

READING POWER

Read this selection. Think about how the main character changes by the end of the story.

The Name of the Game

Javier had been in Bay City for only a few weeks. It had been hard to leave his friends and relatives in Mexico and come to a place where everything was different.

At Javier's new school, many kids smiled at him. Some boys in his class even made room for him at the lunch table. Still, Javier worried that he would never make friends. He was learning more English every day, but it was still hard to talk with the other kids. None of them spoke Spanish. Javier had to concentrate so much on the strange-sounding words that he sometimes got a headache. He missed being able to read and understand everything around him.

Other things were different, too. Javier often thought about the big midday meals he used to share with his family. In Mexico, everyone in the family came home in the middle of the day and ate a meal together. They talked and laughed, and no one was in a hurry. Now his father ate lunch at work, and Javier ate lunch at school. Javier was not used to the food they served in the cafeteria, and everyone had to eat so quickly.

Most of all, Javier missed playing *futbol*. In Mexico, Javier and his friends played *futbol* whenever they could. Sometimes older brothers, fathers, and uncles joined in the games. They played in the evenings until it got too dark to see the ball. No one seemed to play Javier's favorite game in Bay City.

Then one day at recess, one of the boys called, "Hey, Javier! Do you want to play football with us?"

At last! Here was something familiar. Here was something Javier loved. He nodded excitedly and ran over to the group of kids. When the game began, it was not at all what Javier had expected. This was American football. It was fun, but it was not the same. When Javier walked back to class, his shoulders drooped a little bit.



"I don't think the kids here know how to play *futbol*," Javier told his family that night at dinner.

"Maybe you'll need to learn American football," said his mother.

Javier shrugged. "I guess so."

For the next few days at recess, Javier played American football. He became quite good at throwing and catching the ball. He liked the game well enough, but he really missed the game he used to play.

Then one Saturday afternoon, Javier grabbed his old ball and took it to the park. He was dribbling it across the grass when he heard someone call his name. Some boys from his class were waving to him.

"Can we play soccer with you?" one of them yelled to Javier.

Javier was confused. What was this soccer they were talking about?

"Come on, Javier! Pass the ball to me!" another called.

Javier grinned and kicked the ball. Before he knew it, he was in the middle of the game he loved best. When they finally stopped playing, the boys gathered around Javier.

"You're a great soccer player, Javier!" one of the boys said. "Did you play soccer a lot in Mexico?"

Javier figured it out. He smiled and nodded. "In Mexico, it is called *futbol*."

The boys looked surprised. "Well, let's play some more *futbol*!" one of them said.

Javier grinned. Whatever it was called, he was glad to be playing his favorite game again.

