



**STORYLAB**

PRESENTS

**WALTER DEAN MYERS'S**

# GAME

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

# Walter Dean Myer's *Game*

In *Game*, seventeen-year-old Drew Lawson is a skilled basketball player. He plays for Baldwin Academy. But basketball is more than a game for Drew. It is his way out of a tough life in Harlem, a neighborhood in New York City. He dreams of earning a college scholarship and making it to the pros.

Drew has mixed feelings about school. He knows doing well in class is important for his future. But he feels frustrated when teachers do not understand his experiences. Drew's English class is reading *Othello* by William Shakespeare. At first, Drew does not see how the play relates to him. Then, he notices that *Othello*—a strong and smart black man—faces doubt, lies, and racism. These are things Drew knows well, and he develops a connection to *Othello*. During discussions, Drew stands up for *Othello*'s identity as a black man, even when his teacher disagrees.

Coach House starts to give more playing time to Tomas, a white player from Europe. It feels unfair. Drew has worked hard and has skills, but now he's being pushed aside. This reminds him of how the character Iago works 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.



In *Game*, basketball is more than a game to high school senior Drew Lawson.

Both *Othello* and Drew need to use their skills to handle the problems they face. Drew has to prove he is the best. He feels the stress of carrying his family's hopes. His dad never finished school, and his mom works long hours. They are counting on him.

In the end, Drew learns to work with Tomas. He sees that his real fight is not against Tomas. It is against the few choices for young black men from his neighborhood. This lesson helps Drew grow stronger on and off the court.

## AN EXCERPT FROM GAME

I didn't want to deal with Tomas. I didn't trust him. Maybe he was just coming over to see what I was thinking. I imagined him calling House and telling him what I said.

"You think I lost the game?" he asked.

"The team lost the game," I said. "The coach, everybody. You did your part, too."

"You know I want to play basketball the same as you." Tomas spoke softly. "In Europe a lot of boys want to come to America and play ball. We see the American players with their big cars and big houses and they're all smiling when they look at you on television. We want to wear the same clothes and get money to wear the different brands. We want that, too. There's no difference in what is in my heart and what is in your heart."

"Yeah, but you came over here and you're starting on the team," I said. "If I went to your school, would I be starting?"

"Sure you would." He grinned. "Everybody in Europe thinks that black people are like gods. They think you don't jump-- you fly."

"In my case it's true," I said.

"Drew, I'm sorry we lost."



"I didn't want to deal with Tomas. I didn't trust him."

"Yeah, I'll see you tomorrow," I said.

Tomas left me at the corner with a little wave.

Going home, I was thinking about Tomas, what he said about things not being different between his life and mine. Maybe they had a high opinion of black ballplayers in Prague, but we were in America, and what I had to deal with was where I was. Just like my man Othello had to deal with where he was.

What I was wondering was whether or not House would let us go on losing games to make his point.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

# Walter Dean Myers



Walter Dean Myers

**W**alter Dean Myers was an American writer who created stories for children and teenagers. He was born on August 12, 1937, in Martinsburg, West Virginia. When he was just two years old, his mother died. After that, he moved to Harlem, New York City, to live with family friends Herbert and Florence Dean. Myers loved books, but he had trouble speaking. Sometimes he got into fights as a child. His foster mother taught him how to read. A caring English teacher saw his interest in writing

and encouraged him to continue. Myers once said, “Reading probably saved my life.”

At seventeen, Myers left high school and joined the U.S. Army. After his military service, he worked odd jobs during the day and wrote stories at night. In 1969, he won a writing contest. His winning story became his first published book called *Where Does a Day Go?*

Walter Dean Myers wrote over one hundred books. He often used experiences from his own life in his stories. Myers believed it was important to write about the urban black experience, particularly in his books for older readers. For example, Myers was a serious basketball player in his youth. He played as a guard and even dreamt of going pro. His love of basketball informed several of his stories, including *Game*, which features energetic basketball scenes and the realistic emotions of a young athlete.

Myers’s writing included many types of books. He wrote picture books for younger children, nonfiction biographies, and memoirs. He received many awards, including five Coretta Scott King Awards. He also earned two Newbery Honors. Several of his books were finalists for the National Book Award and listed as Best Books of the Year.

Walter Dean Myers passed away on July 1, 2014, in New York City. His stories continue to inspire young readers.

## TEXT CONNECTION

# William Shakespeare's *Othello*

**O**thello is a play by William Shakespeare. It is about a black general who leads the army of Venice. Even though some people act racist toward him, Othello is respected because he is a skilled and brave fighter. He has earned his position through hard work, talent, and loyalty. Many trust him as a strong leader who protects the city.

The story begins when Othello secretly marries Desdemona, a white woman from a rich and powerful family. Their love surprises many people because of the differences in their backgrounds and social status. This marriage causes tension and jealousy among some characters, especially a man named Iago. Iago pretends to be Othello's loyal friend, but deep down he hates Othello. He wants to ruin Othello's life for selfish reasons, including jealousy and anger over being passed over for a promotion.

Iago makes a plan to hurt Othello by playing tricks on him. He tricks Othello into believing that Desdemona is cheating on him with another soldier named Cassio. Iago sneaks Desdemona's handkerchief—a gift from Othello—into Cassio's room. Iago claims it is proof of the affair.

Othello becomes jealous and angry. Desdemona insists she did not cheat, but Othello does not believe her. His jealousy grows so strong that he covers Desdemona's face with a pillow while she sleeps and kills her. Right after,

Othello discovers that Iago has lied about everything and that Desdemona was innocent. Filled with grief and regret, Othello kills himself.

The play shows how jealousy, lies, and racism can destroy lives. This is true even for strong and successful people like Othello. It warns about the dangers of trusting the wrong people. It is a lesson to not let anger and suspicion control your actions. It also highlights the tragic consequences of misunderstanding and prejudice in society.



Iago: O, beware, my lord, of jealousy;  
It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock  
The meat it feeds on ...

## TEXT REFLECTION

# Point Guards Run Everything

In Game, Drew Lawson isn't just another player on the team. He's the point guard, which means he's basically the boss on the court. He has the same role as Steph Curry for the Golden State Warriors.

A basketball team is made up of five positions: point guard, shooting guard, small forward, power forward, and center.

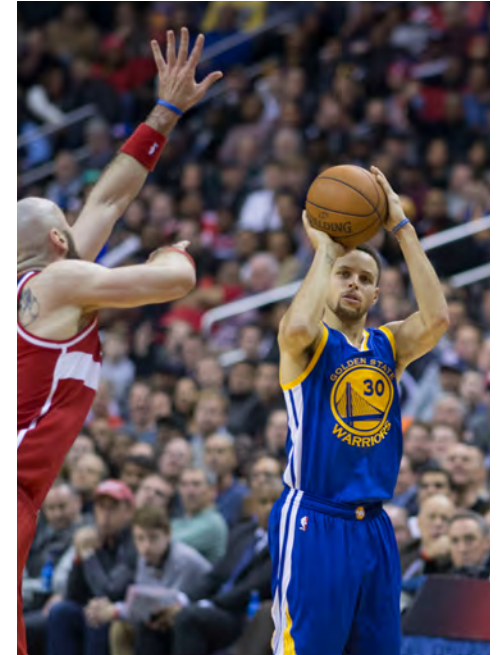
- **Point guards** like Drew and Steph bring the ball up court. They tell teammates where to go. They decide when to pass and when to shoot. Point guards stay calm when defenders try to steal the ball.
- **Shooting guards** are the team's primary scorers, especially from the three-point range. They excel at finding open spots and converting shots when the point guard creates opportunities for them.
- **Forwards** do the dirty work. Forwards rebound, defend, and score close to the basket. They are usually the strongest guys on the team
- **Centers** are the big guys who protect the rim and grab rebounds. They're like human walls.

Throughout Game, you see Drew doing point guard

things. He brings the ball down court. He gets assists by setting up teammates for easy scores. When opposing players pressure him, he stays cool and finds Tomas open inside. In clutch moments, he gets the ball because point guards can handle the pressure.

Steph Curry changed basketball by showing that point guards can score a ton of points, not just pass. But even when Curry drops 50 points, he's still running plays and leading his team.

Both Drew and Curry prove that point guards don't need to be the biggest guys. They need brains and leadership.



Steph Curry is widely regarded as one of the greatest NBA shooters of all time. He is often credited with changing the sport with his three-point shot.

**What Is Realistic Fiction?** Walter Dean Myers's *Game* is considered realistic fiction. Realistic fiction consists of:

- a made-up story but set in the real world;
- a conflict that could happen today; and
- convincing and believable characters.

**Keep Reading:** Want to read more of *Game*?

Go to your library and check out a copy!

**If you like *Game*,** then you might also like to read these realistic fiction texts:

*The Crossover* by Kwame Alexander

*Ghost (Track series #1)* by Jason Reynolds

*Blended* by Sharon M. Draper

**Start Writing:** Inspired to write your own realistic fiction?

Consider this prompt to get started: Coach says I have to show up on Saturday. But Saturday is the day everything changes ...”

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