

## Game Five

By Pete Hsu

Illustration by Brenda Chi

Curriculum developed by Andrew Ramirez



## OVERVIEW

### Quick-Glance 10 Points for Usage Guide

<b>Student Population</b>	
Age/Grade-Level Appropriateness	* 16-18/ 11th - 12th grade
Genre/s	* Fiction
Length	* 5,093 words (25 min read)
Content Advisories	*References to drugs * Language
One-Sentence Summary	Amidst a world of harsh realities — abandonment, death, and fear of the unknown — a young narrator questions his faith in a “loving” God.
<b>Lesson Planning</b>	
Topics & Key Themes Overview	<p><b>Topics:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Can a higher power exist in an unfair world?</li> <li>* The value of community</li> <li>* Finding identity through sports</li> <li>* Questioning the status quo</li> <li>* Mob mentality and human cruelty</li> <li>* Coming of age in a tough environment</li> </ul> <p><b>Themes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Faith</li> <li>* Trust</li> <li>* Integrity</li> <li>* Identity</li> <li>* Apostation/Doubt</li> <li>* Friendship</li> </ul>
Historic Events/Time Period for Study	* Aids crisis in the 1980s * Taiwanese culture and heritage
Complementary Text	* Poem by Chen Chen: <a href="#">“In The Hospital”</a> * Article: <a href="#">Magic Johnson’s HIV Disclosure Helped to Shatter Stigmas</a> * Article: <a href="#">The Lakers Are Sick, Magic Johnson Is Healthy: An AIDS Lesson From An Art Exhibit</a>
Author	<b>Peter Hsu</b> was born in Taipei, Taiwan and currently resides in Southern California’s San Gabriel Valley.

<p>Key Common Core Standards (found in detail following the curriculum)</p>	<p>Grades 9th-10th Common Core Standards:</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1            CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2            CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3            CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.7            CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.9            CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.7</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.C            CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.D            CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.E            CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9.A            CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9.B            CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2.A            CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2.B            CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2.C</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.A            CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.B            CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.C            CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.2            CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.3</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.1            CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.3</p>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

### Author Biography

**Peter Hsu** is the author of the short story collection *If I Were The Ocean, I'd Carry You Home* (Red Hen Press, 2022) and the experimental chapbook *There Is A Man* (Tolsun Books). His writing has also been featured in *The Los Angeles Review*, *The Bare Life Review*, *F(r)iction Magazine*, *Faultline Journal of Arts and Letters*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, and others. He was a 2017 PEN America Emerging Voices Fellow and the 2017 PEN in the Community Writer in Residence. He was born in Taipei, Taiwan and currently resides in Southern California's San Gabriel Valley.

### Artist Biography

**Brenda Chi** was born in Los Angeles (SGV) and was raised by sitcoms and cartoons. She makes art that shines a light on Asian American stories and experiences. Her personal goal is to make work that can elevate all BIPOC, to empower and inspire others. She's also a multidisciplinary artist, with a background in web comics as an Associate Art Director, worked in animation, educational illustration, and apparel consumer products. She also a small business owner, running her own art shop, selling work about the AAPI experience! On her spare time, she hangs out with her two one-eyed cats, Compton and Lychee, in a home filled with plants. You'll often find her with green hair, sipping Horchata or a Taro Milk Tea! Find more on her website: <https://brendachi.com/>.

### SYNOPSIS

When their father suddenly departs, young Chris must navigate life with his older brother John. Chris and John find community at their local Taiwanese church — holding tight to their strong bonds of faith and

basketball. But in the early days of the AIDS crisis, several of their friends are ostracized for contracting the disease, and left to suffer alone without a community. Witnessing this darker side of humanity, this leads Chris to question his faith, and deepen his bond with his brother John despite an unjust world.

## CURRICULUM

### Pre-Reading & Themes Activity Options

#### Topic

Journaling:

In a 15-minute journal entry, explore the following prompt:

Do you believe there is a “higher power” that controls and commands the outcome of humanity, or is human experience driven by random chance? Or perhaps you believe the truth is somewhere in the middle — perhaps a higher power that can control some things, but not others. Wherever you land on this answer, be sure to provide examples from our world to support your theory on this big question.

NOTE: Understandably so, this is a BIG question, but undoubtedly one we think about as intelligent people. So if you aren’t sure about where you stand on this question, it is OK to say “I don’t know.” But be sure to explain why you are unsure, and provide examples from our world that support your uncertainty on the existence of a higher power.

#### Main Ideas

Small-Group Discussion:

In groups of four...

STEP ONE: Find ONE thing that you all share in common, or like (ie, we are all the youngest child, we all like the color green, we were all born in spring, etc).

STEP TWO: Find ONE thing that distinguishes you from everyone else (ie, I am the only one who likes volleyball, I am the only one who likes horror movies, etc).

After you determine one thing you all share in common, and one thing that you don’t... lightly reflect on whether you knew this about each other already. Then...

STEP THREE: As a group, discuss whether it is more important for groups to share everything in common, or disagree (politely) on everything. As you discuss, consider which option gives the group the best chance of growing together and being happy.

#### Passage-Specific Themes

Small-Group and Class Discussion:

Read the following passage from “Game Five” by Peter Hsu. Discuss the questions below in small groups, then share your ideas with the class:

*When our father moves back to Taiwan, he leaves John in charge. He gives him a list of rules for how to take care of me. The list covers school, money, girls, sports, and religion, and also stuff like hygiene and cooking. John says that it’s too long. Our father says that John could do with*

*following these rules himself. Then they argue, John’s main point being that our father should stay if he’s this concerned, and then our father’s main point being that we should be grateful he didn’t just disappear in the middle of the night like Cho Yuan’s father. They go on like this for what seems like a long time. When they finish, they both have the same neutral expression on their faces, so it’s hard to tell who won the fight. But the new list, it has only three rules: 1) do your homework; 2) go to church every Sunday; 3) watch all Lakers games. Our father says that he is confident that if we follow these three instructions, I’ll turn out okay. Then he and John shake hands.*

Question One: Based on their interaction in this passage, what kind of relationship do you think John and the dad have? Provide two examples from the text to support your answer. (Note: Context is king. Therefore, your examples need not be perfectly concrete as you may choose to explain what you can reasonably infer from an ambiguous line.)

Question Two: After John and the dad agree to shorten the list of “guidelines” for Chris, why do you think they both agree to keep all Lakers games? What is it about basketball — or perhaps the Lakers specifically — that makes both John and the dad agree this should be an integral part of Chris’s life?

**Universal Themes**

Think about “abandonment” as a theme in this story. Each character, in one way or another, has been abandoned. Job, the biblical character Cho mentions, is also abandoned by God. Inversely, the characters experience a strong sense of community — through church and sports — that counters this sense of abandonment.

With this in mind: **Do you think basketball and religion are equally important to Cho’s survival as a person who has been abandoned? Or do you believe one is more important than the other?** (As you answer, consider: What do basketball and religion have in common... where do they differ?)

**Key Vocabulary**

Definitions are context-dependent. Make sure any definitions you look up or work from are the ones that most correctly fit in the context of the story.

Level One	Level Two	Level Three
podium	resigned	seamless
sermon	sanctuary	dislodge
papasan	obedient	AIDS
meager	celibate	hypocrite
kimchi jjigae	Job	nostalgic

**Vocabulary Activity Options**

1. SET UP: Write each word on an individual notecard, and have groups of students take 3 cards at random.

ACTIVITY: Groups then look at the three cards they have drawn. For example, maybe they drew podium, obedient, and papasan. Together, students will write a SHORT STORY that fulfills the following requirements by incorporating their 3 vocab words in the following way:

\*One used as the title of their creative piece

\*One used in the opening sentence of their story

\*One used as a theme, or inference in the story... in other words can we INFER this word from your story without you saying it (for example, a story about a person remembering a fond moment... vocab word: nostalgic).

*If time remains, students may share their group work with the class.*

2. Comb through the story and find 5 additional words that are not listed in the vocabulary list that you would ADD in. Do not worry about which level they fit into. Rather, pick 5 words that interest you and list them on a sheet of paper along with their definition. Then, pick one word from your list, and answer this question: How does this word help or influence the story, “Game Five” by Peter Hsu, at large?
3. Google Palooza!  
Pick five words from the list and put them into a google image search. From the first page, pick 5 images that you feel are best associated with the meaning of the word. As always, Google will draw from news articles, essays, social media, etc to source images — so with this range in mind, be sure to select images that are both appropriate and meaningful to the definition of the word.

### Post-Reading Class Discussion Options

1. Why do you think the father leaves John and Chris, to go back to Taiwan? Do you believe the father has good reasons for leaving, or not?
2. Why do you think the author chooses to “scaffold” this story with the Lakers/Bulls basketball final series? What effect does this formatting have on your understanding (and enjoyment or non enjoyment) of this story?
3. How does Cho treat Margaret after she contracts AIDS? Is it consistent with what a “good person” would do? Why do you think Cho acts the way he does? Do you believe the church plays a part in Cho’s behavior?
4. “No matter what you do, how hard you try, how good a person you are, God may or may not give a shit in the end.” Why does John say this to Chris? What is John directly quoting, and what is John also referring to (two different things) when he says this?
5. Do you think John is doing a good job “raising” Chris, after their dad leaves? Provide reasons for why or why not.

### \*\* Text-Dependent Question Options

1. Do you believe the church that John, Cho, and Chris attend in “Game Five” is an accepting, or inclusive, church? Provide examples from the text to justify your answer.

2. Cho compares Chris to the basketball player AC Green because they are both “pure of heart.” Do you believe this to be an accurate assessment of Chris? What examples from the text support or negate this assertion that Chris is this way.
3. Strong creative writing can be defined as transporting the reader into the world, where the unique sights, smells, sounds of the story come to life. With this in mind, identify 3 separate moments where the story “comes to life.” Examples of this can be a particularly well written description, or a moment of authentic dialog, or even a quality transition from one scene to the next, that moves the story through your mind like a movie. Whatever the example, identify 3 moments like this in the story, and explain their significance to you.
4. How does the artwork enhance or influence your understanding of “Game Five” by Peter Hsu. Before you answer, here are a few things to consider: Did you read the story before you looked at the artwork? Does the artwork connect or interpret a specific scene from the story? What are the dominant colors being used, and how does that connect with the specific attitude or tone of the story?

## Writing Exercises

### Narrative

“Game Five” by Peter Hsu tells a story that is deeply rooted in cultural specifics. Small references to foods (kimche jjingae) and furniture (papasan) are just a few examples. Additionally, the culture of basketball is also referenced heavily too. Together, all these specifics go to build a world that feels rich and authentic. With this in mind, take a moment to think of the culture that surrounds you. This could have to do with your heritage, your family, your interests, the school you attend, anything! For example, you and your classmates all share a common culture in the school you attend. Despite some differences, our cultures always overlap in many ways too. Exploring differences and commonalities is what makes life interesting!

Guided Tour: Write a short story where you give Chris a tour of your world. This could be as straightforward as picking Chris up from the airport and showing him around, but feel free to be as creative and “out of the box” as you want! In your story, be sure to include strong details and descriptions that create a sense of culture in your work. Aim for one page minimum length. Happy writing!

### Descriptive

*Serge puts two cigarettes between his lips and lights them both at the same time. He gives one to John. I feel like telling John not to take it, but I don't. Then the two of them smoke and tell stories about the old days. Once in a while, John'll let me take a sip from his beer, and Serge will try to include me in the conversation. He says things like, "Someday, little man, you'll have better stories than ours. I mean it. And I don't mean just party stories. You're gonna be somebody."*

*Then Serge starts crying. John grabs hold of him and pulls him into a tight hug, each of them resting their chin on each other's shoulder. It's sweet and also funny because they both keep smoking the whole time.*

In a one page response, write about a time that you would describe as happy and sad at the same time (see: bittersweet). This could be similar to the moment described above, in “Game Five” by Peter Hsu, where the two characters embrace in a tearful moment, but the narrator notes how it's funny that they keep smoking the whole time. Another example could be graduation. Sad, of course, because you aren't going to see all your friends next year, but happy too because you are moving onto bigger and better things!

Whatever shape your story takes, write about a time that was both happy and sad (see: bittersweet).  
Happy writing!

### Complementary Text Option

Read this poem, “In the Hospital” by Chen Chen:

*My mother was in the hospital & everyone wanted to be my friend.  
But I was busy making a list: good dog, bad citizen, short  
skeleton, tall mocha. Typical Tuesday.  
My mother was in the hospital & no one wanted to be her friend.  
Everyone wanted to be soft cooing sympathies. Very reasonable  
pigeons. No one had the time & our solution to it  
was to buy shinier watches. We were enamored with  
what our wrists could declare. My mother was in the hospital  
& I didn't want to be her friend. Typical son. Tall latte, short tale,  
bad plot, great wifi in the atypical café. My mother was in the hospital  
& she didn't want to be her friend. She wanted to be the family  
grocery list. Low-fat yogurt, firm tofu. She didn't trust my father  
to be it. You always forget something, she said, even when  
I do the list for you. Even then.*

#### \*\* Writing Exercise

In “Game Five,” Hsu writes:

When we see her, it takes me a second to understand who it is. Margaret had been athletic and outdoorsy before, but now she's pale and skinny. Kinda boney and puffy at the same time. There are little circles on her arm of small, purple pools. I had not realized that someone could get that sick that fast. I try not to stare, but I do look whenever I think she isn't looking.

We sit, and John puts the food out, family style, on top of the flattened bags. He gets a steak knife from the kitchen and cuts the steaks into strips. He puts it all out in a kind of a mini-buffet, but Margaret barely eats, picking up a few fries and dipping them in house dressing.

The game is on the television. I take a soda and sit on the papasan. John and Margaret are on the couch. During commercial breaks, instead of talking about basketball, they talk about CSUN, John's classes: Lit Survey, Research Methods, Identity. His grades are good. Margaret seems proud. Then they talk about Cho and how the church is doing. They talk about music ministry. They talk about the other young people, the kids who used to spend their weekends here in this apartment, some of whom might want to send Margaret their best wishes, but none have actually come to see her.

John says, “They're fucking hypocrites.”

Both excerpts describe the difficulties of illness, specifically the day-to-day emotional struggles a sick person might feel, as well as the difficulty friends might have being supportive over the long term. In a situation like this, there are no right or wrong answers. People cope with illness in different ways, and each situation is unique.



PROMPT: How does the author in each passage show the effect disease (or sickness) has on the sick person? What effect does the same illness have on their friends? Please cite specific examples from both texts to support your claim.

### Interactive Classroom Activity

Students read one of the two following articles:

- Article: [Magic Johnson's HIV Disclosure Helped to Shatter Stigmas](#)
- Article: [The Lakers Are Sick, Magic Johnson Is Healthy: An AIDS Lesson From An Art Exhibit](#)

After, students will pair up in groups of threes, where at least one person has read a different article. Together, students will discuss the following questions:

1. How did this article change or enhance my understanding of "Game Five" by Peter Hsu
2. What is the relationship between health and money?
3. What is the MAIN detail you'd share with some who did not read this article?

After, students may share their findings and discoveries with the class.

### COMMON CORE STANDARDS REFERENCE

*This story and its exercises are appropriate for 9th grade and above. 9th- and 10th-grade standards are cited.*

#### Pre-Reading & Themes Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.C: Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.D: Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.E: Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.2: Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.3: Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

#### Vocabulary Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1: Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.7: Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment (e.g., Auden’s “Musée des Beaux Arts” and Breughel’s Landscape with the Fall of Icarus).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.9: Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone). (See grade 9–10 Language standards 4–6 for additional expectations.) CA.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.7: Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment (e.g., Auden’s “Musée des Beaux Arts” and Breughel’s Landscape with the Fall of Icarus).

### **Post-Reading Class Discussion Options**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9.A: Analyze a. Apply grades 11–12 Reading standards to literature (e.g., “Demonstrate how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century work [e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare]

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9.B: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning [e.g., in U.S. Supreme is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious Court Case majority opinions and dissents] and the premises, purposes, and reasoning.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2.A: Introduce a topic or thesis statement; organize complex ideas, concepts, a. Introduce a topic or thesis statement; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions; and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes )d include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics, multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2.B: Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, oc( extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.A: Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

### **Text-Dependent Question Options**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.7: Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment (e.g., Auden’s “Musée des Beaux Arts” and Breughel’s Landscape with the Fall of Icarus).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.9: Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).

### **Writing Exercise Options**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2.C: Use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9.A: Analyze a. Apply grades 11–12 Reading standards to literature (e.g., “Demonstrate how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century work [e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare]

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2.B: Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.A: Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

### **Complementary Reading Text (Comparative Writing Exercise)**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.7: Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment (e.g., Auden’s “Musée des Beaux Arts” and Breughel’s Landscape with the Fall of Icarus).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.9: Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone). (See grade 9–10 Language standards 4–6 for additional expectations.) CA.

### **Activity Options**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.B: Work with peers to set rules for collegial discussions and decision-making (e.g., informal consensus, taking votes on key issues, presentation of alternate views), clear goals and deadlines, and individual roles as needed.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.C: Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.3: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.