



Unit: Daily Life

Lesson 4.9: Play Ball

Aim: To learn about the history of baseball in Brooklyn.

Objective: Students read a shared reading about the history of baseball in Brooklyn and respond to an archival picture of an early baseball game.

Materials:

1. Shared reading on overhead transparency
2. Baseball pictures on overhead transparency (or copies for small groups): Prison game <http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/civilwar/cwdoc053.html>, Brooklyn Athletics game <http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/civilwar/cwdoc086.html>
3. Optional: Letter about baseball games played in Brooklyn and by soldiers in 1861 <http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/civilwar/cwdoc025.html>

Procedure:

1. Ask students: Who has ever been to a baseball game? Have them describe the experience.
2. Model shared reading. Read again with class.

A note about shared reading: During a shared reading session, the whole class is on the same “page”—everyone’s attention is focused on the same overhead transparency. The teacher models the initial reading in several ways. In addition to simply reading the passage aloud, slowly and clearly, he or she reveals thoughts and reading strategies for the group. Be it visualizing, making connections, or noticing new or interesting vocabulary, these thoughts are shared so that students see and understand what goes on in the mind of a good reader.

3. In pairs, students write two “teacher questions” for the class to answer. Share and respond.
4. Students summarize reading in a short paragraph.
5. Ask class to brainstorm a list of things at a baseball game (including bleachers, refreshments, souvenirs, etc.).
6. In small groups, students look at picture of an early baseball game in Brooklyn. How is it different from a Cyclone, Met, or Yankee game today? Share.

New Yorkers started playing baseball even before the Civil War. In 1845, the Knickerbocker Base Ball Club was formed in Manhattan. A small committee created the first formal rules, many of which are still part of the game today. There were four bases; the fourth was called “home”; three strikes and the batter was out; three outs marked the end of a half inning; the batter was out if the ball was caught on a fly. One important difference was the length of the game. While today’s games are usually nine innings unless there’s a tie, teams played until the winner scored 21 runs.

The Excelsiors were a Brooklyn team formed in 1854. They played near Carol Park by Smith and President Streets. Soon the Putmans, Eckfords, and Atlantics joined the game. By 1858 there were 22 clubs in the New York area. Unlike the early Manhattan teams, whose players were from the upper classes, the Brooklyn teams attracted working class players who thought of the sport as more than “just a game.” They looked for talent and were serious about winning.

The fastball and curveball were both invented in Brooklyn. The first stolen base also happened in Brooklyn in the 1860s. The Civil War actually helped spread the popularity of the game across the country. Union soldiers from New York taught the Midwesterners the game during training. They even played in prison camps while the Confederates, despite their differences, watched and learned. Baseball was on its way to becoming our favorite national pastime.

(sources: www.hickoksports.com/history/baseba02.shtml,
www.brooklynonline.com/bol/membership/baseball.shtml)