

BASEBALL

THE TENTH INNING

A FILM BY KEN BURNS & LYNN NOVICK

Baseball Heroes

Grade Level: 7–12

Related Academic Subjects: Social studies, language arts, behavioral studies, U.S. history

Lesson Overview:

Why do human beings always seem to need heroes? American history was built on them and we find examples in all aspects of our culture. Some heroes are well known to all of us, while others do their work in obscurity. All genuine heroes achieve life-changing results. Athletes, especially famous athletes, are often revered as heroes. But are they truly heroic? Like most professional sports, baseball has a long list of larger-than-life personalities who have been seen as heroes. Some have overcome tremendous obstacles – poverty, racism, discrimination, or injuries. Some have made a real difference in the lives of others, and have dedicated their lives to being positive examples, always trying to do their best. Others achieved one-time performances that surpassed all human expectations. But when does this make them heroes? Have fame and celebrity become conflated with heroism in contemporary American life?

In this lesson, students will explore what it means to be a hero and examine the lives of several major league baseball players who might be considered heroes. They will then research one of the major characters presented in the “Baseball” series and develop a multimedia presentation chronicling the person’s life and actions analyzing whether or not this person deserves being called a hero.

Lesson Objectives: (The student will...)

- Explore the concept of heroism and develop descriptors to characterize this human quality
- Review the careers of four modern major league ballplayers and analyze whether they could be called heroes
- Research a character from the “Baseball” series and develop a multimedia presentation analyzing his or her heroic qualities.

Estimated Time for the Lesson:

- Opening activity: 30 minutes
- Video viewing activity: One 50-minute class period
- Multimedia project: Two 50-minute class periods plus research time

Video Segments:

Baseball: The Ninth Inning, Home

Chapter 3: “A Higher League”

Chapter 7: “Dear Hank Aaron”

Baseball: The Tenth Inning, Top of the Tenth

Chapter 7: “And Then Ripken Came Along”

Baseball: The Tenth Inning, Bottom of the Tenth

Chapter 3: “Ichiro”

Materials Needed:

- Individual computers connected to the Internet and/or computer projector
- Student handouts
 - Heroes Video Clip Viewing Activity
 - Profiles from the “Baseball” series
(<http://www.pbs.org/kenburns/baseball/players>)
 - Heroes Multimedia Project

Lesson Procedure:**Opening Activity**

Provide students with some background on the concepts of heroes. Tell them that this archetype is found in numerous literary works, from Homer’s “Iliad” and “Odyssey” to many of Shakespeare’s plays to the movie “Star Wars.” You might want to cover various aspects of the hero concept, explaining the classic hero and the tragic hero in Greek and Roman literature, and the mythic hero as popularized by Joseph Campbell (Mythweb <http://www.mythweb.com>; Joseph Campbell <http://www.folkstory.com/articles/campbell.html>). Also, have students think about and discuss more contemporary conceptualizations of heroism. Ordinary people who do good deeds, improve others’ lives, overcome obstacles and/or change for the better what it is they do.

Have students form small groups of three or four. Ask them to take out a sheet of paper and draw an oval in the middle. Have them write the word “hero” in the oval. Give each group two minutes to brainstorm one-word descriptors they feel characterize a hero and build a word web. They should also provide examples of characters they are familiar with in literature and/or life who display these characteristics. Ask them to share their top five descriptors for each category, and make a summary list of all the groups’ responses on the front board.

Then ask them to discuss in their small group the nature of heroism (you might put these questions on the front board for easy reference):

- What makes a hero? Is it an action they take or is it how they live their entire lives? Are they without imperfections?

- Do people have to be famous or have their actions become well-known to be considered heroes?
- What about ordinary people who do good work, are they heroes? Why or why not?
- Can athletes be heroes? What is heroic about what they do?
- Provide examples of how athletes represent heroes in the modern world.

Have several groups report their discussion to the class.

Video Analysis Activity

1. Divide the class into new groups of three to four students or keep them in the same groups from the opening activity.
2. Distribute the handout “Baseball Heroes Video Clip Review Activity” to all students. Review the directions with the class.
3. Have students view the video clips and then meet in their small groups to discuss the questions. Have a spokesperson from each group present the group’s response to the final two questions. Ask members of the class to respond to these characterizations.

Main Activity: Heroes Multimedia Project

In this activity, students will research the life of a major character presented in “Baseball” and create a multimedia presentation. Students may work individually or in small groups.

1. Either assign or have students select one of the personalities from “The Players” section of the “Baseball” Web site (insert link: <http://www.pbs.org/kenburns/baseball/players>).
2. Allow time for students to conduct research and construct their presentations.
3. Have students present their projects either online or in class. Students may develop a social networking site or Web page that presents all projects in a digital format. As an alternative, students can present their research on poster board.

Assessment:

Students can be assessed on their participation in class discussions and according to the following rubric for their presentations.

Category	4	3	2	1
Content (all required points from assignment are included)	Content covers topic in depth with details and examples. Student’s knowledge of subject is excellent.	Content includes essential knowledge about the topic. Student’s knowledge of subject appears to be good.	Content includes essential information about the subject, but there are one or two factual errors	Content is minimal OR there are several factual errors.
Presentation (appropriate use of text, images, and special	Presentation makes excellent use of font, color, graphics,	Presentation makes good use of font, color, graphics, effects,	Presentation makes use of font, color, graphics, effects,	Presentation’s use of font, color, graphics, effects, etc., distracts

effects)	effects, etc., to enhance the presentation.	etc., to enhance the presentation.	etc., to enhance the presentation.	from the presentation.
Organization	Content is well organized using headings or bulleted lists.	Content is logically organized overall.	Uses of headings or bulleted lists help organize the presentation, but organization appears flawed.	There is no clear or logical organizational structure, just information.

Extension Activities:

- Have students examine stars in other sports, such as the National Football League, National Basketball Association, World Wrestling Entertainment or National Hockey League. Who can be characterized as heroes? Students can construct projects similar to the one featured in this lesson.
- Have students explore the question of when athletes are heroes, and why. What purpose do they serve in the sport? How do their extraordinary accomplishments on the field enhance fans’ experiences and feelings about the game, about themselves, about what matters in life? Have students interview a sports psychologist or sportscaster when compiling their information. Students can write a newspaper or sports magazine article or develop a multimedia presentation.
- Have students consider the tragic hero who, because of an error in judgment or a tragic flaw, loses his or her way, with tragic results. Conversely students can explore the nature of the anti-hero who lacks the traditional traits of heroes—trustworthiness, courage, and honesty. Have students look at some of the baseball players who could be considered tragic heroes or antiheroes: Ty Cobb, Joe Jackson, Pete Rose, and Barry Bonds, and have them develop reports following the Heroes Multimedia Project guide adopted for antiheroes.

Resources:

(NOTE: In addition to the resources listed below, the teacher should encourage students to conduct research using traditional sources such as encyclopedias, books and magazines.)

- Baseball Web site (<http://www.pbs.org/baseball>)
- The Tenth Inning Web site (<http://www.pbs.org/tenthinning>)
- Major League Baseball (<http://mlb.mlb.com/index.jsp>)
- Baseball Legends (<http://baseballlegends.wordpress.com>)
- “Historic Baseball Resources” Library of Congress (<http://www.loc.gov/topics/baseball>)
- Antiheroes in Literature (<http://writing.learnhub.com/lesson/7614-anti-heroes-in-literature>)

- Myths, Heroes and Antiheroes
(<http://www.westerlycentre.uwa.edu.au/publications/myths-heroes-and-anti-heroes>)
- Joseph Campbell and *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*
(<http://mythosandlogos.com/Campbell.html>)

Academic Standards:

This lesson fits the following academic standards as set by the Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) (<http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks>)

Historical Understanding

Standard 2: Understands the historical perspective

Level III (Grades 6–8)

- Understands that historical accounts are subject to change on the basis of newly uncovered records and interpretations

Level IV (Grades 9–12)

- Analyzes the values held by specific people who influenced history and the role their values played in influencing history
- Understands how past events are affected by the irrational and the accidental
- Understands that change and continuity are equally probable and natural
- Understands how the past affects our private lives and society in general
- Knows how to perceive past events with historical empathy
- Evaluates the validity and credibility of different historical interpretations

Behavioral Studies

Standard 1: Understands that group and cultural influences contribute to human development, identity and behavior

Level IV (Grades 9–12)

- Understands that heredity, culture and personal experience interact in shaping human behavior, and that the relative importance of these influences is not clear in most circumstances
- Understands that family, gender, ethnicity, nationality, institutional affiliations, socioeconomic status, and other group and cultural influences contribute to shaping a person's identity

Standard 4: Understands conflict, cooperation and interdependence among individuals, groups and institutions

Level III (Grades 6–8)

- Understands that being a member of a group can increase an individual's social power and also can increase hostile actions toward or from other groups or individuals

- Understands how various institutions influence people, events and elements of culture, and how people interact with different institutions
- Understands how tensions might arise between expressions of individuality and group or institutional efforts to promote social conformity

Level IV: (Grades 9–12)

- Understands that intergroup conflict does not necessarily end when one segment of society gets a decision in its favor, because the “losers” may then work even harder to reverse, modify or circumvent the change
- Understands that the decisions of one generation both provide and limit the range of possibilities open to the next generation

Language Arts, Writing

Standard 4: Gathers and uses information for research purposes

Level III (Grades 6–8)

- Uses a variety of resource materials to gather information for research topics (e.g., magazines, newspapers, dictionaries, schedules, journals, surveys, globes, atlases, almanacs, Web sites, databases, podcasts)
- Organizes information and ideas from multiple sources in systematic ways (e.g., time lines, outlines, notes, graphic representations)

Level IV (Grades 9–12)

- Uses a variety of print and electronic sources to gather information for research topics (e.g., news sources such as magazines, radio, television and newspapers; government publications and microfiche; databases; field studies; speeches; technical documents; periodicals; Internet sources, such as Web sites, podcasts, blogs and electronic bulletin boards)
- Uses a variety of primary sources to gather information for research topics
- Synthesizes information from multiple research studies to draw conclusions that go beyond those found in any of the individual studies

About the Author

Greg Timmons has been a social studies teacher for more than 30 years. He has written lessons for the Ken Burns series “The War” and “The National Parks: America’s Best Idea.” He lives in Washington state and Montana.

Baseball Heroes Video Clip Review Activity

Background:

Like most professional sports, baseball has a long list of people who could be considered heroes. Some of these people have demonstrated character traits over long periods of time, while others exhibited their heroism in a single event. As in any good drama, major league baseball players of the past and present provide numerous examples of what could be considered heroism. In this activity, you will look at four examples of baseball players featured in the *Baseball* series and evaluate whether you feel they should be considered heroes.

Video Clips:

- Roberto Clemente, the passion, the heart, and the pride of one of baseball's greatest players.
- Hank Aaron, self-assured, reliable, and humble. A player who came up from the Negro Leagues, he endured bigotry and hatred during one of his and baseball's greatest moments.
- Cal Ripken Jr. Iron Man. Quiet, unassuming, and very consistent, he accomplishes a major feat of human endurance.
- Ichiro Suzuki, disciplined and dedicated to the game. Through his style of play, he brought back memories of some of baseball's greats and instilled a sense of pride in his people.

Directions:

Review the video clips and discuss the questions below. Be prepared to share your findings with the class.

1. Describe Roberto Clemente's abilities, achievements on the field, and attitude toward the game when he played for the Pittsburgh Pirates. Why do you think the press coverage of his career was so upsetting to him? What are your thoughts on how he responded to the poor press coverage? Do his accomplishment in baseball and charitable activities off the field make him a hero? Why or why not? When considering Roberto Clemente's legacy, does it matter how he died? Would his career and life be any less inspiring had he died of old age or in a less dramatic way?
2. Describe the kind of player Hank Aaron during his 22-year career. How did his homerun drive to surpass Babe Ruth's record put him in an uncomfortable situation? Describe how he handled the pressure of breaking this record from challenges both on and off the field. Explain whether the issue of his race plays into recognizing his accomplishments? Should he be considered a hero? Why or why not?
3. Describe the values Cal Ripken brought to the game of baseball. How did these help him succeed in breaking Lou Gehrig's record of 2,130 consecutive games played and set a new record of 2,632 games? How did his actions on the field help baseball regain its appeal after the infamous 1994 baseball strike? Does Ripken's accomplishment soon after the baseball strike contribute to him being considered a hero? Why or why not?

4. Describe how Ichiro Suzuki's early training in baseball influenced his style of play and the way he approached the game. How did he overcome the doubts of many baseball scouts on his ability to play in the Major Leagues? How did his style of play bring back memories of past players in baseball? How did this contribute to his appeal with fans? Does Ichiro's ethnic descent make him more of a hero to fans of his own ethnic background than it does to white Americans?
5. Compare the descriptors of heroes you examined in the opening activity to the players featured in the video clips. Explain how each of the four players depicted in the video clips is characterized by some of these descriptors.
6. Compare and contrast each player's experience and accomplishments in light of their being considered a hero.

Baseball Heroes Multimedia Project

Background:

Part of the appeal of baseball is the multitude of larger-than-life personalities who have been a part of the sport from the beginning. Many of these people are considered heroes and at some point in their career exemplify heroic characteristics. In this activity, you will examine the life of one of these people and evaluate whether you think he or she is a hero.

Directions:

1. You may work individually or with a partner on this project. After you have identified or been assigned one of the individuals from the “Baseball” series, you can conduct your own research. You’ll find suggested resources below.
2. Follow this guide in your research and project construction:
 - Provide a brief introduction highlighting your subject and something noteworthy about his or her career and private life.
 - Describe an early event that had a significant impression on the subject. This might have been values and principles they acquired while young or a significant event that made a lifelong impression.
 - Identify a test or challenge that the subject faced and describe how they met this challenge. Consider your previous discussions and examination of the four major league players and analyze the subject’s actions in light of being a hero. Explain whether or not he or she meets the test. Use the guide below to assist your analysis:
 - Do you consider this person a hero?
 - What aspects of your understanding of heroism contribute to this conclusion?
 - What supporting evidence on the subject’s life and career can you produce that supports your conclusion?
 - Do you think the subject became enlightened in some way through the experience? Does this enlightenment transcend normal human experience and set your subject apart from all the rest of society? If so, how? What can others learn from the subject’s experience to enhance their own lives?
3. After you’ve gathered your research in the above areas, develop a multimedia presentation for class or as a Web site with space for comments from viewers.

Resources:

- Baseball Web site (<http://www.pbs.org/kenburns/baseball>)
- Tenth Inning Web site (<http://www.pbs.org/kenburns/tenthinning>)
- Major League Baseball (<http://mlb.mlb.com/index.jsp>)
- Baseball Legends (<http://baseballlegends.wordpress.com>)
- “Historic Baseball Resources” Library of Congress (<http://www.loc.gov/topics/baseball>)
- Myths, Heroes and Antiheroes (<http://www.westerlycentre.uwa.edu.au/publications/myths-heroes-and-anti-heroes>)
- Joseph Campbell and *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (<http://mythosandlogos.com/Campbell.html>)