

Read the text and complete the task that follows it.

Diamond Girl

How many people can spend their summers getting down and dirty with some of their best friends? I do, and I love every minute of it! For years, my summers have been spent on softball diamonds around the United States.

When I was ten years old and just four feet tall, my mother put a glove in my hand and sent me off to play with the big girls. My life hasn't been the same since. I've spent hours at catching clinics, pitching clinics, and hitting clinics. I've broken two fingers on the same hand in two summers. I've been hit by pitches, line drives, and bats. I've had the sun glaring in my eyes, dust swirling in my mouth, rain pelting my head, and water pooling around my feet. And I wouldn't trade it for anything.

I am a summer diamond girl. I play the game because I love it. I give up the beach, the mall, the movies, or just hanging out. I play against girls who are in college to help me improve. I sleep in dilapidated motels with funky-smelling rooms in the middle of nowhere because that's where the tournament is. I travel two hundred miles to play a Saturday game at eight in the morning because that's the schedule. I have a 9 P.M. curfew because that's my coach's rule. I do everything I can to improve because I don't want to ride the bench. I live for softball.

Summer diamond girls are a breed apart. You know us when you see us—we're stronger than most girls and have more fight in us. We never give up, and we never give in. We hold our heads high, as well as our bats. We keep our gloves down, and our butts too. We cheer each other on because there is no "I" in "team." We excel at what we do because we work harder than other people. We are summer diamond girls.

Most of us don't have a steady boyfriend; we don't have time. How does a boy understand that I would rather play softball than hang out with him? Or that the most important man in my life is my coach? Or just as I would never ask him to miss a game to spend time with me, neither should he ask me to do the same? Because I am a summer diamond girl.

We don't sing "Take me out to the ballgame." But sing we do: "Hit it for me, baby, hit it, hit, hit, hit it." In our repertoire are twenty cheers. One of the joys of traveling around the country is hearing a new cheer, bringing it home and adapting it to our team. Also high on the list is meeting new friends and visiting interesting places.

When I was twelve, my team traveled to Orlando, Florida, where we won the Walt Disney World Wide World of Sports Thanksgivingfest Tournament. We competed against teams that practiced year-round, while our glorious New England weather limits us to six months of outside ball, at best.

Last year, my team went to Virginia in the middle of July to compete in the PONY Nationals. Although we suffered some injuries and had a very disappointing tournament, we grew as a team. We also had the experience of pintrading for the first time. The kids liked it, but for some of the parents (including my mother), it became an obsession. The pins I collected are attached to a souvenir towel and have a prominent place in my room. A special smile crosses my face when I see them. They remind me that I am a summer diamond girl.

Using evidence from the text, write a paragraph explaining the author's point of view (perspective) about softball.

The rubric on the back will be used to score your response. Please write your answer on notebook paper or in the space provided by your teacher.