5: Hey Batter, Batter

Baseball is one of America’s most widely known and celebrates sports. While it is widely believed that the sport was invented in Cooperstown N.Y. during the summer of 1839 by Abner Doubleday, historical evidence shows this is inaccurate. Games resembling baseball in the United States date back to the 18th century. However, it wasn’t until 1845, a group of New York City men founded the New York Knickerbocker Baseball Club, and one member named Alexander Joy Cartwright, established a new set of rules that would later shape modern day baseball. As a unique American tradition, Major League Baseball now has two leagues — the American League, and the National League — and there are a total of 30 teams between the two leagues. Each year this sport hosts the World Series — this annual championship allows MLB teams in Canada and the USA to compete for the ultimate prize: The Commissioner’s Trophy. Take a look at the reading recommendations, activity, and videos to further explore the sport deemed as “America’s pastime!”

Reading Recommendations:

Children

1. Goodnight Baseball by Michael Dahl
2. Mr. Baseball by William H. Hooks
3. Lucky Baseball Bat by Matt Christopher
4. Baseball’s Greatest Pitchers by Sydelle Kramer
5. Baseball A to Z by Michale Spradlin
6. Arthur Makes the Team by Marc Brown

Juniors

1. Baseball Bafflers by Wayne Stewart
2. Great Baseball Card Hunt by Daniel A. Greenberg
3. The Boy Who Saved Baseball by John H. Ritter
4. Baseball Play Like a Pro by Bike Walker
5. Sluggers by George Sullivan
6. Six Innings by James Preller
7. *Winning Season* by Rich Wallace
8. *Gold Dust* by Chris Lynch

**Teens**
1. *Ball Four* by Jim Bouton
2. *The Big Bam* by Leigh Montville
3. *The Last Boy* by Jane Leavy
4. *The Art of Fielding* by Chad Harbach
5. *Living on the Black* by John Feinstein
6. *Knuckler* by Tim Wakefield
7. *Double Play* by Robert B. Parker
8. *Color Blind: The Forgotten Team That Broke Baseball's Color Line* by Tom Dunkel

**Activity:**

**Materials**
- water balloons (filled with water)
- baseball bat (or other pole/stick to use like a bat)
- 5 bases (you can use bases, hula hoops, cones, rocks, brightly colored pieces of paper, or anything else to mark the bases, home plate, and pitchers mound)

**Procedure**

Hey batter, batter… it’s time to play ball! Baseball can be a fun summer sport, however playing with water balloons gives an added element of surprise and can be a perfect way to cool you off on a hot summer day.

1. Set up the playing field as a standard baseball field using Hula Hoops as bases.
2. Place a bucket of pre-filled water balloons on the “pitcher’s mound”
3. One person is designated pitcher and stands on the “pitcher’s mound”
4. Other participants stand can all line up at home plate to take turns hitting; or you can split up participants so some are in the outfield while others are hitting. Note: player in the outfield can hold water balloons and/or squirt guns to soak the hitters as they run the bases, if desired.
5. Play the game: one person is up to bat, and the pitcher pitches the water balloons to the batter. The pitcher throws balloons until the batter hits or breaks one.
6. After the batter hits or breaks a balloon, they run to first base. The pitcher tries to tag them with a water balloon as they run. The pitcher gets one throw per base (one throw from home to 1st, one throw from 1st to 2nd, etc).
7. If the water balloon hits the runner, they are out – if the water balloon misses the runner, they keep running. The runner can choose to run to the next base or stay on the base they are on.
8. As they runner runs the bases, the outfielders can squirt them with water (just for added fun).
9. If the runner gets all the way back to home base without being hit by a water balloon, they get a run.
10. Take turns batting/pitching/
11. Note: you can modify and make your own variation of this game based on your personal preferences — maybe if the batter hits the balloon and it breaks, that counts as an automatic home run; or maybe the batter only gets 3 chances (or water balloons pitched) to make a hit, otherwise they are out and it moves on to the next batter. The goal is to have fun under the sun while staying active and cool!

**Dive Deeper:**
After reading and/or completing the activities, does this topic peak your interest?

**Check out these websites to further explore the topic of baseball:**
1. The National Pastime — [https://www.pbs.org/kenburns/baseball/pastime/](https://www.pbs.org/kenburns/baseball/pastime/)
3. Major League Baseball — [www.mlb.org](http://www.mlb.org)

**Check out these videos and films to visually learn more:**
1. NPR Driveway Moments: Baseball: Radio Stories That Won't Let You Go (OverDrive AudioBook)
2. This is Baseball for Kids — [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CbBxgmtED0M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CbBxgmtED0M)
3. 11-Year-Old Baseball PHENOM — [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Js6in_sZE7o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Js6in_sZE7o)
4. 42 (2013 Film)
5. A League of Their Own (1992 Film)
6. Field of Dreams (1989 Film)
7. Moneyball (2011 Film)
8. Million Dollar Arm (2014 Film)

**To stimulate the brain and engage in active learning, ask these questions:**

Looking to build upon writing skills? Share your responses to these questions in a personal journal or brief paragraph essay.

Looking to build upon verbal communication and discussion based skills? Share your responses around the dinner table at night with family members; each person can contribute to the conversation with their own perspectives.

Looking to visually demonstrate your ideas? Share your responses by drawing and labeling a diagram, creating a storyboard with pictures, construct a 3D model, or acting out a scene.

1. How has the game of baseball changed since it was originally invented in 1869?
2. In 2008 baseball was featured in the Summer Olympics, but in the following two Olympics (2012 and 2016) baseball was not featured. Do you think baseball should be an Olympic sport?
3. Baseball is considered to be “America’s pastime” because so many people in our nation find the sport to be intriguing and enjoyable to watch. Is there another sport or activity that you would consider to be “America’s pastime?”