HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Baseball is America’s sport. Developed in the mid-nineteenth century, it became popular among people from different ethnic and economic backgrounds. Civil War soldiers played it in the camps. Native American children played it at Indian assimilation schools. Other minorities sometimes played with whites until segregation in the U.S. succeeded in forcing them into their own leagues (which was not the case in Latin America).

Negro Leagues were popular in black communities until Jackie Robinson became the first African American to integrate baseball in 1947. Tennessee’s first African American baseball clubs started in the 1870s and 80s, with the Memphis Red Sox and the Nashville Elite Giants as two best known teams by the 1920s.

Many Tennessee towns and cities fielded amateur and professional baseball teams as early as 1877. Minor league teams have been organized under a number of regional leagues over the years, with the later twentieth century bringing in the structure of minor league teams as “farm teams” for the major leagues. Today, Tennesseans can enjoy the games of four minor league baseball teams: Smokies in Knoxville, Sounds in Nashville, Lookouts in Chattanooga, and Redbirds in Memphis.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

The Library of Congress has an extensive collection of primary sources related to baseball, including baseball cards, photographs, drawings, magazine covers, newspapers, and films. These primary sources can be used to meet curriculum standards in many subject areas, including math, art, social studies, and English.

This primary source set contains images that relate to the cultural impact of baseball. As a class, discuss the impact baseball has had on societies throughout the world. Students may chose a baseball player, team, or stadium to research, or they may also choose to look at other topics related to baseball, like women, African Americans, or team logos. Students can search the Library of Congress for primary sources related to their topic, then write research papers or create posters on their topics that incorporate these primary sources.

Students in art classes can use primary sources to design a baseball card, advertisement, or logo for a player or a team, updating those that they find on the Library of Congress Web site.

You can find more ideas in the lesson activity Past and Present: Using Baseball Statistics to Teach Math.

ADDITIONAL LINKS

- Baseball Cards, 1887-1914
- Baseball and Jackie Robinson
- Spalding Base Ball Guides, 1889-1939
- Historic Baseball Resources
- Primary Source Set: Baseball Across a Divided Society
- Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers (keyword: baseball)
- Baseball, Minor League and Baseball, Negro Leagues from the Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture
Oscar Stanage, [1911]

Who would doubt that I'm a man? / music by A.F. Groebl; words by M.S., [c. 1895]

Baseball game, Manzanar Relocation Center, Calif. / photograph by Ansel Adams, [1943]

Baseball fans--"Hot dogs" for fans waiting for gates to open at Ebbets Field, Oct. 6, 1920.

Spalding's official base ball guide, 1930
New wartime baseball. Cork-cushioned centers in baseballs—official in major leagues for more than a decade—are war-taboo. Rubber-cushioned centers, "borrowed" from stopped golf ball production, offer temporary relief. Left: cork-type ball; right: new baseball with rubber center. [1943]

Amateur championship game, Telling's Strollers vs. Hanna's Cleaners, Brookside Stadium, Sept. 20, 1914; attendance 100,000. [1914]

The ball game / Thomas A. Edison, Inc. [1898, video]

Baseball team at the Industrial School, Kearney, Nebraska [ca. 1914]

First colored world series, opening game Oct. 11, 1924, Kansas City, Mo. / photo by J.E. Mille[r], K.C. [1924]

Rickwood Field, Birmingham, Alabama [2010]

Female baseball player [c. 1913]

Playing baseball at Madison, New Jersey [1910]

Chicago White Sox baseball team and special five car Pullman train westward bound on the Denver & Rio Grande main line through the Royal Gorge / Geo. L. Beam, [1910]

Baseball Today [1911]
Members of the Democratic base ball team of the House of Representatives who will meet a team composed of Republican members next Saturday, snapped at their practice session today [between 1925 and 1930].

BASEBALL, CONGRESSIONAL, REPUBLICANS. STANDING: BARCHFELD OF PENNSYLVANIA; WINSLOW OF MASSACHUSETTS; DICK AUSTIN OF TENNESSEE; UNIDENTIFIED; J.R. MANN OF ILLINOIS; UNIDENTIFIED. SEATED: KALANIANAOLE OF HAWAII; C.B. MILLER OF MINNESOTA; UNIDENTIFIED [1913].


Spokane Indian School baseball team, Fort Spokane, Washington, ca. 1903.
Teachers: Providing these primary source replicas without source clues may enhance the inquiry experience for students. This list of citations is supplied for reference purposes to you and your students. We have followed the Chicago Manual of Style format, one of the formats recommended by the Library of Congress, for each entry below, minus the access date. The access date for each of these entries is March 3, 2011.


CITATIONS, cont.


