

BROTHERS AT BAT

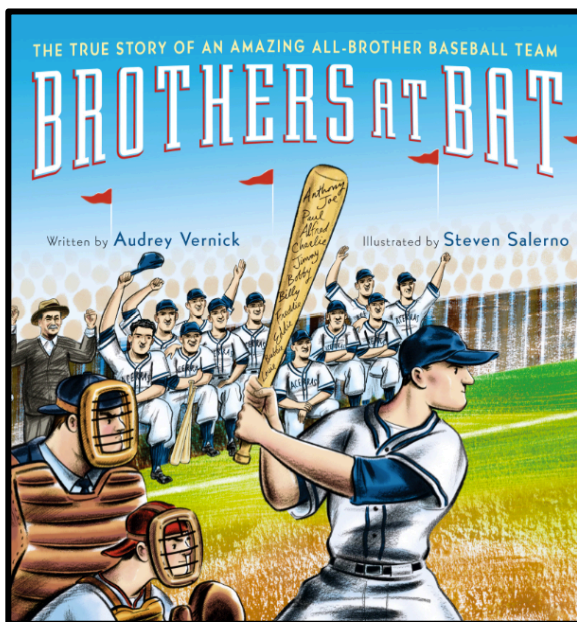
Written by Audrey Vernick, Illustrated by Steven Salerno

BOOK SUMMARY

The Acerra family had sixteen children, including twelve ball-playing boys. It was the 1930s, and many families had lots of kids. But only one had enough to field a baseball team . . . with three on the bench! The Acerras were the longest-playing all-brother team in baseball history. They loved the game, but more important, they cared for and supported each other and stayed together as a team. Nothing life threw their way could stop them. Full of action, drama, and excitement, this never-before-told true story is vividly brought to life by Audrey Vernick's expert storytelling and Steven Salerno's stunning vintage-style art.

PRE-READING PROMPTS

- What kinds of games do you like to play with your family? Which sportsmanship rules does your family follow?
- What is your favorite sport? Who are some of the most famous players of this sport?
- Look at the photo on the Author's and Artist's Notes page. What kind of team is this? Where is the setting? Is this a recent photo or one from many years ago? How do you know?
- Find New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, the Atlantic Ocean, and Europe on the map. As you read the story, place stickers on the map to keep track of the places the Acerra brothers go.



"Brothers at Bat is a story any baseball fan will enjoy and one that we all should know."

~ Hall of Famer Cal Ripken, Jr.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Which season was the Acerra brothers' favorite? Why?
- Why didn't the Acerra sisters play baseball?
- Which characteristics made Anthony, Charlie and Jimmy unique in their family? Which characteristics would your family say make *you* unique?
- How did Alfred get the courage to play baseball again?
- When six of the Acerra brothers were in Europe during the war, what did they miss most about home? What would you miss most?

- Why were the Acerra brothers honored by the Baseball Hall of Fame?
- How did the Acerra family react when their bus broke down on the way home from the Baseball Hall of Fame? How does this reflect their family values?

POST-READING ACTIVITIES

- Look at the illustration on page 26 of one of the Acerra brothers in uniform holding a letter. What do you think the letter says? Do you think it came from home, or is it a letter that he wrote to someone? Write the letter that you think he is holding. Compare your version to those written by other classmates.
- On page 36, read about the items that Jimmy's son donated to the Baseball Hall of Fame. Create your own museum display of items to honor your favorite athlete or hero.



BROTHERS AT BAT

Written by Audrey Vernick, Illustrated by Steven Salerno

- In 1939, the Acerra brothers boarded a plane for the first time and flew over Newark, New Jersey. Use Google maps to “fly” over Newark today. What land features do you see that the Acerra brothers would have seen?
- Take a look at some early baseball cards from the sites listed in the Resources section of this guide. Design a “baseball” card for each of your family members (and one for yourself!) that showcases something each person does well.
- One sound that the Acerra brothers loved was the *slap, slap, slapping* of their screen door as they rushed outside in the spring to play baseball. Brainstorm a list of sounds you look forward to hearing each season of the year. Write a poem that highlights your examples of onomatopoeia.
- How are baseball stats calculated? Visit <http://www.baseball-almanac.com/stats6.shtml> to find out. Play a game of class kickball or softball and calculate the stats for either individual students or the whole class. Each time a game is played throughout the year, update and graph the numbers. How do your stats compare over time?
- Jimmy Acerra used to throw a knuckleball that was hard to hit or catch. Research the physics behind how knuckleballs work and why they’re so tricky, then give it a try out on the field! (Younger children can use a tennis ball to practice.)
- Take a look at the headlines on pages 28 and 33. Choose a scene from the story and write a headline and article to go along with it. Add an illustration with a caption. Display students’ front pages under a banner that reads:

Brothers At Bat: We Read All About It!

RESOURCES

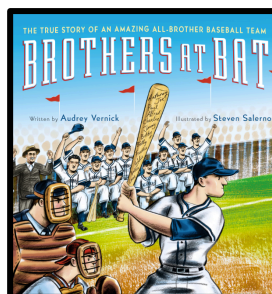
- Baseball Hall of Fame <http://baseballhall.org>
- Library of Congress American Memory Early Baseball Card Collection <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/bbhtml/bbhome.html>
- Smithsonian Institution Baseball Card Collection <http://collections.si.edu/> (Search Term: *baseball cards*)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Audrey Vernick is the author of the picture books *Is Your Buffalo Ready for Kindergarten?*, *She Loved Baseball*, and *Brothers at Bat*, as well as the novel *Water Balloon*. She has published short stories for adults and twice received the New Jersey State Council of the Arts' fiction fellowship. She lives with her family in New Jersey. Visit her at www.audreyvernick.com

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Steven Salerno has illustrated many popular picture books for children, including *The Dirty Little Boy* by Margaret Wise Brown, *Bebe Goes Shopping*, and *Brothers at Bat*, as well as his own *Little Tumbo* and *Coco the Carrot*. A graduate of Parsons School of Design, where he studied under famed author/illustrator Maurice Sendak, Steven's illustrations appear in magazines, advertising campaigns, product packaging, and retail interiors. He lives and works in New York City. Visit him at www.stevensalerno.com



Discussion and Classroom Activity Guide created by Natalie Dias Lorenzi.

