



Grades  
2 & 3



## *Fail Points* By Kenji Yoshinari and Julia Ustinovich

Zen loves soccer more than anything. She wants to learn a tricky soccer move called the elastico. But every time she tries, she messes up. Instead of giving up, Zen starts counting something called Fail Points. Each mistake becomes a Fail Point — and every Fail Point means she is learning. With the help of her supportive dad, memories of things she learned before (like piano and diving), and encouragement from her teammates, Zen discovers something important: Failing isn't the opposite of success — it's part of success.

**Instructor Note:** Explain to students that the story is inspired by the author's own child, which means the lessons about practicing, failing, and trying again come from real life experiences.



**Goals:** The Battle of the Books is all about making reading an exciting adventure! We want campers to dive into their books and be excited and inspired by what they read. Our goal is to be there every step of the way, showing them how to explore their reading material while keeping the fun alive and making sure they understand everything they read.



# PREPARATION

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### What to tell campers:

Test your power of reading in the annual Battle of the Books!

- Read the book and prepare for battle!
- Be ready to compete against readers just like you from across the county.
- Get excited for teamwork, fun activities, and the competition of the summer with prizes to win.

### Engage:

Introduce yourself and the Battle of the Books initiative. Battle of the Books is a way to get kids excited about reading through a lively competition packed with engaging activities. Build excitement and anticipation for each day's adventure by letting campers know the theme, the exciting activities planned, why we're doing them (hint: it's all about fun and learning!), and what to look forward to on the day of the battle.



### Prizes:

A fun field trip, lunch, and the pride of knowing how well you understood the book!

This summer, Battle of the Books is ON! Enjoy a thrilling competition!

**Literacy Tip:** Build the excitement for reading by creating a special experience when handing out new books to the campers. Invite them to notice how the new books look, feel, smell, and even sound when they flip through them. Invite them to put their names on the inside cover and then find a special place, or library, in the room to keep their books.



# BOOK ACTIVITY 1

## Pre-Reading and Comprehension

### Before Reading:

Have campers examine the front cover, back cover, and flip through the book. Then, engage in a discussion centered around the following questions:

- What would you say to a friend who wants to give up?
- Would it be fun or boring if you never failed?
- Why do you think the subtitle is “Unlock the Secret Power of Failing”?

### After Reading:

Engage campers in a discussion surrounding the following questions:

- When was a time you felt like giving up, just like the character?
- Write or share one thing you used to not be able to do but can do now.
- What is something you expect you might fail at this week?
- How are the title and subtitle more meaningful now that you’ve read the whole book?



**Literacy Tip:** Pre-Reading lays a foundation for reading comprehension. Never skip this essential stage when introducing new reading material.



# BOOK ACTIVITY 2

## Summarizing the Story with SWBST

Reread the story to the campers and tell them that after they read today, they are going to practice summarizing the story. Ask campers what it means to summarize something. Tell them to think about what the most important parts of the story are as they read.

Introduce Summarizing:

- Summarizing is a great way to monitor comprehension. It allows campers to pull out the most important information from what they read and relay it in their own words. An effective strategy for summarization is the ["SWBST" method](#). This can be used to summarize a section of a story or the whole story.

Give each camper their own Summarizing Chart. Explain to the campers that they can identify the most important parts of a story by answering these 5 questions:

- Who is the main character?
- What did they want to do?
- But what was the problem?
- So how did they try to solve it?
- Then how did the story end?
- Encourage campers to work with a partner or in a group to complete their summary of the book using SWBST.

Somebody (main character)	Wanted (wanted or tried to)
But (the problem)	So (solution to problem)
Then (Final resolution)	
Summary Sentence: _____	
_____	

**Literacy Tips:** Vary your summarizing strategies to keep campers engaged. Reading Rockets offers many creative suggestions for [Quick Summarizing Strategies](#).



# BOOK ACTIVITY 3

## Theme

### Before Reading:

#### Introduce Identifying the Theme:

- Explain to campers that every story has a theme. The theme is the lesson the character learns in the story. It's also the lesson that we, as readers, can take away from the story.
- Share some common themes found in stories such as "Don't judge a book by its cover" or "Treat others how you want to be treated." Invite campers to share some other themes that come to mind.
- Encourage campers to think about the lesson that the main character learns as we read the story again today.

### After Reading:

Invite campers to engage in a discussion surrounding the following questions:

- What was the problem Zen faced?
- How did she solve that problem?
- What lesson does Zen learn in this story?
- How can you relate to this? Share your experiences.
- How did Zen's feelings change from the beginning to the end of the story?



**Literacy Tip:** Invite campers to design posters with the lessons/themes from the book and hang them up in your camp space. This is a great way to remind campers of the lessons they are learning while reading.



# BOOK ACTIVITY 4

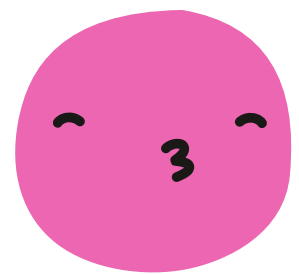
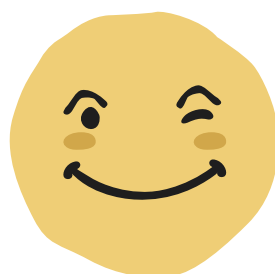
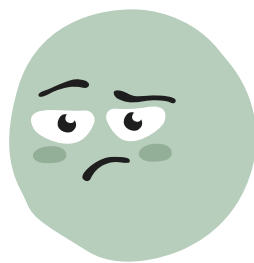
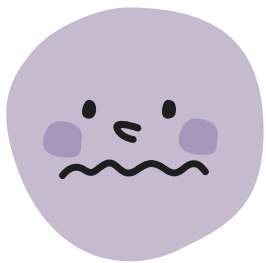
## Illustrating Emotions in a Graphic Novel

Julia Ustinovich created the illustrations to accompany the author's story. Invite the campers to look through the book and choose five illustrations that especially capture a character's emotions.

Ask them to write which illustrations they chose, along with the details of the illustrations that really show the characters' emotions. Invite the campers to share and compare their choices with their fellow campers.

Ask them to consider whether they chose some of the same images. Whether their choices included examples of Zen and her friends feeling frustration? Happiness? Determination? As a group, discuss what it was about each illustration that made it effective.

Now invite the campers to draw a face experiencing a different emotion than the five they chose. Encourage campers to use details they noticed in the illustrations, along with colors to express emotion in their drawing. Ask them how effectively they feel they captured that emotion (and, if they're not happy with their illustration, ask them how many fail points they earned while drawing it).



# BOOK ACTIVITY 5

## Learning (and Illustrating) the Meaning of Our Names

On page 7, Zen shares that her name means “happiness” in Japanese, and the reader sees the characters that make up her name in that language.

For this activity, ask campers if they know the story behind their names. Does their name have a meaning in a different language? Are they named after someone? Is there a reason behind why their name was chosen? If a camper does not know their name story, encourage them to go home and ask. Then, invite them to share the reasons they like their name, what it reminds them of, and how it makes them feel.

Invite campers to create art pieces with their name and its meaning, trying to reflect that meaning through the colors and designs they use to create their name.

They can then share their name projects with each other through turn and talks or as part of a more formal presentation. Consider posting the children’s name art pieces around the room.





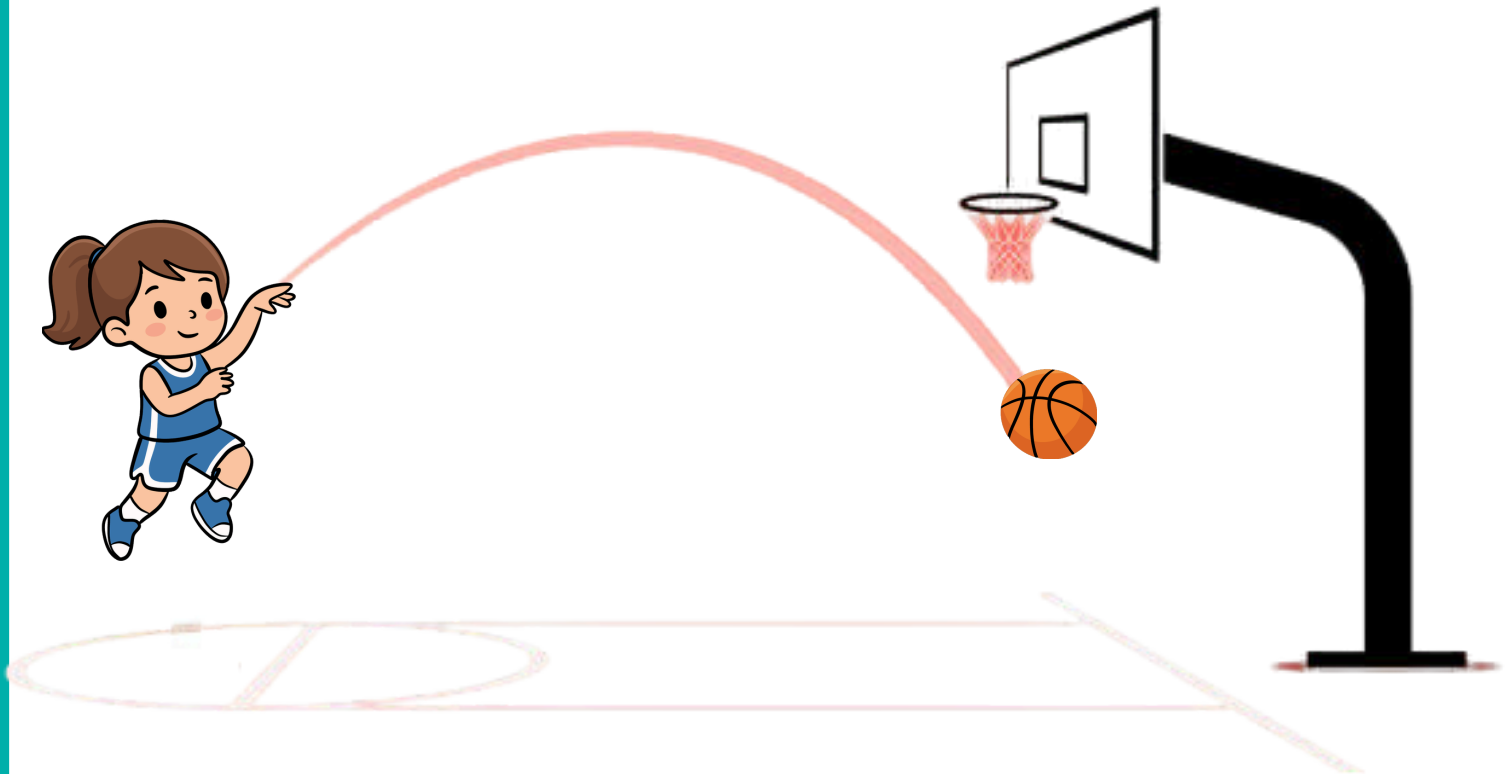
# BOOK ACTIVITY 6

## How to Calculate Fail Points

On pages 18 and 19, Zen takes a bike ride around her neighborhood and notices people in her community trying (and failing) at different activities.

She guesses that it might take 125 “fail points” to learn how to sink a basketball from the 3-pointer line but only 70 “fail points” to master a magic trick. Ask the campers “How do you think Zen decides how many attempts it might take to become good at various activities (page 22)?” “How would your calculation process differ from Zen’s?”

Invite them to come up with their own system for calculating fail points and to create a chart with up to ten additional activities (not featured in the graphic novel) and, using the system they created, include the number of “fail points” it would take to become good at each one.



# GO FURTHER

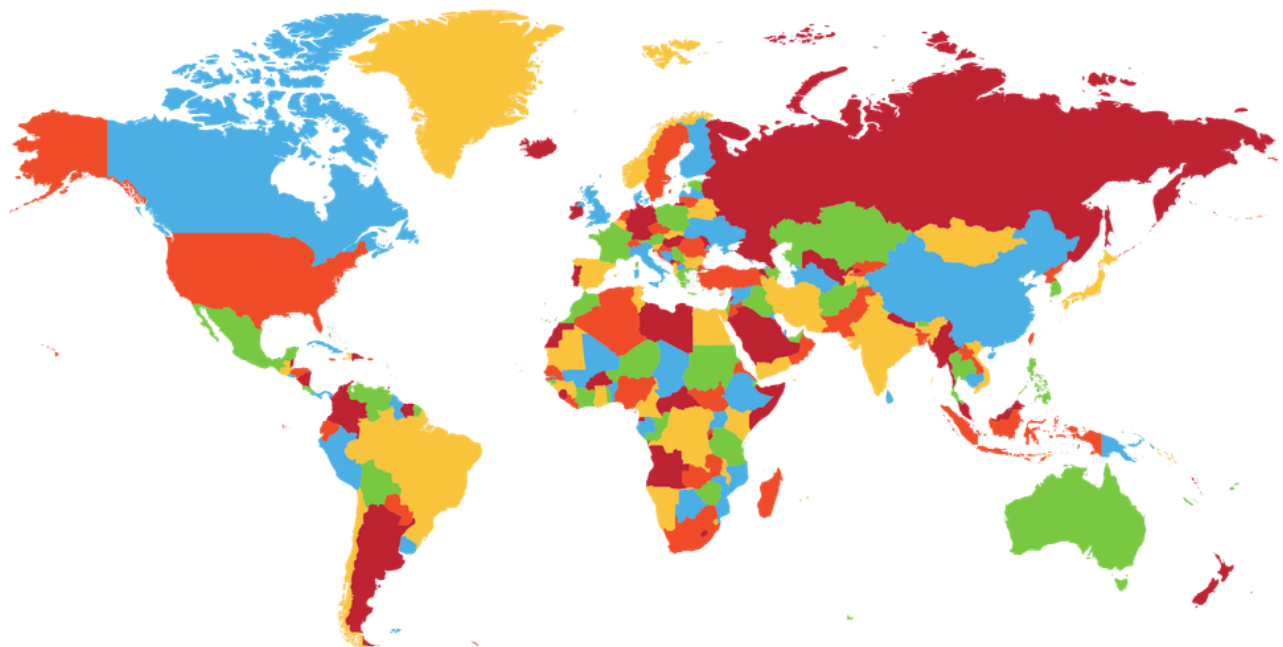
## The World Cup (History/Geography/Art)

The following activities provide campers with opportunities for cross-curricular and/or community-based projects that connect with the story. These activities are wonderful to engage the children in after reading to help them make real-life connections to the text and the characters. Campers can engage in all of the activities below or have the choice of which activity interests them the most.

What is the World Cup? Think of the World Cup like the biggest, most exciting soccer game on the planet! Players come from countries all over the world (like Brazil, France, the USA, and more) to play together.

Which Countries Participate?

- Using a world map and the [FIFA website](#), point out participating countries for children to begin understanding who will compete this summer.
- Let campers identify areas of the map where they have family and invite them to root for the soccer teams representing those countries.
- The "Flag" Display: Have campers draw/color the flag of the team they support. Once they finish, decorate the room with them to create a World Cup Fan Zone in Miami.



## Research Famous Athletic "Failures"

Do the campers know of anyone who failed before succeeding? Share these stories of soccer players who had to overcome obstacles to succeed. Give them the opportunity to do research on other athletes in other sports they enjoy who may also have earned "fail points" on their way to success and then share their discoveries with each other. Here are some examples to share with the children:

### **Marta Vieira da Silva (Brazil)**

- Marta grew up in a very poor town in Brazil where people told her soccer was only for boys. She faced extreme poverty and played with makeshift balls (often bags stuffed with socks).
- The Fail Point: She was rejected by many professional teams early on because of her background and lack of formal training.
- The "Yet" Moment: She didn't let the "no" stop her. She kept training on her own until she became the greatest female player in history, winning the FIFA World Player of the Year award six times. She shows that where you start doesn't decide where you finish.

### **Alex Morgan (USA)**

- Morgan is a superstar now, but her journey wasn't a straight line to success.
- The Fail Point: She didn't even start playing competitive club soccer until she was 14—very late compared to most professionals. She also suffered a severe ACL injury in high school that could have ended her career before it really started.
- The "Yet" Moment: Instead of quitting, she used that recovery time to focus on her mental game and physical rehabilitation. She proved that you can start later than others and still become a world-class athlete through pure determination and strategy.

### **Harry Kane (England)**

- Kane is one of the most prolific goal-scorers in modern soccer, but his path was defined by constant rejection.
- The Fail Point: As a young boy, Kane was actually cut (released) from the youth academy of a major London club because they didn't think he was talented enough. He had to drop down to smaller, less prestigious teams and work his way up from the very bottom.
- The "Yet" Moment: He didn't view being "cut" as a permanent ending. He used it as fuel to practice his finishing and positioning more than anyone else on the pitch. He took loan move after loan move, proving to coaches who originally rejected him that he wasn't "not good enough"—he just wasn't good enough yet.