

SPORTS ZONE!

CORNER KICK!



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For my favorite team: Alison, Eliza, and Charlie. — AM

**For my brother, Abhishek, for introducing this sport to me.
For my friends, Ayoush, Abhi, and Malathi. And for Lionel
Messi and the Arsenal Football Club. — AT**

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Believe

THE WORLD'S GAME



"Okay, everyone, close your books," Miss Hackett says as she stands up from her desk at Raintree Elementary and walks around the classroom. "Reading time is over."

"No fair," says Jasper. "I'm just getting to the best part of the story!"

“Pleeeeeeeeeeassse can we keep reading?” asks Ruby.

Miss Hackett walks to the front of the classroom.

“I love that everyone is enjoying their books,” she says. “But there is something special I want to tell you before lunch.”

Mo groans and turns toward Dougie, who is sitting next to him. “It’s probably Fish Stick Friday in the cafeteria,” Mo says. “Soooo special.”

Miss Hackett motions for Mo to shush.

“Can anybody tell me what worldwide event starts next week?” she asks.

“The International Napping Contest?” asks Harvey, yawning.



Miss Hackett sighs. “Anyone else have a guess?” she asks.

The room falls quiet.

“Here’s a hint,” Miss Hackett says. “It’s a sporting event that will determine the best team in the whole *world*.”

A kid in the middle of the room shoots up their arm. “The Super Bowl!” Davey says.

“Nice try, but all the NFL teams are in one country,” Miss Hackett replies.

“The World Series!” adds Amina, raising her hand.

“That *sounds* international, but there are only two countries that have Major League Baseball teams,” Miss Hackett says.



Jasper loves sports, and he often hears a sports announcer voice in his head. It's the kind of voice you hear on TV on the weekends. He hears it now: *These kids say they're big sports fans, but they don't know the answer! They need somebody to step up before lunch!*

A quiet voice in the front row calls out an answer.

"The World Cup starts next week," says Sofia, a new student from Texas. "It's a soccer tournament."

"Correct! And it's not just any tournament," Miss Hackett says. "It's the biggest sporting event on the planet! Countries from all over the world participate. So, next week, all our lessons will relate to the World Cup!"



Ruby raises her hand.
“Miss Hackett, there is a Men’s World Cup and a Women’s World Cup,” she says. “Which one are we talking about?”

Miss Hackett nods. She’s proud of Ruby for raising the point.

“Next week is the Men’s World Cup,” she replies. “Next year, it will be the women’s turn.”

“Well, let’s celebrate then, too,” Mo says.

“Of course,” Miss Hackett says. “Both tournaments are great!”

The bell rings.

“All this talk about soccer makes me want to kick a ball,” Mo says to his friends Ruby and Jasper. “Let’s play after school!”

