and off the court. Your grades matter big time! No good grades mean no college basketball. Many players forget this important fact: you need to hit the books as hard as you hit the gym.

Take Drew's story. Basketball isn't just his ticket to college but also his path to a better future. A college degree can open doors to becoming a business owner, sports marketer, teacher, or health worker. Very few college players ever go pro, but ALL college graduates can land good jobs!

When you get a scholarship, the real work begins. You need to prove you earned this chance by showing your coach they made the right choice. It's about representing your team with pride—not just during games, but in the classroom and community too.



Basketball Referees: The Court Official

Basketball referees, also called officials, make sure rules are followed by watching players, calling fouls, and keeping the game moving smoothly.

To become an official, you need to get approval. This means passing a written test about basketball rules and often showing your skills on a court. Most basketball officials have played the game themselves. Having experience as a player helps referees understand the game better and recognize fouls more easily.

High school basketball typically has two or three officials per game. College games usually have three officials. Professional NBA games always use three officials to cover the faster, more complex play.

When officials make decisions during games, coaches can ask for explanations but cannot change most calls. In professional games, some calls can be reviewed using video replays, but this isn't common in high school games.

Good referees need quick reactions, excellent vision, and confidence. They must stay physically fit to keep up with players. Most importantly, officials need thick skin since players, coaches, and fans often disagree with their calls!