

# What

# Jo

# Did

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## Genre

**Fiction** often has characters and events that seem real. As you read, try to picture this story taking place where you live, with people you know.



Question of the Week

**How can we learn to appreciate the talents of others?**

Let's  
**Think**  
About  
**Reading!**



**L**ittle Joanna Marie loved to play basketball. She especially loved the sound the ball made as it fell through the net. She would practice every day, touching the backboard as often as she could. Since Joanna's parents had no idea how high a basketball rim should be, they hung it on the side of their roof, which was a whopping sixteen feet high.

Joanna saw rims on TV and figured they looked about the same height as her own—**she had no idea they were only ten feet high.**

Joanna also didn't realize that most people couldn't jump up and touch the backboard because she hadn't ever played with anyone else. But her parents **marveled** at how high she jumped, and how she could run up to the backboard with the ball and lay it up and in. Her father was especially proud because he couldn't even touch the bottom of the net. Not even with the help of a broom.

Let's **Think** About...

What do you know about basketball that makes you think that Jo will be a really good player?

**Background Knowledge**



**O**ne day Joanna, her hair bundled up under her baseball cap, was dribbling her basketball on the way to the store to get some sugar for her mother. Her mother said that she didn't have to hurry home, as long as she was in by dark. As Joanna moved down the street, a basketball came rolling out of nowhere and bumped her high-tops.

"I'm sorry, man, I didn't mean to hit you with the ball like that," said a young boy dressed in sneakers, shorts, and a Bulls tank top as he picked up the ball.

"Oh, that's okay. I wasn't even paying attention," Joanna said.

"Hey, we need one more to play a game. You in?" he asked her.

**"Sure, why not?" she responded.**

As Joanna approached the other boys, she remembered that she had her hat on.

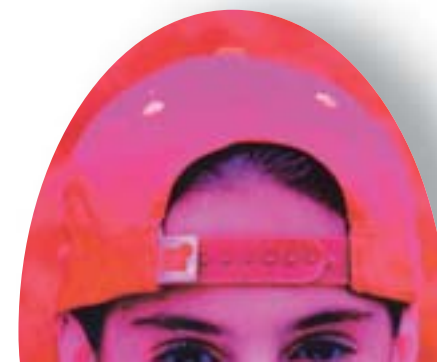
*They probably think I'm a boy, she thought. Might as well enjoy the ride.*

The boys picked teams, and since Joanna was smaller than everyone else, she got picked last. It didn't bother her, though, because she had never played with anyone before and was just happy to be there.

"Hey, kid, what's your name?" asked a freckle-faced kid with red hair.

"Ahhh . . . Jo. My name is Jo," Joanna said nervously.

"All right, Joe, you pick up T.J. over there, see. Make sure he doesn't score a basket. He can jump pretty high, ya know!"



Let's **Think** About...

What do you think the boys expect from Jo?

**Inferring**

Let's **Think** About...

The sequence of events are important to understanding the conflict between T.J. and Jo. How will T.J. react to Jo's blocking his shot?  
**Story Structure**

**J**o moved around, not really touching the ball at first, just trying to get a feel for playing with other people. She had never even passed the ball or received a pass herself. Playing with others took getting used to, but in no time she was passing the ball. The only thing that puzzled her was why the **hoop** was so low.

Even though the boys passed the ball around a lot, T.J. didn't really touch it much, and when he did, he didn't take a shot. Finally, he was wide open for a jump shot when Jo came out of nowhere, jumped high into the air, **and swatted his shot into the next court.**



**WOW, did you see that?**

Did you see how high he jumped?" the freckle-faced kid said, his mouth wide open.

"I've never seen anybody jump that high. Not even Michael Jordan," said the kid with the Bulls jersey on.

"Unbelievable."

"Where'd you learn to do that?"

"Oh, my goodness!!!"

"Poor T.J."

"Hey—I got **fouled**, and besides, it wasn't that high," said T.J., but his face was so red that he couldn't hide his embarrassment.

"Uh, uh . . . it's just something I picked up. I practice a lot with my dad," Jo added, surprised at how big a deal the boys made of her block.

"Man! You must have some dad," one of the boys said.

The game continued, and Jo was passed the ball more often. Her teammates encouraged her to shoot more, and when she did, they were amazed how the ball arced in the air like a rainbow before falling straight through the hoop, without touching the **rim**. As the game progressed, Jo felt hot, but she knew she couldn't take her hat off, or else she'd be found out.

Whenever a boy got the ball and Jo came over to play defense, he quickly passed the ball away. Jo blocked a few more shots, which created more *ooooohs* and *aaaaaaahs*, and one of the boys on her team asked her if she could dunk the ball.

"Dunk? What's that?" Jo asked. This was a word she had never heard before.



Let's **Think** About...

Why are the other players passing the ball to Jo now?  
**Story Structure**

**"A dunk.** You know—

a slam, a jam, to throw it down. You jump up and put the ball in the rim while holding on to it."

"Ohhhh . . . that," she said, trying to hide the fact that she had never heard of it before.

"See, what you do is, you dribble the ball, jump up, and put the ball in the rim with your hand," said a kid with a Lakers jersey on, trying to demonstrate on the ground as best he could.

"You guys, can we finish this game? It's getting dark and my mom wants me home soon," T.J. said, still upset that Jo was getting all the attention and that his shot was blocked.

"Hold your horses, T.J.," said the freckle-faced kid. "I wanna see Joe dunk. I'll bet that he can dunk it better than Michael can."

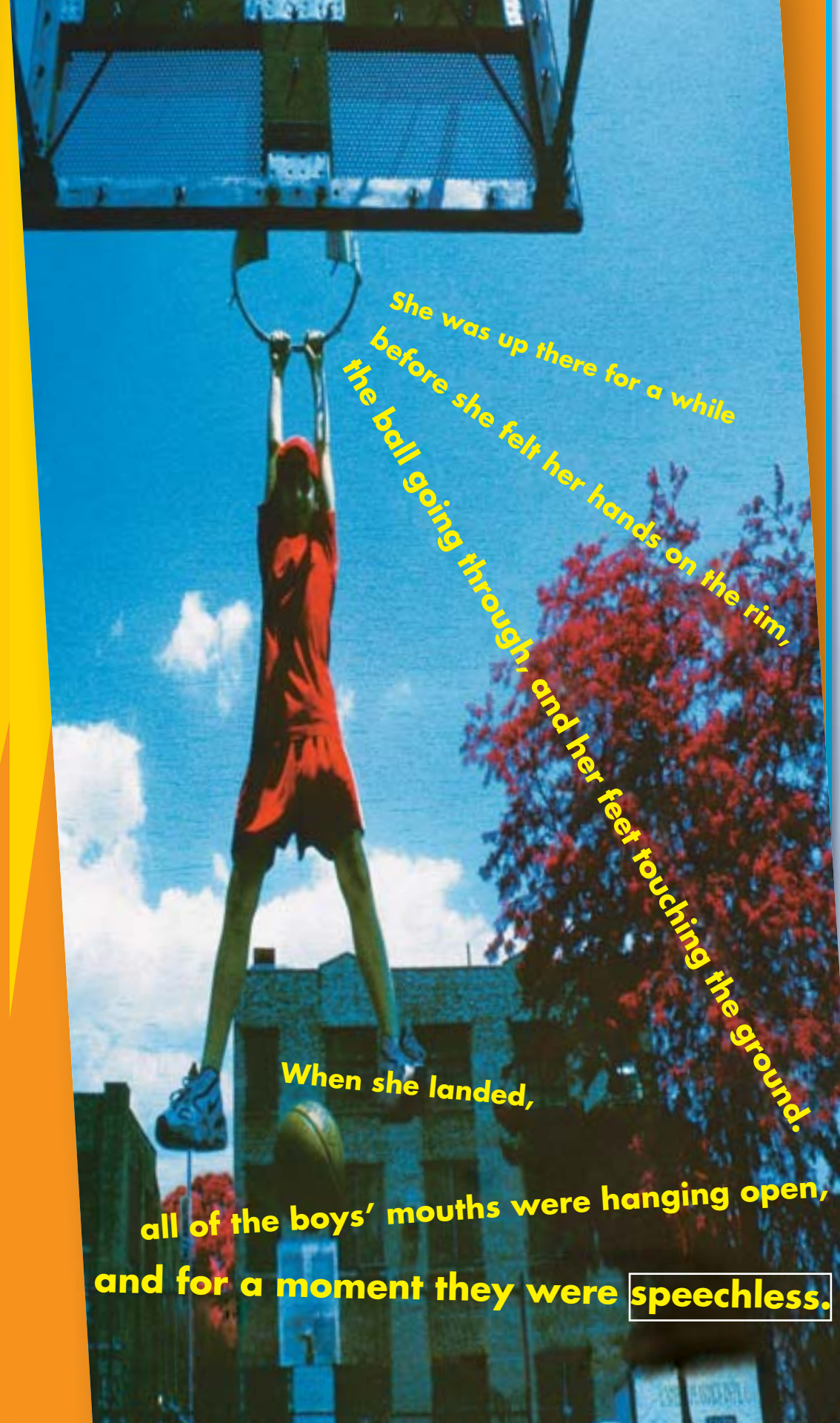
"Well, I'll give it a shot," Jo said, curious herself to see if she could "dunk."

She started at half-court, dribbling the ball quickly, and headed straight for the rim. As she approached, she remembered how high her basket was and realized that this one was much lower. Maybe she *could* jump a little farther out and dunk the ball through. As she got to the free throw line, she lifted her left leg up and went **flying into the air, till she was so high** she was looking down on the hoop. Now all she had to do was put the ball in the rim with both hands.

Let's **Think** About...

How do you think T.J. feels as he waits to see if Jo can dunk?

**Story Structure**



*She was up there for a while before she felt her hands on the rim, the ball going through, and her feet touching the ground.*

*When she landed, all of the boys' mouths were hanging open, and for a moment they were **speechless.***

**Then:** "No way."

"It can't be!"

"Am I  
seeing  
right?"

"That's  
impossible."

"How did she . . . ?"

*As the boys stared at her, Jo looked down at the ground and saw her hat lying there.*

**She froze.**

"So, like . . . you're a girl?" said the kid with the Lakers jersey.

"Ahhhh . . . yeah . . . you could say that," Jo answered slowly.

"I can't believe it, you guys, we've been playing basketball with a girl," T.J. said with disgust.

"Hey, she may be a girl, but I'd play on her team anytime." The kid with the Bulls jersey approached Jo and gave her a high five.

After that, they congratulated Jo and introduced themselves. They even came up with a nickname for her: Jumpin' Jo. In the end, T.J. walked up to her and apologized.

"Sorry, Jo," he whispered. "I just never played against a girl before. Especially a girl as good as you. I've never seen anyone who can jump like that! You should come and play with us again sometime.

**But next time, leave the hat at home."**

Let's **Think** About...

Why do you think players give each other nicknames? What does this tell you about how the boys feel about Jo?

**Questioning**

