

Read the passage. Then answer each question.

Luke, Jay and Zach's Winning Game

It was the last game of the regular season, and Luke's baseball team, the Wildcats, had to win to make it to the playoffs. Luke really wanted his team to win because he had never been to the playoffs before.

The coach called the whole team into a huddle before the game began. He said, "Whether we win or lose, it has been a great season. You should all be proud of yourselves. Let's give it our best effort. But remember – a loss won't lessen the greatness of our team. We have all worked well together and deserve to be proud of our accomplishments."

The team really was a good one. All of the teammates got along well and encouraged each other. Luke's best friend, Jay, was on the team too. Luke and Jay were two of the best players on the team, and their teammates looked up to them.

The Purple Sox were the Wildcats' opponents. They had a pretty good record going into the game, but the Wildcats had an even better record. Both teams and all of their fans were super excited about the game.

The Wildcats got off to a good start. They had three runs by the end of the second inning and had prevented the Purple Sox from scoring any runs. Unfortunately the Wildcats had a scoring drought after the second inning. By the end of the fifth inning, the Purple Sox had taken over the lead and were ahead of the Wildcats by four runs.

Luke and Jay were starting to worry, but they knew they had to remain positive for the sake of the team.

“Don’t give up, Wildcats,” urged Jay.

“We can do it!” cheered Luke. “Be proud and give it your best effort, like Coach said,” Luke reminded the team.

Over the next few innings, the Wildcats were able to overcome their scoring drought, and by the bottom of the ninth inning, they were ahead of the Purple Sox by one run, but the Purple Sox had the last at bat for the game. Could the Wildcats hold them off?

There were two outs, and the Purple Sox had one man on first base. The way their lineup fell, their last batter was one of their weakest players. His name was Zach. Everyone liked Zach, but he was known throughout the league to be an easy out. It wasn’t looking good for the Purple Sox.

Zach approached the plate looking very nervous. His Purple Sox teammates cheered him on with hollers of support. Then they started chanting, “Go Zach. Go Zach. Go Zach. Go” Before too long, the fans joined in on the chant too. Even the Wildcats started cheering because they knew how hard Zach always tried, and they knew what it felt like to not be able to hit the ball. Everyone wanted to see Zach succeed with a hit.

Zach started to feel a change flow through his body. He was ready to hit the ball into the stands to help his team win the game.

Zach swung hard at the first pitch but missed – strike one. He watched the second pitch coming and knew it was the one. He focused hard and swung the bat nice and smoothly. All of a sudden he felt a powerful connection

and heard the *thwack* of the bat hitting the ball. The ball flew just beyond the pitcher's reach and landed short of the outfielder.

Zach ran as hard as he could to first base. He made it. He finally had a single, and his teammate was able to advance to second base. Everyone was tingling with joy.

The next Purple Sox batter was up. Zach felt the excitement; he was ready to run. They might just win the game after all. The batter watched the first two pitches pass by. The third pitch was a different story though. The batter hit a fly ball far into outfield. Unfortunately it wasn't far enough. Luke was able to catch the ball and save the game for the Wildcats.

When the game ended, both teams shook hands and congratulated each other. It really was a win for everyone. Luke, Jay and the Wildcats made the playoffs, and the Purple Sox saw their teammate Zach have his first hit. They were thrilled for him. Zach was thrilled too.

Answer the Questions:

1. After reading the fourth paragraph, which team did you think was more likely to win?

2. Based on context, what do you think the word *drought* means?

3. What was the Purple Sox score at the end of the fifth inning?

4. Why did Luke and Jay have to remain positive for their team?

5. Why do you think Zach felt a change flow through his body?

6. What is the difference between winning a game and being a winner?