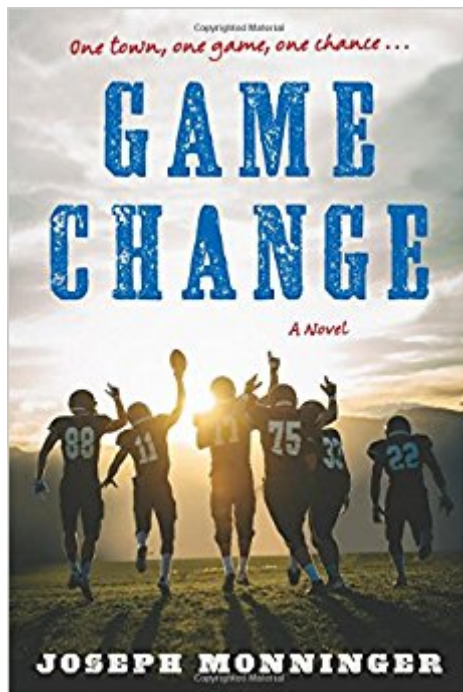


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# Game Change



## Synopsis

Seventeen-year-old Zeb Holloway is happy to work in his uncle's auto repair shop and cruise through school without much effort. He's a quarterback on his high school's undefeated football team, but he never plays. Why would he when T.T. Munroe is a walking, talking highlight reel is around? That is, until T.T. injured a week before the state championships. Now Zeb is starting. As he assumes the role of QB and team leader, the entire town is watching him. And when a college recruiter says Zeb could have a future beyond his small New Hampshire town, he realizes there's a bigger life out there for him . . . if he can play his heart out.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A coming-of-age story with the American dream simmering underneath, Monninger's novel will grab the attention of sports fans, even reluctant readers, and Zeb's adjustment to a role outside his comfort zone will resonate with many readers as they navigate their high-school years. . . full of heart and discovery." **Booklist** ". . . Monninger heartwarmingly and realistically portrays Zeb and his companions as relatable individuals who do not have the perfect lives. The description of football and the community pressure feel authentic . . . Recommended for a young adult collection looking for more sports fiction." **SLJ** "A coming-of-age story about a teen who gets the first and only start of his football career when their star quarterback is badly injured a week before a championship game | Subtle, nuanced, and full of heart." **Kirkus** "Hand this to your sports fans, struggling readers,

and those who secretly wish they could be the starting quarterback during the championship game. *Whippoorwill* • School Library Connection Praise for *Whippoorwill*: \* "The narrative adeptly portrays longing and belonging, and the heartbreak and hope of not only the human condition but the canine one as well. Monninger revitalizes the boy-and-dog trope in this sweet novel."

*Whippoorwill* • School Library Journal, starred review *Whippoorwill* \* "Narrator Clair is absolutely believable as the girl who is stable yet also negotiating her own loss." *Whippoorwill* • The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, starred review *Whippoorwill* "An unexpected, generous and poignant portrait of a girl, a boy, and the dog who brings them together." *Whippoorwill* • Huntley Fitzpatrick, author of *What I Thought Was True* "Masterful! Heartwarming! I read it in one sitting. I could not put it down. One of the best YA novels I have read in years." *Whippoorwill* • Roland Smith, bestselling author of *Peak* "Destined to become a classic. . . *Whippoorwill* is about the love and care and neglect and magical inter-species connections between an animal and members of a family, and it will both devastate and transform you. I love this book." *Whippoorwill* • Luanne Rice, New York Times bestselling author of *The Lemon Orchard* "A bighearted, gorgeous, timely champion for empathy, kindness, and common courtesy." *Whippoorwill* • Matthew Quick, New York Times bestselling author of *The Silver Linings Playbook* and *Forgive Me, Leonard Peacock* "*Whippoorwill* is an invitation to walk a mile in Wally's paws, and discover that sometimes there are strays of the human variety and they, too, need love, compassion, and, most importantly, trust." *Whippoorwill* • Jennifer Brown, author of *Torn Away* "A sweet story about a lucky dog that reveals itself to be a deeper story about a lucky human." *Whippoorwill* • Kirkus "A sweet, melancholy read for those whom a dog holds a special place in their hearts, and who might just wonder: in dog-human relationships, who rescues whom?" *Whippoorwill* • Booklist "Recalls William H. Armstrong's *Sounder*, Wilson Rawls's *Where the Red Fern Grows*, and Phyllis Reynolds Naylor's *Shiloh*. . . [it] will resonate most with animal lovers (I count myself among them), and readers who consider tears signs of a great ending." *Whippoorwill* • The Boston Globe

Joseph Monninger is an English professor and New Hampshire guide. He is the author of the young adult novels *Finding Somewhere*, *Wish*, *Hippie Chick*, and *Baby*. He also writes fiction and nonfiction for adults. Visit his website at [www.joemonninger.com](http://www.joemonninger.com).

This beautifully written YA novel spans a week in a senior's life in a small town in New Hampshire. The first day is a Saturday. The star QB is injured and won't be able to play in the state championship game the following next Saturday. It will fall to Zeb Holloway, who has never been off

the bench, to attempt to lead the team to victory on the upcoming Saturday. Zeb is a polite, intelligent, young man who hunts deer with his uncle and works in his uncle's garage. He lives with his mother, a waitress, in a camper hooked up to his uncle's house. His best friend Hawny is very funny. Shortly after the book begins he develops a beautifully expressed love interest. The excitement of the big game is always surrounding everyone in this small town, however because Zeb has come to his opportunity to grasp at the chance to be the star of the championship game far into the season, it is complicated for him to understand the implications of what it will mean to his future. The only things he knows are that people from his side of town never give up, and that he personally has an excellent throwing arm. I particularly loved the author's use of the five senses which he wove expertly through the story to give the reader a feeling of what it is like to live in a small town in New Hampshire in the season of November. Joseph Monninger really wrote a lovely story. I enjoy recommending it to YAs and to anyone who loves insightful stories about sports as a metaphor for life.

Game Change is a great football story and a fine coming of age tale that will find many fans among readers who find themselves at that uncertain time in their life when even imagining all the possibilities seems impossible. Zeb is an eighteen year old back up quarterback who suddenly finds himself in a starting role for the first time. Zeb's first start just happens to be in the state championship, presenting plenty of unexpected possibilities in a very short time. For a kid who is used to traveling under the radar, finding himself the focus of attention rocks his world, opening up doors he never expected and leaving him wondering about his future for the first time. The author's decision to tell this story in the short time frame of the five days leading up to the game was key to its success. This compressed the narrative and made up for a surprising lack in actual sports action, giving the story a propulsive energy that kept the pages turning at a fast rate. Zeb is a well drawn character that young readers will relate to and cheer for. Kudos to the author for not giving in to convention and delivering a realistic ending to a story that felt authentic and resonated with me both as a parent of a young man the same age as Zeb - and as a football fan! This is an excellent choice for readers grades 8 and up.

My son grew up on the Matt Christopher sports books and loved them. This book is firmly in that camp -- an underdog story with a happy ending. Much of the plot is recognizable: the main character, Zeb, is poor and lives in a camper, his father has left the family, his mother works as a waitress, hunting is a big part of the culture, and an injury to the star quarterback on the football

team gives Zeb his chance at glory. The names have that quirky ring that writers seem to think main characters need (Zeb, Hawny, Pushee, Ferron). Some elements of the familiar storyline have been updated, though. The love interest is Goth and the language contains a few words I'd rather not see in a book. But for any readers who have been the kid on the team who never gets put in -- whether it's football, baseball, basketball or whatever -- this story will resonate.

Zeb Holloway is a socially awkward, poor, sexually frustrated yet reasonable, back quarterback. When the main senior QB is injured and moved away he is suddenly thrust into the role and both ridiculed and congratulated by his peers. The way in which Zeb reacts is absolutely perfect and realistic; he is a very optimistic character and that is a little tiring. I found the book lacking and awkward in communications and relationships. I was disappointed in the ending but pleased in the outcome of the game. There wasn't enough character development and I seriously question the relationship between the author's mother and himself as the interactions between Zeb and his own mother is very.... Strange and fake. The transitions between paragraphs were choppy and hard to read. Not worth the time, unfortunately, however it was written fine.

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