



The beloved author of *Ms. Bixby's Last Day* and *Posted* returns with a humorous, heartwarming story of family, friendship, and miniature golf.

For as long as he can remember, Malcolm has never felt like he was good enough. Not for his parents, who have always seemed at odds with each other, with Malcolm caught in between. And especially not for his dad, whose competitive drive and love for sports Malcolm has never shared.

That is, until Malcolm discovers miniature golf, the one sport he actually enjoys. Maybe it's the way in which every hole is a puzzle to be solved. Or the whimsy of the windmills and waterfalls that decorate the course. Or maybe it's the slushies at the snack bar. But whatever the reason, something about mini golf just clicks for Malcolm. And best of all, it's a sport his dad can't possibly obsess over.

Or so Malcolm thinks.

Soon he is signed up for lessons and entered in tournaments. And yet, even as he becomes a better golfer and finds unexpected friends at the local course, he wonders if he might not always be a disappointment. But as the final match of the year draws closer, the tension between Malcolm's parents reaches a breaking point, and it's up to him to put the puzzle of his family back together again.

ONE LAST SHOT

ONE LAST SHOT

A READER'S
GUIDE 

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John David Anderson is the author of some of the most beloved and highly acclaimed books for kids in recent memory, including the *New York Times* Notable Book *Ms. Bixby's Last Day, Posted, Granted, Sidekicked*, and *The Dungeoneers*. A dedicated root beer connoisseur and chocolate fiend, he lives with his wonderful wife and two frawsome kids in Indianapolis, Indiana. You can visit him online at:

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

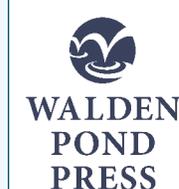
- 1** *One Last Shot* opens with a quote from professional golfer Arnold Palmer... and another from Pac-Man! Discuss these two quotes, and explain how, while quite different, they are both fitting for this story.
- 2** Malcolm's story begins at a mini golf tournament. On page 5, Malcolm thinks, "He's not coming. That's what the voice inside my head says. He's not coming." What did you think when you first read this? Once you have finished the book, has your interpretation of these sentences changed?
- 3** What does Malcolm like about mini golf versus baseball?
- 4** Malcolm tells the story of *One Last Shot* jumping back and forth in time. Why do you think John David Anderson chose to tell the story this way?
- 5** On page 96 Malcolm first introduces us to the Cove, his small hideout in the attic. He explains that his mother named it the Cove, saying: "A cove is a little sheltered stretch of water in the ocean, like a little pool. Sort of peaceful and tucked away. The waves usually don't crash as big there." What does Malcolm's mother mean by this? Why is this a great description of a safe space? Why does Malcolm need the Cove?
- 6** Throughout *One Last Shot*, John David Anderson uses a technique called "foreshadowing," offering warnings or hints of future events. Can you name a few of the times that this technique is used in the book? How does this use of foreshadowing help tell the story?
- 7** On page 171, Malcolm gets some advice on making friends from his mom. She tells him: "The key to making friends is just being yourself.... Be the self you are when you're just hanging out at home, not your around-strangers self." Discuss what she means by this, and why it is useful advice for Malcolm.
- 8** Frank gives Malcolm his old putter on page 212 and insists that Malcolm give it a name. Malcolm chooses "Katana." What is the significance of this name? Explain its origins, and why it makes a great name for Malcolm's club.
- 9** When Malcolm and Lex first meet, one of the things they talk about is "proprietary eponyms." What are proprietary eponyms? Can you think of any others to add to the list they make on page 153?

DISCUSSION GUIDE *continued*

- 10** Malcolm and Lex both love words and expressions. At one point, after seeing Frank in a “taco cat” t-shirt, they start discussing palindromes. They came up with words, phrases, and even entire sentences that are palindromes. Think up some palindromes. Make a list, either on your own or with other people. What are some of the best palindromes you can think of?
- 11** Malcolm’s father gives him a set of golf balls with his name on them on pages 260-261. Discuss the significance of this moment for Malcolm and for his dad.
- 12** Lex inspires Malcolm on page 294 by saying “Waka waka.” Explain how these words are a useful mantra for Malcolm during his tournament.
- 13** Malcolm has a few things that he considers to be lucky charms in this story. What are they? Why are these items important to Malcolm? Do you have any lucky charms? Why are they meaningful to you?
- 14** On page 302, Frank asks Malcolm which shot in a tournament is the most important. The answer he is looking for is: “the next one.” Explain what Frank means by this.
- 15** On page 316, while Malcolm is playing the last hole, the reader doesn’t witness the action firsthand. Instead, Malcom describes it, saying that he missed an easy putt, forcing him tie for second place. Right before he takes his shot he thinks, “In miniature golf there’s usually a dozen different ways to make a shot. But there are a million ways to miss one.” What do you think happened on the last hole?
- 16** On page 317, Jamie Tran comes up to ask Malcolm a question about his putt on the 18th hole of the tournament. But he walks away before asking the question. What do you think Jamie is trying to ask?
- 17** The last line of *One Last Shot* is “I want to watch the sky change.” Explain the significance of this line for Malcolm, and how it relates to Frank’s speech on page 272.

ACTIVITIES

- 1** Malcolm often hears voices inside his head. He hears different people at different moments in his life. The first ones we notice in this book are the sports announcers who narrate his golf matches, one saying (on page 2), “It’s a beautiful, sunny day here in Williams Bay, Wisconsin, where twenty-four talented young golfers are getting ready to tackle this monster of a course.” Read the rest of this section, and once you have a sense of how these announcers speak, pretend you have your own set of announcers! Write a script that they might say to call the play-by-play for something in your life. Maybe they are describing you playing with your dog, or making dinner, or playing basketball. Choose any you want, as long as the announcers make it sound as exciting as possible!
- 2** Lex loves to know “a little bit about everything.” She loves to research the origin of everything she is interested in, from tap dancing to Tootsie Rolls. She even researches the origins of mini golf for Malcolm. On page 173 she says: “It was invented because a bunch of chauvinist pigs in Scotland wouldn’t let women play real golf because they weren’t allowed to lift their arms above their shoulders. It was considered ‘unladylike.’ So women were told they were only allowed to putt, and courses were made just for that.” Do some research about the origins of another sport or activity that you love. When was it invented? How did it come to be? Can you discover any stories as interesting as this one?
- 3** On page 5, Malcolm describes his Friday afternoon routine with his mom. He says, “Mom always took off early on Fridays so that she could pick me up from school and we could spend a couple of hours together, just the two of us—to decompress.’ We’d spend them browsing at the library or walking around the park or just lying on the couch watching baking contests on TV while Dad worked late. It had become a tradition. Decompressing was one of my favorite things to do. I was good at it.” Decompressing is very important for all of us. Describe your ideal way to decompress on a Friday afternoon. What do you like you do? Where might you be? Who are you with? Are you as “good at” decompressing as Malcolm?
- 4** On page 74, Malcolm realizes that playing the game “Angry Birds” has helped his mini golf game, because he learned about playing angles and basic geometry, which are both very beneficial skills for mini golf. Can you think of any other games that would help you play a sport? Make a case for how and why it would be beneficial to your game.
- 5** Malcolm is often thinking of expressions that he got from his Granny Allison, such as: “That will come back to bite you in the bum” and “Hoity-toity.” Does your family have any shared expressions? What makes them memorable? If you can’t think of any such expressions offhand, ask an older relative to help you think of some.



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