

## Learning about Baseball and History Through Film

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Grade Level: 9-12

Time: 2 class periods

Inquiry: This lesson will illustrate to students how sports can mirror the thoughts and ideals of a society at a specific time. Do sports influence social issues, or do social issues influence sports? Music and other social pastimes can take the place of baseball if applicable. The essential question is “How has baseball changed with the times?”

Objectives:

- 1) Students will explain how baseball reflects the issues and cultures of different historical time periods.
- 2) Students will compare the depiction of baseball’s importance in different historical periods.

Materials:

-Video Clips: (note- in the procedure this is the suggested order of display)

“Eight Men Out”- The “Champagne bonus” scene. Show some of the baseball action before this scene. In the scene itself, the players are given champagne for winning the pennant, but are shocked to realize that their promised bonus for doing so is actually champagne, not money.

“The Babe”- DVD scenes 6, 16. Scene six shows a drunken Babe Ruth showing up late to play a baseball game for the Boston Red Sox. Scene 16 shows Babe and Lou Gehrig’s 1927 homerun race. Both scenes include baseball action, fan behavior, and language of the times.

“A League of Their Own”- Start with the scene where a radio commentator is bemoaning the loss of femininity to masculine occupations. The next scene is a montage of baseball training and displays the “uniforms” the players were expected to wear. Finally, the next scene shows the players taking classes at a finishing school to ensure they are “lady-like.”

“The Jackie Robinson Story”- DVD scene 6. This scene details Jackie Robinson’s second spring training in white baseball and his first as a Dodger. Branch Rickey accosts the Dodger players who signed a petition against Robinson. Jackie faces racism on the field, but continues to succeed on the field.

“Field of Dreams”- James Earl Jones’ speech at the movies climax. Jones’ character, author Terrance Mann, speaks of baseballs link to America herself, how it has been crushed but has always come back. In this vein, baseball is seen as marking the time.

-Handout: Baseball in film. Includes opening question and a categorical graph students will fill out.

-DVD player, VCR, and television

Time: Approximately 60 minutes

Procedure:

Initiation

- 1) Teacher will pass out "Baseball in film" handout to students as they enter. On the board will be written, "What do you think of when you think of Baseball today?" Ask students to jot down some things on their paper in the appropriate space. After a minute, discuss this question with the whole class. (5 minutes)

Process

- 2) Explain activity to students. They will be watching several film clips that show baseball in the past. For each film, they will be analyzing one of four factors in groups (shown on sheet in front of them. Every time they see something that fits into one of the categories, they should simply record it in the appropriate box. (2-5 minutes)
- 3) Break students into four groups. Each group will be assigned one category to focus on for the film clips. Students will move into groups as needed. (1 minute)
- 4) Show clip of "Eight Men Out" to students. Students should be watching the clip, and taking notes for their specific category. Teacher will be preparing next set of clips (putting DVD in player) as well as circulating to assure student understanding of task. At end of clip, give students a minute or so to confer with one another about what they found. Teacher may help out certain groups who appear to be having trouble.  
-Repeat this process with the next four clips. Please note that the order alternates between DVD and VHS. We suggest this because it allows for smoother transitions. Each clip is between roughly 2-10 minutes long. (30-40 minutes)

Closure

- 5) Discussion of films and topics. Instruct students to pick out their favorite details from the films to share with the class. Students will then choose a speaker or presenter. Teacher will then allow each group a few minutes to present their findings. Instruct other students to write. Close discussion by asking students to compare these past images with the future. What has remained the same, what has changed? (10-20 minutes)

Assessment:

Informal

-Teacher will circulate throughout class to assure students understand the task at hand.

-During discussion, teacher can monitor student understanding through level of comfort discussing material. Teachers can also evaluate how students are able to pick out the similarities and differences of the past and the present. For example: were students able to notice the differences in culture of the past and the future.

-Baseball in Film sheets. Teacher can evaluate

Formal

-Although we did not prepare this, as this was an activity day lesson, teachers could design a homework assignment asking students to write about the differences between the past and the present. Students could use the films and their own experience as evidence. Teachers could ask students to focus on any of the categories on the "Baseball in Film Sheet" or perhaps simply ask students to compare the "culture of baseball/America" from one era to the next.

CT State Standards:

Educational experiences in **Grades 9-12** will assure that students:

- evaluate data within the historical, social, political and economic context in which it was created, testing its credibility and evaluating its bias
- demonstrate an understanding of major events and trends in world history, United States and local history from all historical periods and from all the regions of the world
- explain relationships among the events and trends studied in local, national and world history
- initiate questions and hypotheses about historic events they are studying

### **Baseball in Film Analysis Sheet**

Before viewing the film segments we will see in class today, please take a few minutes to respond to the following question with a one paragraph answer. - What you think about when you think of baseball today?

As you view the film clips, please note any examples or incidents from the films that relate to any of the categories below.

Racial Equality	
Pay	
Fashion/Equipment	
Male/Female roles	