

Name: _____ Class: _____

The Champion of Quiet

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Tracy Stewart has written for Highlights. In this short story, a quiet girl volunteers to be a team captain in gym class. As you read, identify who Maggie chooses as teammates and the different reasons for choosing them.

[1] It was a Tuesday, and Maggie hated Tuesdays.

Tuesdays meant one thing: gym class.

Gym class meant one thing: picking teams.

Picking teams meant one thing: Maggie would be picked last.

[5] As always.

Maggie was a new student that year in a class of champions. To help herself remember the other kids, she'd come up with a special title for each one.

There was Kevin, Champion of the Clean Desk; and Linnie, Champion of Knowing the Answer First; and Caroline, Champion of Tardy.¹ And so on.

She'd had to think long and hard to figure out her own special title. After five whole weeks of school, Maggie had decided.

She was the Champion of Quiet.

[10] The Champion of Quiet sat on the gym floor, sandwiched between the Champion of Daydreaming and the Champion of Goofy Jokes. Maggie felt blue. She knew what was coming. She considered changing her title to Champion of Last Pick.

Mr. Murphy, the gym teacher, asked for volunteers to pick the basketball teams.

The usual hands shot into the air.

Maggie sighed and glanced to her right. She caught the eye of Jasmine, Champion of Cursive J's. Maggie thought she might like to be Jasmine's friend but never felt brave enough to talk to her.



"I pick Jasmine" by Paula Becker is used with permission.

1. **Tardy (adjective):** being late

Looking at Jasmine, Maggie realized that Jasmine seemed a little blue, too. Maggie thought, I'm not the only one picked last. Sometimes Jasmine is picked last, too.

[15] With that, the Champion of Quiet had an idea.

Mr. Murphy asked, "Anyone else want to volunteer today?"

Maggie felt her hand slowly rise. She looked again at Jasmine and took a big breath.

Maybe it was time for the Champion of Quiet to use her voice.

"Maggie?" Mr. Murphy smiled. "You want a turn?"

[20] Do I? Maggie wondered. "Yes," she said.

The class murmured. Maggie leading a team?

"Yes," she answered again, louder this time. Her voice shook just a little.

"What's stopping you, then?" Mr. Murphy waved Maggie to the front of the gym, where the other three captains — Champion of Jumping Rope on One Foot, Champion of Never Misses a Shot, and Champion of Doesn't Know How to Lose — stood, ready to choose their teams.

"Maggie, you get first pick," said Mr. Murphy.

[25] "Jasmine," announced the Champion of Quiet.

The class snickered.² Was this a joke? More than once, Jasmine had tried to score on the wrong basket.

Maggie smiled and repeated, "Jasmine."

Eyes wide, Jasmine took her place beside Maggie.

The other three captains called out familiar names — the best players on the basketball court.

[30] It was Maggie's turn again. "I choose Jamie."

Jamie, Champion of the Untied Shoelace. Jamie could not dribble, throw, or catch. He knew what it felt like to be the last pick.

But not today.

Jamie jogged to stand next to Jasmine. He tripped only once. The class sat in shock.

So it went. The names flowed from Maggie's mouth, sounding sure and strong. The stronger she sounded, the stronger she felt.

2. **Snicker** (*verb*): to give a half-hidden laugh

[35] Three very talented teams took shape.

And then there was Maggie's team.

Maggie looked at her teammates. There stood Jasmine and Jamie, plus Gillian (Champion of Hugs) and George (Champion of Very Big Musical Instrument). They were grinning at Maggie.

Maggie grinned back. I have chosen the worst team in the history of the world, she thought.

The Champion of Quiet walked onto the court with her team close behind, ready to face players who were bigger and better.

[40] Game on!

The basketball slipped through Jamie's fingers, skated around Jasmine, dribbled itself away from George and Gillian, and bounced off Maggie's head — twice. Their laughter echoed throughout the gym.

Clutching the ball and out of breath from running and giggling, Maggie heard Jasmine call out, "Mags! Pass the ball to me!"

I have a nickname, Maggie thought happily. She threw the ball to Jasmine.

Of course, Jasmine missed. They were indeed the Worst Team in the History of the World.

[45] And they did what any Worst Team would do. They lost. They lost big.

But losing a basketball game doesn't make you a loser; Maggie knew that much. Maggie grinned at her team. We are, officially, the Champions of No Score, she thought. Awesome.

The Champion of Quiet walked off the court with her new friends. And as the group made plans to sit together at lunch, Maggie was no longer surprised to hear her own voice joining the noisy chorus.³

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3. something spoken by many people at the same time

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which sentence describes the main theme of the short story?
 - A. It can be frightening to be the new kid at school.
 - B. Taking a chance and being brave can lead to making new friends.
 - C. People who have things in common make good friends.
 - D. If you want to stop something that is unfair, it's important to speak up.

2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "Maggie was a new student that year in a class of champions. To help herself remember the other kids, she'd come up with a special title for each one." (Paragraph 6)
 - B. "She caught the eye of Jasmine, Champion of Cursive J's. Maggie thought she might like to be Jasmine's friend but never felt brave enough to talk to her." (Paragraph 13)
 - C. "Jamie, Champion of the Untied Shoelace. Jamie could not dribble, throw, or catch. He knew what it felt like to be the last pick." (Paragraph 31)
 - D. "Maggie grinned at her team. We are, officially, the Champions of No Score, she thought. Awesome." (Paragraph 46)

3. PART A: What does it mean that Maggie feels "blue" in paragraph 10?
 - A. She is sad about the idea of being picked last.
 - B. She is embarrassed that she is going to be picked last.
 - C. She is out of breath from participating in gym class.
 - D. She is afraid to speak up and talk to others.

4. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "Picking teams meant one thing: Maggie would be picked last." (Paragraph 4)
 - B. "Maggie was a new student that year in a class of champions." (Paragraph 6)
 - C. "She'd had to think long and hard to figure out her own special title. After five whole weeks of school, Maggie had decided. (Paragraph 8)
 - D. "The Champion of Quiet sat on the gym floor, sandwiched between the Champion of Daydreaming and the Champion of Goofy Jokes." (Paragraph 10)

5. Which of the following best describes what motivated Maggie to choose her teammates?
 - A. She thinks they will be good friends and wants to get to know them.
 - B. She believes that they are better at sports than her classmates realize.
 - C. She wants her classmates to know that she is a good person.
 - D. She understands how they feel always being picked last for teams.

6. Why is it important to the story that Maggie decides to speak up and volunteer to be a team captain?
