Baseball Memories

**Grade Level: 6–12** (although lesson may be suitable for lower grade levels with some adaptations)

**Related Academic Subjects:** U.S. history, behavioral sciences (sociology), language arts (journalism)

**Lesson Overview:**
In this lesson, students will conduct oral history interviews about important “baseball memories” (either in person or conveyed through radio or television) with family members, teachers or other adults. They take this information and create blog entries reporting the results of their interviews.

(NOTE: Links to teacher- and student-friendly social networking tools are included in the resources for the lesson, along with several how-to Web sites that describe effective ways to set up and use a class blog or Ning. The teacher may also elect to work with the school or school district’s technology or information systems staff to allow for unblocking of blog or networking sites in order to complete the lesson.)

**Lesson Objectives:** (The student will…)
- Recognize specific trends and cultural benchmarks in baseball history that transcend the sport and are part of popular history
- Develop strategies and appropriate questions for oral history interviews
- Synthesize interview responses into grammatically and structurally correct essays that highlight the impact of baseball on the individual interviewed as well as American cultural history

**Estimated Time for the Lesson:**
Two to three class periods, as well as outside time to find appropriate interview subjects and conduct oral history interviews.

**Video Segments:**
*Baseball: The Sixth Inning, The National Pastime*
Chapter 13: “He’s Coming”

*Baseball: The Seventh Inning, The Capital of Baseball*
Chapter 5: “Fiction Is Dead”
Chapter 12: “The Absolutely Unthinkable”
Chapter 13: “Perfect”

*Baseball: The Ninth Inning, Home*

Chapter 14: “The Curse”

*The Tenth Inning: Bottom of the 10th*

Chapter 9: “What Have I Done”

Chapter 14 “The Sun Shining”

**Materials Needed:**

- Computers with Web access
- “Baseball Memories” video segment Student Handout
- If desired, students may need access to video and audio recording equipment in order to record video/audio interviews.

**Lesson Procedure:**

**Opening Activity**

At the start of the first class period for the lesson, introduce the activity by reading the following paragraph, projecting it on an overhead LCD projector or writing it on the chalkboard:

“For many people, there is no stronger memory than sharing a ‘baseball experience’ as a child or a parent, either by visiting a major league ballpark or by spending time either listening to a radio broadcast of a game or viewing one on television. Frequently, it is a defining moment in their lives.”

Then tell the students that they will look at select recollections of baseball memories by persons featured in the “Baseball” series, looking for specific clues and ideas to help them write oral history questions. Once they’ve developed those questions, they’ll select someone to interview using their questions. After they’ve collected the information, they’ll post their oral histories on a social networking site.

Next, have students meet in small groups and discuss their reaction to the quote and share their own experiences. Ask them to consider whether they’ve had similar experiences to the one discussed in the quote above.

**Main Activity**

**Part 1. Preparing for the Interview**

The teacher should next provide an overview of the importance of various online recollection sites and their place in the overall study of history. Using computers with Internet access, direct students to resources such as “The War” *Power of Story* project ([pbs.org/thewar/edu_power_of_story.htm](http://pbs.org/thewar/edu_power_of_story.htm)), and “The National Parks: America’s Best Idea” *Place-Based Digital Storytelling Modules* ([pbs.org/nationalparks/for-educators/digital-storytelling](http://pbs.org/nationalparks/for-educators/digital-storytelling)) as examples of effective methods of collecting and digitizing oral history collections. The teacher may also want to highlight the Slave
Narratives collection from the Federal Writers’ Project (1936–1938) as an excellent example of how to collect and record oral histories (http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html).

As the class reviews the resources, the teacher may also wish to note that historically the shared experience of baseball has been used as a way to cement the bond between parent and child, and that frequently team loyalty (or rivalry) has been handed down from generation to generation. Ask the students to look for specific details that will help in telling their story. What follow-up questions might be asked of guests in order to get them to effectively expand on an answer or to give more insight into their original answer?

**Part 2. “Baseball, the National Pastime” Video Clip Analysis**

Next, watch the video clips. Before students view the segments, distribute the Baseball Video Segment Student Handout to each student. Direct students to select any four of the related segments and complete the chart. The teacher may elect to have students analyze more or fewer clips. The teacher may wish to allow students to view clips multiple times in order to complete the chart.

**Part 3. Preparing for the Interview**

Divide the students into working groups of approximately three or four students per group. Distribute a copy of the Student Interview Handout to each group, and review the instructions and prepared questions with the class.

Questions provided include:

- The name and age of the interviewee.
- Information as to why a particular baseball memory is important to the interviewee (was it because it was a favorite team; did the interviewee share this memory with a significant person in their lives, such as a parent, spouse, child?).
- Where the interviewee was when this particular event happened and why the location or the person sharing the experience was memorable. (For example, several of the interviewees in the Baseball series recalled being at school during World Series games, sharing memories with parents, hearing about events while serving in the armed forces, etc.).
- In some instances the interviewee may suggest that an event included significant controversy, such as whether Roger Maris’ breaking of Babe Ruth’s single season home run record was “legitimate” since Maris played in a longer regular season, or if Barry Bonds’ breaking of Hank Aaron’s career home run record should be recognized because of allegations of steroid use. The memory may also be a specific call by an umpire or something done by a particular player, or someone else at the game.
While students should draw their own conclusions about what questions are most appropriate to ask, prompt students to speculate as to what sorts of questions might elicit the best responses and spark interviewee recollections.

Allot time for groups to determine if they should rewrite any of the prepared questions, and to supplement the prepared questions with questions created by the group.

**Part 4. Conducting the Interview**

Allow adequate time for students to identify interview subjects and collect information. The teacher also will need to select a format for student writing and determine how to publish interviews. While students could simply write descriptive paragraphs on paper or use word-processing software, it might be more effective if the teacher allows students to publish work using a blog or wiki.

The teacher should consider the nature of social networking and Web-based publishing in regard to two-way communication. Frequently, persons may come across a blog, social networking page, or other Web publication and respond. The teacher may wish to either promote this by providing an e-mail link, or may wish to simply review responses posted to the page. The teacher should also consider the open nature of the Web and social networking, and preview any responses to student work before allowing students to view them.

Other teachers may wish to require students to provide multimedia interviews using audio and or video equipment. Teachers electing to have students complete the project in this manner should review “The War” *The Power of Story* and “The National Parks: America’s Best Idea” *Place-Based Digital Storytelling Modules*.

**Assessment:**
Once students have completed the lesson, the teacher should assess student work by using either an assessment instrument or rubric approved by the school or district or a teacher-created rubric. A suggested rubric is included below that may used as-is or adapted to meet teacher objectives.

**Extension Activity:**
Debrief students as a class to compare and contrast their interview responses. What common threads or thoughts can be seen in the responses? What contrasting views are found? When debriefing has been completed, have students write essays in which they define the role of baseball in American popular culture.

**Resources:**
(Note: While the following resources can assist students in developing oral history interview questions and can give them insight as to the impact of baseball on modern cultural history, the teacher should also encourage students to conduct research using traditional resources, such as books, magazines and encyclopedias.)
Tenth Inning Web site (http://www.pbs.org/tenthinning/)

Baseball Web site (http://www.pbs.org/baseball/)

Major League Baseball (official site) (http://mlb.mlb.com/index.jsp)

Major League Baseball “History” page (http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/history/)

John Skilton’s Baseball Links page (http://www.baseball-links.com/)

National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum (http://www.baseballhalloffame.org)

The Baseball Almanac (http://www.baseball-almanac.com/)

Baseball-Reference.com (http://www.baseball-reference.com/)

Minor League Baseball (http://web.minorleaguebaseball.com/index.jsp)

Exploratorium “Science of Baseball” (http://www.exploratorium.edu/baseball/)

The Field Museum, Chicago, “Baseball as America” (http://www.fieldmuseum.org/baseball/index.html)

Links for examples of oral histories and collection methods for oral histories:

The War “Power of Story” project (http://www.pbs.org/thewar/edu_power_of_story.htm)

PBS The National Parks: America’s Best Idea “Place-Based Digital Storytelling Modules” (http://www.pbs.org/nationalparks/for-educators/digital-storytelling/)


Links for examples of oral histories:


The University of California (Berkeley) “One Minute” Oral History Checklist (http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/resources/1minute.html)

“A Farm Girl Plays Baseball” (http://www.stg.brown.edu/projects/WWII_Women/FarmGirlBaseball.html)

Links for teacher blogging information:

Classroom Blogs and Wikis (http://my-ecoach.com/online/webresourcelist.php?rlid=4992)

Future of Math Resources for Blogging in the Classroom resource (http://futureofmath.misterteacher.com/Class%20Blogging%20Resources.html)

THE Journal story on “Five Don’ts of Classroom Blogging” (http://thejournal.com/articles/2008/02/01/five-donts-of-classroom-blogging.aspx)

How to Create a Primary Classroom Blog (http://primaryschool.suite101.com/article.cfm/how_to_create_a_primary_classroom_blog)

Blogger (https://www.blogger.com/start)

Edublogs (http://edublogs.org/)

Ning (Social Networking) (http://www.ning.com/)

Academic Standards: This lesson fits the following academic standards 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 7–8)**
  
  **Benchmark 6.** Knows different types of primary and secondary sources and the motives, interests, and bias expressed in them (e.g., eyewitness accounts, letters, diaries, artifacts, photos; magazine articles, newspaper accounts, hearsay)

- **Level IV (Grades 9–12)**
  
  **Benchmark 10.** Understands how the past affects our private lives and society in general

  **Benchmark 11.** Knows how to perceive past events with historical empathy
**Benchmark 12.** Knows how to evaluate the credibility and authenticity of historical sources

**Benchmark 13.** Evaluates the validity and credibility of different historical interpretations

**Behavioral Studies**

**Standard 31.** Understands the economic boom and social transformation of post-World War II United States

**Level II (Grades 5–6)**

**Benchmark 4.** Understands aspects of contemporary American culture (e.g., the international influence of American culture, increased popularity of professional sports, influence of spectator sports on popular culture, sports and entertainment figures who advertise specific products)

**Language Arts**

**Standard 2.** Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing

**Level III (Grades 6–8)**

**Benchmark 1.** Uses descriptive language that clarifies and enhances ideas (e.g., establishes tone and mood, uses figurative language, uses sensory images and comparisons, and uses a thesaurus to choose effective learning)

**Benchmark 2.** Uses paragraph form in writing (e.g., arranges sentences in sequential order, uses supporting and follow-up sentences, establishes coherence within and among paragraphs)

**Level IV (Grades 9–12)**

**Benchmark 3.** Uses a variety of sentence structures and lengths (e.g., complex and compound-complex sentences; parallel or repetitive sentence structure)

**Benchmark 4.** Uses a variety of transitional devices (e.g., phrases, sentences, paragraphs)

**Benchmark 5.** Uses a variety of techniques to provide supporting detail (e.g., analogies; anecdotes; restatements; paraphrases; examples; comparisons; visual aids, such as tables, graphs and pictures)

**Benchmark 7.** Conveys individual voice, tone and point of view in writing
About the Author
Michael Hutchison is Social Studies Department chairperson at Lincoln High School, Vincennes, Indiana, and has more than 30 years of teaching experience. He has written several lessons for PBS films, including “The Civil War,” “The War,” “Horatio’s Drive” and “Empire of the Air.” He is president of the board of directors of the Indiana Computer Educators and is a moderator for the NCSS Network and list editor for H-HIGH-S, a secondary social studies teachers’ listserv.
**Baseball Memories Evaluation Rubric**

1. **Question Development:** Did the student demonstrate initiative and thought in developing questions used in the interview? Are the questions germane to the assignment? (15 points possible)

__________________________ points awarded

2. **Interview Skills:** Is there evidence that the student has developed thoughtful and insightful techniques in conducting the interview? Does the interview follow a logical format? (15 points possible)

__________________________ points awarded

3. **Knowledge of the Period and Subject:** Does the student demonstrate adequate knowledge of the subject being discussed in the interview? (15 points possible)

__________________________ points awarded

4. **Spelling and Grammar:** If the lesson is completed as a blog entry or social network entry, are all words spelled correctly and correct grammar used? (15 points total)

__________________________ points awarded

5. **Video and Audio Components:** If the lesson is completed as a streaming audio or video file, does it meet standards in regard to lighting, sound quality, and video quality? (15 points total)

__________________________ points awarded

6. **Other criteria as added by the teacher:**

__________________________ points awarded

Total points awarded for the lesson: ____________________________
## Baseball Memories
### Video Segment Student Handout

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/Age of Interviewee</th>
<th>Why Memory Is Important</th>
<th>Where Interviewee Was/Who Else Was There</th>
<th>Controversy Surrounding the Event (If Any)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Baseball Memories Student Interview Handout

Use the following organizer to help you develop your interview questions. As you create questions, keep the following thoughts in mind:

- Questions should pinpoint a specific memory or recollection. For example, the question might point to a particular event or milestone (Cal Ripken’s breaking of Lou Gehrig’s consecutive game streak, the Red Sox winning the 2004 World Series, etc.).
- Questions should be clear and concise.
- The interviewer should be prepared to steer the interview back to the topic if the interviewee strays from the subject.
- Understand that the interviewee might provide the interviewer with information that may be contrary to other information the interviewer may know about the subject.
- The interviewer should ensure that the questions and interview effectively cover all aspects of the event and answer as many of the following questions as possible: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?
- Be polite to your interviewee and thank them for their time and for the information they provide to you.

The questions below will help you form a framework for your interview. Space is also provided for you to write your own questions. Questions you create will help you conduct a more effective and interesting interview.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name and age of person interviewed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information as to why a particular “baseball memory” is important to the interviewee (e.g., because it was a favorite team, because the interviewee shared the memory with a significant person in his or her life, such as a parent, spouse child)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where the interviewee was when this particular event happened and why the location or the person sharing the experience was memorable (e.g., several interviewees in the “Baseball” series recalled being at school during World Series games, sharing memories with parents, or hearing about events while serving in the armed forces)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was there any controversy or debate you can recall regarding the baseball memory—a particularly questionable call from an umpire or an incident that happened with one of the players?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>