

BY THE TWO-TIME NEWBERY MEDAL-WINNING AUTHOR

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*The View from  
Saturday*





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**M**rs. Eva Marie Olinski always gave good answers. Whenever she was asked how she had selected her team for the Academic Bowl, she chose one of several good answers. Most often she said that the four members of her team had skills that balanced one another. That was reasonable. Sometimes she said that she knew her team would practice. That was accurate. To the district superintendent of schools, she gave a bad answer, but she did that only once, only to him, and if that answer was not good, her reason for giving it was.

The fact was that Mrs. Olinski did not know how she had chosen her team, and the further fact was that she didn't know that she didn't know until she did know. Of course, that is true of most things: you do not know up to and including the very last second before you do. And for Mrs. Olinski that was not until Bowl Day was over and so was the work of her four sixth graders.

They called themselves The Souls. They told Mrs. Olinski that they were The Souls long before they were a team, but she told them that they were a team as soon as they became The Souls. Then after a while, teacher and team agreed that they were arguing chicken-or-egg.



Whichever way it began—chicken-or-egg, team-or-The Souls—it definitely ended with an egg. Definitely, an egg.

People still remark about how extraordinary it was to have four sixth graders make it to the finals. There had been a few seventh graders scattered among the other teams, but all the rest of the middle school regional champs were eighth graders. Epiphany had never before won even the local championship, and there they were, up on stage, ready to compete for the state trophy. All four members of Maxwell, the other team in the final round, were in the eighth grade. Both of the Maxwell boys' voices had deepened, and the girls displayed lacy bra straps inside their T-shirt necklines. The fact that the necklines were out-sized and that the two pairs of straps matched—they were apricot-colored—made Mrs. Olinski believe that they were not making a fashion statement as much as they were saying something. To her four sixth graders puberty was something they could spell and define but had yet to experience.

Unlike football bowls, there had been no season tallies for the academic teams. There had been no best-of-five. Each contest had been an elimination round. There were winners, and there were losers. From the start, the rule was: Lose one game, and you are out.

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So it was on Bowl Day.

At the start of the day, there had been eight regional champs. Now there were two—Epiphany and Maxwell.



It was afternoon by the time they got to the last round, and Mrs. Olinski sat shivering in a windowless room in a building big enough and official enough to have its own zip code. This was Albany, the capital of the state of New York. This was the last Saturday in May, and some robot—human or electronic—had checked the calendar instead of the weather report and had turned on the air-conditioning. Like everyone else in the audience, Mrs. Olinski wore a short-sleeved T-shirt with her team's logo across the front. Maxwell's were navy; Epiphany's were red and were as loud as things were permitted to get in that large, cold room. The audience had been asked not to whistle, cheer, stomp, hold up signs, wave banners, or even applaud. They were reminded that this Bowl was for brains, not brawn, and decorum—something between chapel and classroom—was the order of the day.

Epiphany sat on one side of a long table; Maxwell, the other. At a lectern between them stood the commissioner of education of the state of New York. He smiled benevolently over the audience as he reached inside his inner breast pocket and withdrew a pair of reading glasses. With a flick of his wrist he opened them and put them on.

Mrs. Olinski hugged her upper arms and wondered if maybe it was nerves and not the quartering wind blowing from the ceiling vents that was causing her shivers. She watched with bated (and visible) breath as the commissioner placed his hand into a large clear glass bowl. His college class ring knocked bottom. (Had the room been two degrees colder, the glass would have shattered.) He withdrew a piece of



"In no other book this year were the potentials of both heart and mind in children laid out with such persuasive clarity...it's a jubilant, unique tour de force."

—John Peters, Chair, 1997 Newbery Committee

## *MEET THE SOULS*

- *Noah*, who quite by accident was best man at the wedding of Ethan's grandmother and Nadia's grandfather
- *Nadia*, a hybrid with a halo of red hair, a dog that's a genius, and a fondness for baby turtles
- *Ethan*, the silent second son of one of Epiphany's oldest families, who discovers he likes halos
- *Julian*, the strangest person on the school bus, who starts everything by inviting the others to a tea party

How did Mrs. Olinski, returning to teaching ten years after being paralyzed in an automobile accident, choose these four to be her sixth-grade Academic Bowl team? And how did this unlikely foursome become even unlikelier champions, in far more than just the state middle school competition? *The View From Saturday* is a rich and rewarding journey that answers these questions and raises many more.

★ "A jewel in the author's crown of outstanding work."

—*School Library Journal*, starred review

★ "Glowing with humor and dusted with magic."

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

◆ "Admirable acts, challenging ideas, and grace notes positively festoon this superb tale." —*Kirkus Reviews*, pointer review

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Simon & Schuster

Cover illustration copyright © 1996

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Ages 8-12

PRINTED IN USA

WEB SITE [www.SimonSaysKids.com](http://www.SimonSaysKids.com)

0298

US \$5.99 / \$6.99 CAN

ISBN-13: 978-0-689-81721-2

ISBN-10: 0-689-81721-5

EAN



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