



# SCHOOLWIDE BOOK REVIEW

## “My Sports” Series by Gail Gibbons

Award-winning author Gail Gibbons has written and illustrated more than a hundred nonfiction children’s books. She knows how to capture young and maturing readers’ interest in all manner of subjects relevant to the world they inhabit.

Each of the four “all about” books in her sport series for HarperCollins highlights a different sport: basketball, football, soccer, and baseball. These books are excellent tools for teaching your students the rules of play for the four specific games they cover. With detailed drawings, diagrams, labels, and a glossary, each book also provides useful examples of the features of nonfiction in general.

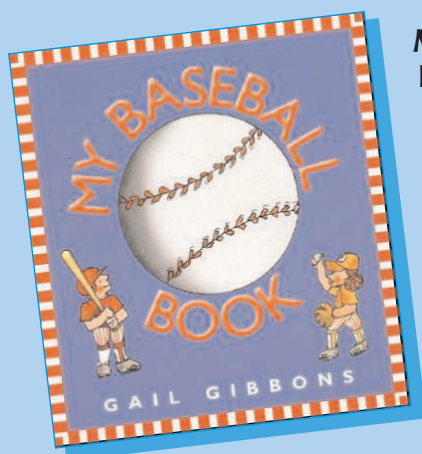
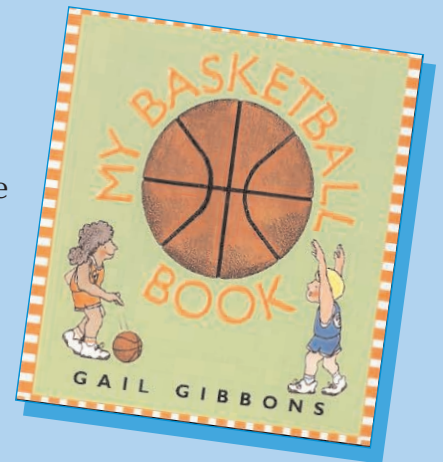
Other special features include the small square easy-to-handle hard back design, and the personal dedications in which Gibbons thanks the respective coaches and physical education experts she consulted in researching collecting information for her books. Her illustrations vividly capture the thrill and excitement of the games being played by smiling boys and girls who are the same age as your readers. It is also worth noting that in each book, a concerted effort has been made to portray girls in prominent roles.

### **My Basketball Book**

ISBN 0688171400

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Creatively rendering a game between the Blasters and the Comets, Gibbons covers all facets of the game, from the different parts of a basketball court to the uniform design. Large font labels throughout the book assist students’ learning and reading. The dedication brings up the opportunity to discuss the research process and the benefits of “asking an expert.” This book is also a nice introduction to some of the features that distinguish nonfiction reference materials, such as the helpful glossary at the end.



### **My Baseball Book**

ISBN 0688171370

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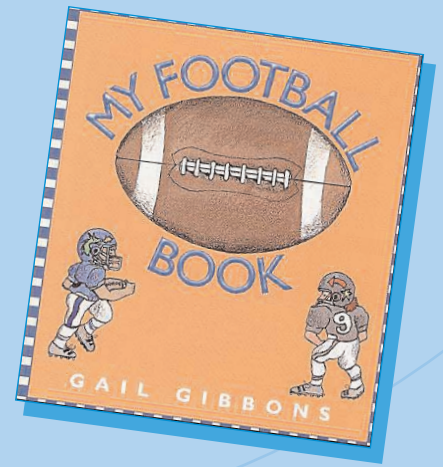
Celebrate America’s pastime with the Robins and the Owls, who show readers the basics of baseball and the meaning of “good game.” Gibbons follows a similar structure as in the companion books, beginning by illustrating and labeling the equipment, providing a diagram of the field (in this case the baseball diamond), and naming the positions and players. Several innings are illustrated to provide readers a close-up look at how points are scored and outs are made. As with each book in this series, the last page offers a glossary of important terms for ready-reference.

## My Football Book

ISBN 0688171397

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The Dragons and the Rockets battle it out on the gridiron in this simple introduction to football. As with the other books in the series, the illustrations and text make a concerted effort to include women, a greater challenge in the football book, but Gibbons incorporates females into key positions, such as where she writes that “the coach guides his or her team” (emphasis added). A helpful glossary at the end will help students review positions and consider how names, labels, terms, and vocabulary play a role in nonfiction or informational writings and drawings.

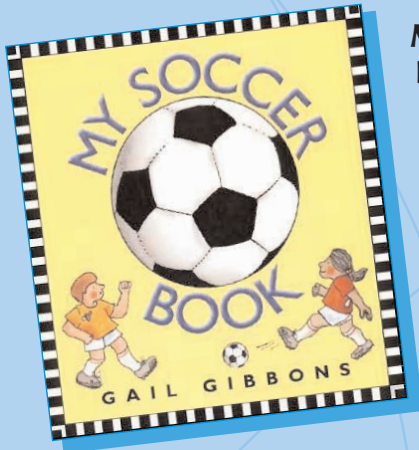


## My Soccer Book

ISBN 0688171389

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This book opens with the declaration that its topic “is fun” and ends by de-emphasizing the victor and echoing, instead, the refrain “good game.” Readers are shown an aerial diagram of a soccer field to assist them in learning the different zones, and they are later provided another diagram that adds the various positions. Gibbons’s colorful visual illustrations animate the game between the Honeybees and the Bear Cubs—labels and text work together to show the specifics of a game in action.



### In the Classroom

The following idea for a read-aloud lesson for *My Soccer Book* can be adapted for any of the books in this series. Begin by telling your students: *Nonfiction writers, like all writers, choose their ideas, those subjects about which they are passionate. They choose to write about activities they like to do, or things they like to watch and observe, or subjects they are passionate about. Gail Gibbons was inspired to write this book by watching soccer being played by children. You can tell by everyone’s smiling faces that she enjoyed watching them play almost as much as they are enjoying playing it.*

Read the first few pages, and share the illustrations as Gibbons illustrates the field with a diagram, and also uses words and pictures to label and describe the different players’ positions. Then point out to your students how Gibbons’s fascination with soccer inspired her to write and draw a whole lot of information in order to create a book that tells “all about” the sport she loves (e.g., the field, the players, the rules, the referees, the gear).

Read the next couple of pages about the length of the game and the adults who help the children on the field. Reinforce for students how the more interested a writer is in a topic the more they want to learn in order to share that information with others. The more passionate a writer is about a topic, the more ideas come to her or him when writing about it.

After reading the book aloud, send your students on a brainstorming mission: Because Gail was so enthusiastic about her subject, she could write all about it: the rules, the play, the players, the other people involved, the equipment, the field, and more. Ask your students: *What subject do you love that you could write or draw many different things about?*

Look for these books by Gail Gibbons, and others, as part of several units in **Writing Fundamentals**, including an author study highlighting many of Gibbons’s nonfiction books.