

When I read I am often drawn to stories that are about people my own age who have problems that I might have, because then I can really feel how the character is feeling. In the short story "The Marble Champ" by Gary Soto a girl named Lupe has never been good at sports, but through determined effort she will do something she has never done before — win a sport.

At the start of the story Lupe had never been good at sports. She could not catch a high pop, kick a soccer ball, or shoot a basketball. One afternoon Lupe lay on her bed staring up at the shelves that held her awards. Her awards were for spelling, reading, science, piano, chess and for never missing a day of school. Not one of her awards was for a sport. "I wish I could win something, anything, even marbles."

Gary Soto uses lists in the beginning of the story to convey the point that Lupe has been a winner. For example "... the school's spelling bee champion, winner of the reading contest three summers in a row, blue ribbon awardee in the science fair, the top student at her piano recital and the playground grand champion in chess." Soto wants readers to notice that although Lupe has excelled in many areas in her life she has not

been good in sports.

Through determined effort Lupe will win in a sport! One night after dinner, Lupe and her dad went outside. It was dark, but with a couple of twists the porch light went on. The light shone down on the circle Lupe had drawn earlier in the dirt. Lupe set the marbles inside the circle and she dropped down to her knee, she released her thumb. Even though she completely missed the marble she did not stop. She was determined to perfect her shot. She practiced again and again and again. It started to become a regular movement in her thumb. It was getting late and she continued to work her way around the circle. Dropping, aiming, releasing. Lupe prepared for the championship by squeezing an eraser 100 times, by shooting marbles for three hours and by pushing up and down on her fingers 20 times.

Gary Soto uses repetition to illustrate determined effort as an important part of Lupe's character. For example "Squeeze, squeeze, squeeze. Practice, practice, practice." Repeating these words shows how Lupe's determination to work hard in order to succeed.

From this story I have learned that

determined effort can have . surprising results
Lupe had motivation to succeed, but I don't
think she was expecting to win her first
game. I think she had prepared herself as
best she could and she was going to try
her hardest. What I realize is that having
determined effort to always do your best is
important, because it can help make your
wishes come true.