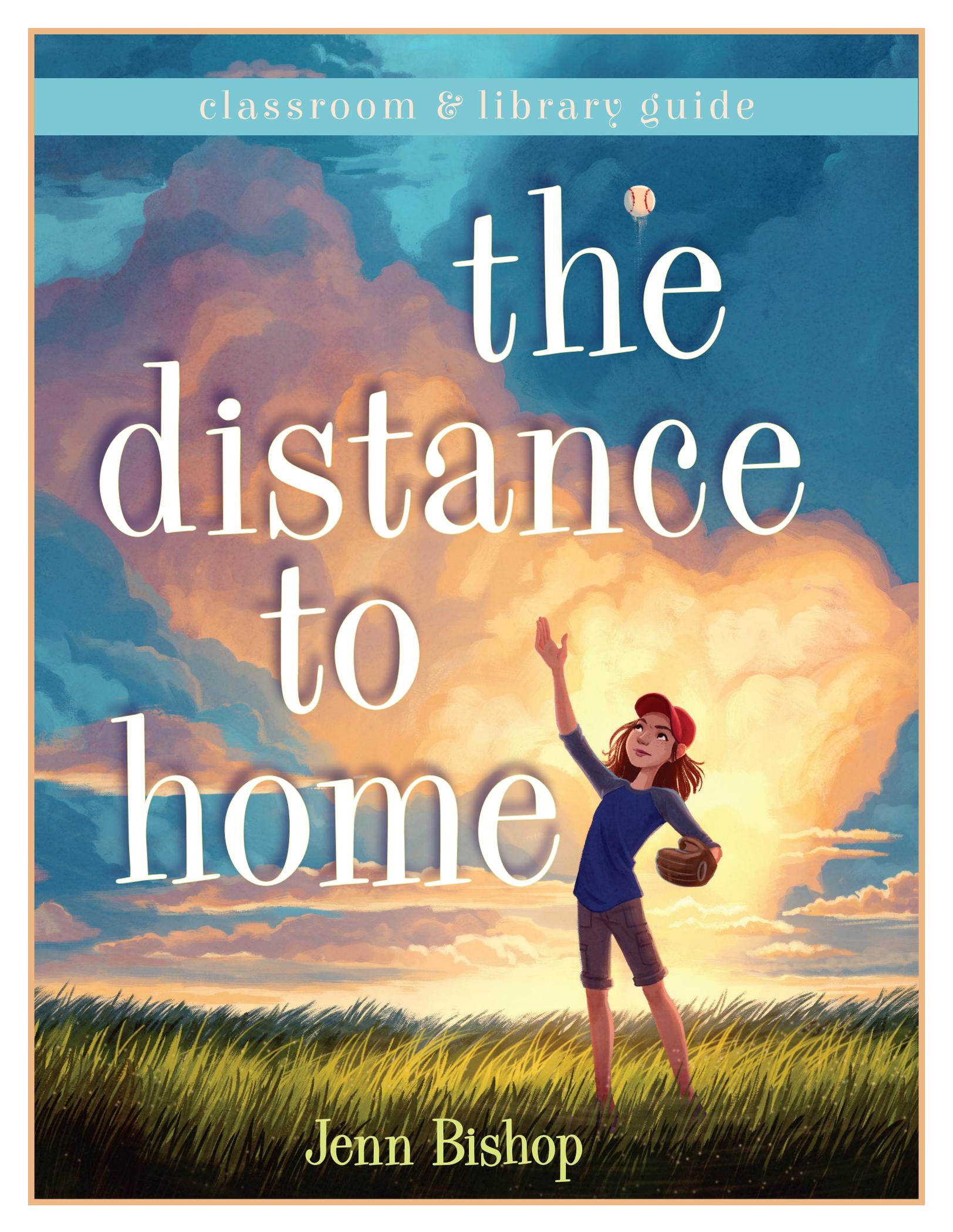


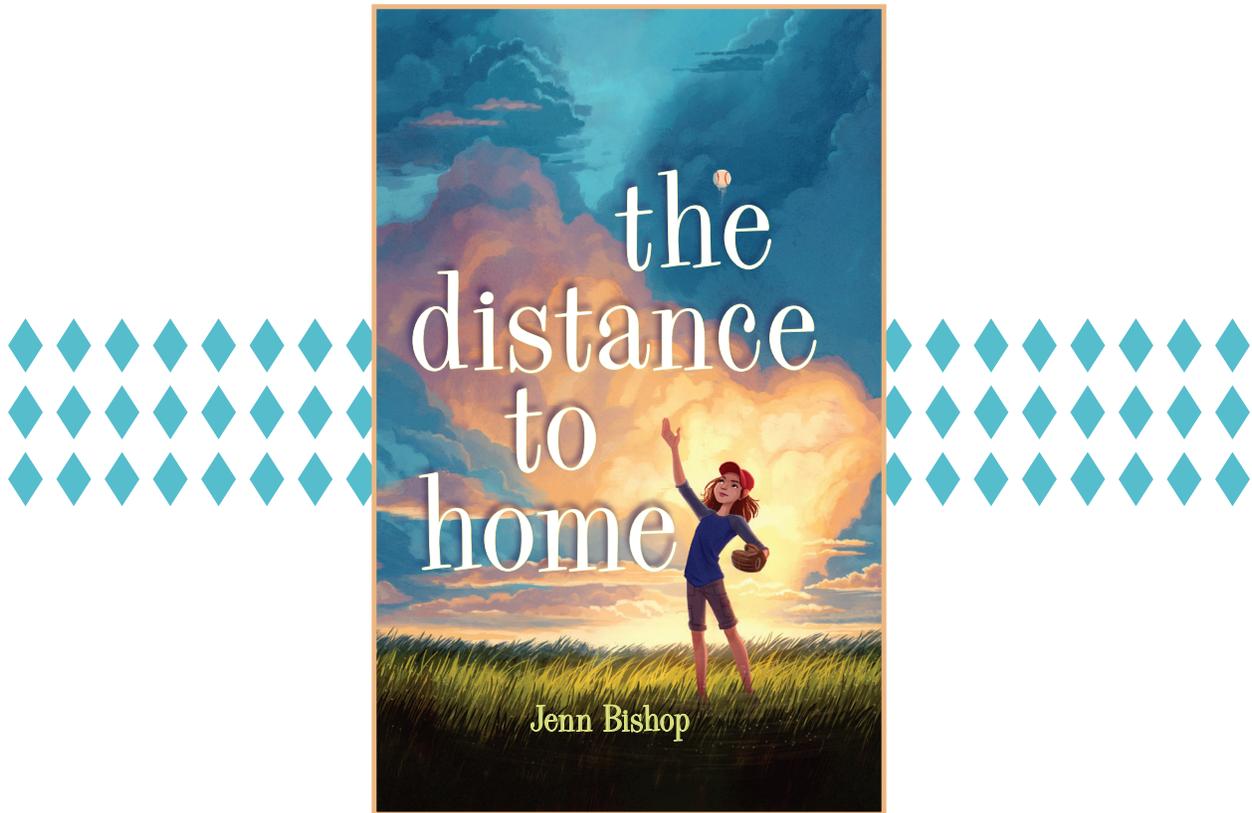
classroom & library guide

An illustration of a young girl with brown hair, wearing a red baseball cap, a blue long-sleeved shirt, and dark shorts. She is standing in a field of tall green grass, reaching her right arm up towards a baseball in the air. The background is a dramatic sky with large, colorful clouds in shades of blue, orange, and yellow, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The title 'the distance to home' is written in a large, white, serif font across the center of the image.

the
distance
to
home

Jenn Bishop

Cover Illustration by Erin McGuire



>>>> about the book <<<<

Last summer, Quinnen was the star pitcher of her baseball team, the Panthers. They were headed for the championship and her loudest supporter at every game was her best friend and older sister, Haley.

This summer, everything is different. Haley's death, at the end of last summer, has left Quinnen and her parents reeling. Without Haley in the stands, Quinnen doesn't want to play baseball. It seems like nothing can fill the Haley-sized hole in her world. The one glimmer of happiness comes from the Bandits, the local minor league baseball team. For the first time, Quinnen and her family are hosting one of the players for the season. Without Haley, Quinnen's not sure it will be any fun, but soon she befriends a few players. With their help, can she make peace with the past and return to the pitcher's mound?

Told in a timeline that alternates between two pivotal summers, Jenn Bishop's heartwarming debut is a celebration of sisterhood and summertime, and of finding the courage to get back in the game.

>>>> about the author <<<<

Jenn Bishop is a former youth services and teen librarian. She is a graduate of the University of Chicago, where she studied English, and Vermont College of Fine Arts, where she received her MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults. No matter where she calls home, she will always root for the Red Sox. Her next book for middle graders, *14 Hollow Road*, is out June 2017. Connect with Jenn on Twitter at @buffalojenn.

>>>> using this guide <<<<

The Distance to Home is a beautiful book about love, loss, and baseball. Young readers will root for Quinnen as she tries to find a new normal after the death of her older sister. This book is perfect for a classroom read-aloud, literature circles, or library book clubs! The discussion questions below are rooted in the Common Core standards for language arts, and the activities allow for an application of skills and learning (and some fun!). If you are holding a book club, consider having readers dress in their favorite baseball hats or jerseys and serve baseball friendly food (popcorn or Cracker Jacks) during the discussion.

>>>> discussion questions <<<<

-  Quinnen listens to the radio show, *After Midnight*, where people call in to share their experiences and make song requests. Quinnen tells the reader that “It helps hearing other people’s stories.” Do you agree that hearing what others have been through can help in difficult times? Why or why not?
-  Quinnen and her family get a home-stay player from the local minor-league team. She has certain expectations on how it will go once the player arrives. Compare and contrast her expectations with what actually happens.
-  Describe Quinnen and Haley’s relationship. How does it change throughout the summer before Haley’s accident?
-  How do Mom, Dad, Quinnen, and Zack all react to Haley’s death? How do each of them work to move on?
-  What is the big message or theme of *The Distance to Home*? Find evidence in the text that supports your ideas.
-  How does Quinnen feel when she learns about the new relationship between Haley and Zack? How do you know?
-  How do books connect Mom, Quinnen, and Haley?
-  Why does Quinnen react the way she does when Hector is injured? How does her friendship with Hector help her grow?
-  On page 92 the book reads, “But you guys won. You won anyway. That’s what teammates do. They help each other out.” Quinnen and her family need a lot of help throughout the story to be okay. Who is on their “team”? Who helps them? How?

>>>> discussion questions <<<<

- 🏆 Mom tries to suggest several things she and Quinnen can do together. What does she suggest? How does Quinnen react? Why does Mom keep trying?
- 🏆 Throughout the novel, we see Quinnen’s baseball glove again and again. The glove can be considered a **symbol**. On page 108, the book reads, “I grab my glove out from under the bed. No matter how much I wear it, the leather hasn’t stretched out to fit my bigger hand.” How does this relate to Quinnen’s story and what she has gone through?
- 🏆 When Quinnen and her family go to the lake house, Haley decides to stay in a different room. Why does this upset Quinnen so much? How does Quinnen deal with change?
- 🏆 At the lake house, Quinnen makes a decision that hurts her sister. Why did she do this? How does she feel about it? Find evidence in the text to support your claims.
- 🏆 What do you think the significance of the title of the book is? Can it mean different things? Do you think Quinnen’s family “reaches home” by the end of the story?
- 🏆 Why do you think the author, Jenn Bishop, chose to structure the novel in “this summer” and “last summer” chapters? How does it impact the telling of the story?
- 🏆 The novel is told from Quinnen’s point-of-view. How would the story change if we saw it from another character – like Casey or Zack’s – POV?



>>>> activities <<<<

Create a Playlist

Quinnen loves listening to the radio show, *After Midnight*. Have readers put together a list of songs (title and artist) that Quinnen might request throughout the book. Have them write three to five sentences about why Quinnen would choose each song and how it would be significant to her and her story.

Top 5 Books

When Quinnen struggles with the list her school librarian has given her of books to read, Haley gives her a list of the “Top 5 Books of 5th Grade” to try instead. Ask readers, “What would be on your list of Top 5 Books?” Have your students or patrons create a bookshelf and draw the spine of each one. On the back of their paper have them write 1 – 2 paragraphs about their choices and why they made their list.

Baseball Bonanza

The Distance to Home is about the relationship between sisters and a family moving forward, but it’s also about baseball! There are a lot of wonderful middle grade books about baseball. Some include *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robison* by Bette Bao Lord, *The Way Home Looks Now* by Wendy Wan Long Shang, *Mudville* by Kurtis Scaletta, *The Girl Who Threw Butterflies* by Mick Cochrane, and Dan Gutman’s *Baseball Card Adventure* books. Have readers pick one of these novels, or another of their choosing and create a T-Chart on a sheet of notebook paper, comparing and contrasting the two books.

Outfitting the Team

Photocopy a baseball jersey template onto cardstock. Then, have readers choose a character from the book. Have them cut out the shirt and decorate it, creating a baseball jersey for that character. They should be sure to include the character’s name and symbols that represent who that character is and what is important to them.

Out of the Park Words

Throughout the novel, there are a lot of wonderful words that can contribute to readers’ major league vocabularies. As they read, have students find 10-15 words that excite them! These could be “new-to-you” words, fun words, baseball words, or words they’d like to use in their own writing. On a sheet of notebook paper, have them jot down the words along with the page numbers they found each of them on. Using context clues, they can create their own definitions and then look up the actual ones in the dictionary. Definitions for baseball terminology can be found in the glossary of the book

