

Baseball - America's Pastime

Internet Lesson Plan

Grade level: 5-8

Teacher Activities

GOAL:

To use Internet resources to explore interesting topics related to baseball, America's game!

OBJECTIVE:

At the end of the unit, the participant will be able to:

- Determine the difference between statements that can be supported by evidence and those that are only a claim.
- Create a timeline of baseball's history.
- Find facts about Jackie Robinson's life to create an epitaph.
- Write a newspaper article commemorating Robinson's break into baseball.
- List other African American players who were first in their sport.
- Create a biographical sketch about a baseball player.
- Survey the class for name recognition of other first African Americans in sports and graph the results.
- Write a sports column about similar barriers that both Jackie Robinson and Tiger Woods had to overcome.
- Compare the salaries of Jackie Robinson and Albert Belle.
- Create a bar graph showing the differences in salaries based on Consumer Price Index information.
- Design an informative brochure for the All American Girl's Professional Baseball League.
- Create a female league including name, home city, mascot, slogan, and colors.
- Complete a chart describing new ballparks being planned.
- Create an advertising campaign for a ballpark of the future.

DURATION:

Two to three weeks, 1/2 hour to 1 hour on-line each day.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY:

Students should work in pairs or small cooperative groups and use Internet stations to research topics. Print the pages when necessary to complete the activities off-line. Products that are a result of student research can be stored in their folders for evaluation at the end of the activities. Encourage students to do additional research both off-line and on-line.

These activities are designed to be interdisciplinary so students see connections between different subject areas. Activities deal with each the subject area; however, students will complete tasks that are cross-curricular within each activity.

PREREQUISITE:

A short introduction to the Internet with information on using addresses or completing searches using a Web browser is necessary. Students should also be familiar with the concept of "hypertext" so they can do research at several levels. If students do not have an extended period of time to complete their research, bookmarks can and should be used.

ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION:

The activities in this unit will be evaluated on the basis of student participation and performance. Team folders will include information gathered in the process of completing the activities. Encourage cooperative learning, group process, problem-solving, competition, and the use of the Internet as these activities are completed. Serve as facilitator and guide throughout the activities.

OTHER RELATED ACTIVITIES:

Activity 1:

- Write a newspaper article about the history of baseball. Remember to use a journalistic style of writing. Desktop publish your article if possible. Find information about the first teams at the Web site "Total Baseball" at <http://www.totalbaseball.com>.
- Research where the first game of the season is generally played each year. Create a pamphlet advertising the first game of the season. How will you attract fans to this event?

Activity 2:

- Using the Web page "50 Interesting Facts about Robinson" at <http://www.usatoday.com/sports/baseball/sbjack09.htm>, find some interesting facts about his childhood, his parents and the injustices he and his family suffered. Create a "Did you know..." fact sheet on Robinson.
- Create a civil rights timeline which depicts civil rights events and baseball events. How do they overlap?

Activity 3:

- What would be the most difficult part of being the first at anything? Write a diary entry of a person that is doing something new for the first time. How would you feel?

Activity 5:

- Find the salary of one of your favorite players. Using an Almanac, look up "Salaries" in which the salaries of many public officials are listed. Compare the salaries of these people to professional athletes.
- Debate the issue of whether or not professional athletes should be paid the salaries they are. Make a list of pros and cons and use them in your debate.

Activity 6:

- Create a bar graph showing the number of teams that played each season.
- Write short biographical sketches of your favorite players or team.
- Write a position paper on why or why not women should be allowed to play professional baseball. If yes, should their uniforms differ? Design a sample uniform.
- Create a baseball card for one of the players.
- Compare women's baseball to men's baseball. What are the similarities? What are the differences?

Activity 7:

- Create a space-age ballpark for the 21st century. What would remain the same and what would change?
- Create a Venn diagram of the characteristics of current ballparks and your new 21st century ballpark.
- Name current stadiums being replaced by new stadiums. Find the information using the Web page "Ballparks" at <http://www.ballparks.com>. Compare the seating capacity of the planned and present stadiums.
- Many of the new stadiums have corporate sponsors. How do you think that will affect baseball and other professional sports? Do you think this is a good idea? List the stadiums and ballparks that bear the names of corporate sponsors.

Other activities:

- Track the pennant race. Create a daily listing of baseball games and scores on a bulletin board. Keep a tally of runs earned for each team, hits and errors. Indicate the leader in each category. Visit the Web site "USA Today" at <http://usatoday.com> for updated scores!
- Predict what teams will end up in the World Series. Chart your class members' responses. How many selected the same team?
- Research the Negro Leagues at "Introduction to Black History" at <http://www.totalbaseball.com/nav/History/Blkball.htm>. Did you discover any unsung heroes? List other players you feel deserve recognition and provide reasons why.
- Using baseball cards, sort them in as many ways as you can. Make a list of the various categories.
- Look for the Web page of your favorite team. What kind of information can you find? How does it compare to other sites you've visited? How can it be improved?
- Visit the "National Baseball Hall of Fame" at http://enews.com/bas_hall_fame/overview.html. Create an overview of the exhibits you can visit on-line and what they contain.
- Find out about the Black Sox Scandal of 1919 by going to the Web page "The Eight Men" at <http://www.polaris.net/~shoeless/soxplayr.htm>. Who was involved? Describe events leading to this event. Do you know of any other scandals involving baseball players? How did these scandals impact baseball?
- Make a list of baseball movies, create a rating system, rate the movies and share it with your class.
- Choose a partner and compare baseball stats of your favorite players. Visit "Baseball Stats" at <http://www.baseballstats.com> to get the information you need! How would those stats change if they played 4 more games and got 3 hits? Recalculate the new averages using this information. Make up word problems for another student using other players and different circumstances!
- Create a top 10 list of the most impressive records as found on the "Baseball Stats" Web site at <http://www.baseballstats.com>.
- In a paragraph defend the position that baseball should be America's sport. If you think another sport should take its place, write the reasons in a persuasive paragraph.

Software connections:

- Measurement, Time and Money, Level II, Measure Up: Use the graphmaker tool to create your own bar graphs.
- Math and More 3, Food for Thought, Explore: Use graphing tools to create both bar graphs and pie charts.
- The Children's Writing and Publishing Center: Create stories, letters, lists and mini-posters.
- The Student Writing Center: Create stories, letters, lists and posters.

- Reading for Information, Level III: Batter Up: Read a story on baseball.
- World Book Encyclopedia: Research baseball history, players and teams.
- Tom Snyder's Timeline: Create timelines with labels.

MATERIALS NEEDED BY TEACHER:

- Pencils, pens and markers
- Large chart paper
- Colored paper for brochures
- Large roll paper for making a timeline
- Books on baseball history
- Maps
- Almanacs
- Folders

TEACHER NOTES:

Baseball is a high interest topic with many opportunities to focus on specific math and language arts skills as well as explore history. These activities were designed to encourage students to explore many topics connected to baseball using the Internet resources outlined. Included are other activities you might incorporate into this unit that are not Internet dependant. Don't forget to include your own activities as well. Have fun and enjoy exploring America's favorite pastime, baseball!

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Student Activities

ACTIVITY #1 - DID DOUBLEDAY REALLY INVENT AMERICA'S PASTIME?

Controversy still rages over baseball's true origin. Nobody knows for certain where and when it was invented. Many references to a game that seems like baseball exist before the date Doubleday founded the game. Try and determine what the true story of the beginning of baseball is.

Explore several sites to find how the game of baseball began:

- ✓ "Total Baseball: Our Game" at http://www.totalbaseball.com/nav/History/crnc_def.htm
- ✓ "The National Baseball Hall of Fame Page" at http://enews.com/bas_hall_fame/overview.html
- ✓ "Was Abner Doubleday Really the Inventor? " at <http://www.historybuff.com/library/refearlybase.html>

Then do these activities:

- When you have gathered your facts, divide them into two categories - statements that can be supported with evidence and those that are only claims.
- Create a timeline of baseball history with the facts you deem to be true.

ACTIVITY #2 - WHO WAS JACKIE ROBINSON?

When asked, "Who is Jackie Robinson?," many think that he was the first African American professional baseball player. But there is much more to discover about Jackie Robinson and his interesting connections to people and events. Complete a scavenger hunt to discover fun facts about Robinson.

Begin your scavenger hunt at the Web site "50 Interesting Facts About Robinson" at <http://www.usatoday.com/sports/baseball/sbjack09.htm>. Find the answers to these trivia questions:

- When was Robinson born? When was his death?
- What did his parents do?
- What hardships and triumphs did his mother have?

- Where did Jackie Robinson attend college?
- Did he win any awards in college?
- In what branch of the service did Robinson serve?
- How did Joe Louis affect Robinson's life?
- What did Jackie Robinson do 11 years before Rosa Parks made civil rights history?
- What is the significance of Robinson's "gentleman's agreement"?
- What hardships did Robinson endure while playing baseball?
- What were some of Robinson's nicknames? Why did he get them?
- What happened on these dates?
April 15, 1947
September 30, 1947
July 12, 1949
- On what teams did Robinson play?
- What job did he have after his baseball career?
- When was Robinson elected to the Hall of Fame?
- Now that you know more about the man behind the baseball player, write an epitaph for him. Try to include important points in his life as you remember this great legend of baseball.

ACTIVITY #3 - THE NEW FACE IN BASEBALL - A CELEBRATION OF 50 YEARS!

Fifty years ago the world was a much different place. No African American athletes played professional sports. Jackie Robinson was the first to break the color barrier in baseball. People didn't pay much attention to Robinson then, but 50 years later, he finally received the recognition he deserved. Research his triumphs as well as his tragedies.

- To begin exploring this fascinating story, go to "Jackie Robinson: Breaking Down Barriers" at <http://www.usatoday.com/sports/baseball/sbjackie.htm>. Read about his life by exploring sections of your choice. Be sure to read the following sections:
 - ✓ Clinton says Robinson's breaking color barrier was America at its finest
 - ✓ Robinson helped civil rights movement
 - ✓ Newspapers barely gave coverage to Robinson's debut
- Write a newspaper article that commemorates Robinson's break into the big leagues. Describe the world during that time.
- Do additional research on the Negro Leagues. You can find more information on the Web page "Introduction to Black History" at <http://www.totalbaseball.com/nav/History/Blkball.htm>. Select one other African American baseball player and create a biography for that player.

ACTIVITY #4 - OTHER FIRSTS!

Jackie Robinson was the first to break the color barrier into professional baseball. But there were many other brave and courageous athletes who also

broke that same barrier in their respective sports. Find out about other famous African American athletes.

- Begin your research at the Web site "The First Blacks in Major Pro Sports" at <http://www.usatoday.com/sports/baseball/sbjack04.htm>. Make a Who's Who entry for each athlete listed. List where you might find additional information.
- Survey your class to see how many recognize the names of the athletes. Are they as well known as Jackie Robinson? Make a graph of the players and how many times they were recognized.
- Relate what you have learned about Jackie Robinson and other "first" players to Tiger Woods. Although he plays a different sport, does Tiger Woods have the same barriers to overcome as Robinson did? What do you think? You are a sports columnist and now's your chance to give your opinion. Write a column.

ACTIVITY #5: NOT BLACK OR WHITE, BUT GREEN!

Great players from all nations and nationalities play America's favorite sport. Race is not an important issue, but salaries certainly are. Things have changed since 1947! If Jackie Robinson were playing the game today, he would be a wealthier man. Compare the salaries and statistics of two great baseball players, Jackie Robinson and Albert Belle, an outfielder for the Chicago White Sox.

Go to the Web site "Robinson's Annual Baseball Salary" at <http://www.usatoday.com/sports/baseball/sbjack07.htm>.

- What was the highest salary Robinson ever earned?
In that year, how much did Robinson earn for every home run?
- Belle recently signed a 5 year contract for \$55 million.
 - ✓ If he plays 162 games, how much will he earn for each game?
 - ✓ If he is at bat 4 times per game, how much will he make for each time at bat?
 - ✓ If he plays 162 games a year, nine innings each, how much does he make each inning?
 - ✓ How much more will Belle make than Robinson in one year? How many days will it take Belle to earn what Robinson did in a season?
- Create a bar graph that shows the difference in salaries based on the Consumer Price Index which appears on middle of the Web page. Use two colors, one to show the salary numbers in 1947 and another to show the adjusted salary numbers based on the Consumer Price Index. Can you figure out the difference based on a percentage?

ACTIVITY #6 - A WOMAN'S PLACE IS AT HOMEPLATE!

During World War II many of America's finest athletes left the United States to fight abroad. Baseball and other sports suffered from the loss of players. A

brand new league, the All American Girls Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL), was created to fill the gap.

This league was the subject of a popular movie "A League of Their Own," but it is also a true story. Many women who played the game eventually earned their place in a special Women in Baseball Exhibit in Cooperstown. Start your research about this special league by going to "All American Girls Professional Baseball League" Web page at <http://www.dlcwest.com/~smudge/index.html>.

- Read about the history of the league.
- Create a brochure about the league containing:
 - ✓ The founder and his affiliation with baseball
 - ✓ Events that played a key role in the development/demise of the league
 - ✓ Key people in developing the league
 - ✓ Modified rules
 - ✓ Important dates
 - ✓ The teams
 - ✓ League champs
 - ✓ Outstanding players
- Why do we not have such a league today? How do you think the public would respond? Let's find out! Create a female team including:
 - ✓ Name
 - ✓ Home city
 - ✓ Slogan
 - ✓ Mascot
 - ✓ Team colors
- Refer back to the history of the AAGPBL for additional information as you plan your future team.

ACTIVITY #7: BALLPARKS OF THE FUTURE!

Right now over 14 cities are creating plans and making decisions about building new baseball facilities for their professional teams. Research the cities that are building these new ballparks.

Go to the Web page "Ballparks" at <http://www.ballparks.com/baseball.html>. Look on the left side of the screen and choose the 5th icon. This site provides information about the teams and cities that will be building new facilities.

- Make a chart for the new ballparks being planned containing:
 - ✓ Stadium name
 - ✓ Team
 - ✓ City
 - ✓ Opening date
 - ✓ Interesting facts
- Which one would you like to visit when completed? Why? How far away is it from where you are? Use the "How far is it?" Web site at <http://www.indo.com/distance/>. Plan your trip!

- Choose one of the new ballparks and create an advertising campaign complete with a billboard, commercial, business card and yellow page ad.