

Name _____

Baseball

Often referred to as America's "National Pastime", baseball is one of the most popular major league and recreational sports in the United States and Canada. While baseball has its roots in similar sports in England, the game as we know today is a uniquely American sport.

Origins of Baseball

It is difficult to draw a direct line from modern American baseball to one specific game played previously elsewhere, but it is clear that baseball likely has roots in England. The modern English bat ball and running games "rounders" and "cricket", with similar characteristics to American baseball, have their origins in earlier English folk games. Early forms of baseball in the United States were known by several names. These include "stool ball", "round ball", "goal ball" and simply, "base".

Americans began playing baseball on informal teams, using local rules, in the early 1800s. Alexander Cartwright (1820-1892) of New York invented the modern baseball field in 1845. Cartwright and the members of his New York Knickerbocker Base Ball Club, devised the first rules and regulations that were accepted for the modern game of baseball. Others of the time had also written rules for the game, but the rules created by Cartwright and the Knickerbockers became the most popular and accepted.

The first recorded baseball game was held in 1846 when the Knickerbockers played the New York Baseball Club. The game was held at the Elysian Fields, in Hoboken, New Jersey. In 1858, the National Association of Base Ball Players, the first organized baseball league, was formed.

Professional baseball started with the first professional team in 1869, the Cincinnati Red Stockings. In 1876 the National League was formed with eight professional teams. Then in 1901 another baseball league, the American League, was formed. There were eight teams in the original American League as well.

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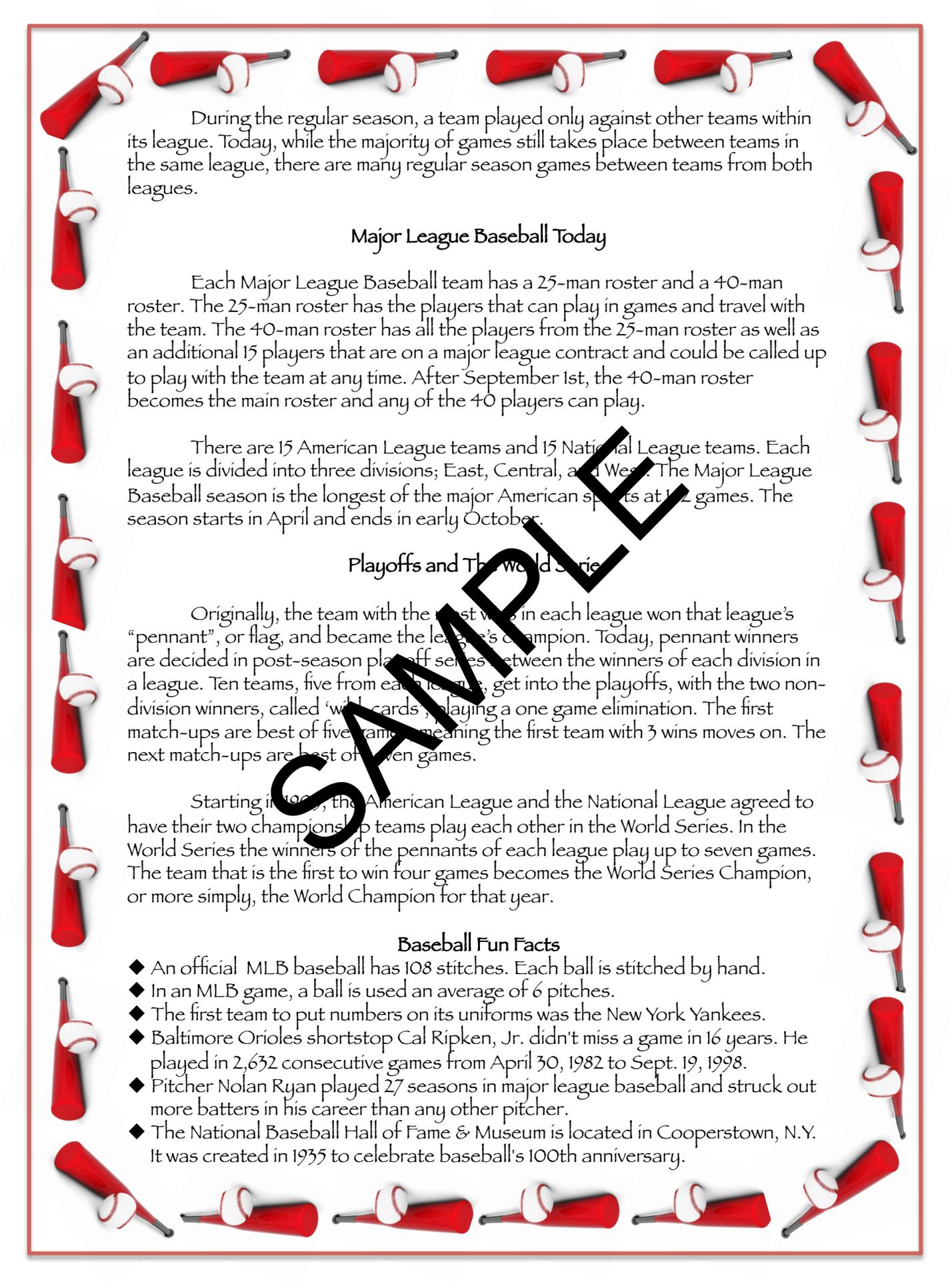
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During the regular season, a team played only against other teams within its league. Today, while the majority of games still takes place between teams in the same league, there are many regular season games between teams from both leagues.

Major League Baseball Today

Each Major League Baseball team has a 25-man roster and a 40-man roster. The 25-man roster has the players that can play in games and travel with the team. The 40-man roster has all the players from the 25-man roster as well as an additional 15 players that are on a major league contract and could be called up to play with the team at any time. After September 1st, the 40-man roster becomes the main roster and any of the 40 players can play.

There are 15 American League teams and 15 National League teams. Each league is divided into three divisions; East, Central, and West. The Major League Baseball season is the longest of the major American sports at 162 games. The season starts in April and ends in early October.

Playoffs and The World Series

Originally, the team with the most wins in each league won that league's "pennant", or flag, and became the league's champion. Today, pennant winners are decided in post-season play-off series between the winners of each division in a league. Ten teams, five from each league, get into the playoffs, with the two non-division winners, called "wild cards", playing a one game elimination. The first match-ups are best of five games, meaning the first team with 3 wins moves on. The next match-ups are best of seven games.

Starting in 1903, the American League and the National League agreed to have their two championship teams play each other in the World Series. In the World Series the winners of the pennants of each league play up to seven games. The team that is the first to win four games becomes the World Series Champion, or more simply, the World Champion for that year.

Baseball Fun Facts

- ◆ An official MLB baseball has 108 stitches. Each ball is stitched by hand.
- ◆ In an MLB game, a ball is used an average of 6 pitches.
- ◆ The first team to put numbers on its uniforms was the New York Yankees.
- ◆ Baltimore Orioles shortstop Cal Ripken, Jr. didn't miss a game in 16 years. He played in 2,632 consecutive games from April 30, 1982 to Sept. 19, 1998.
- ◆ Pitcher Nolan Ryan played 27 seasons in major league baseball and struck out more batters in his career than any other pitcher.
- ◆ The National Baseball Hall of Fame & Museum is located in Cooperstown, N.Y. It was created in 1935 to celebrate baseball's 100th anniversary.

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Basics of the Game

Baseball is played between two teams of nine players each who take turns batting and fielding. The offense, or batting team, attempts to score runs by hitting a ball that is thrown by the pitcher with a bat swung by the batter, who stands at home plate. If the batter hits the ball, he runs counter-clockwise around a series of bases, ending at home plate. The fielding team, or defense, has a number of ways of making an 'out', sending the batter off the field. A run is scored when a player advances around the bases and returns to home plate. The teams switch between batting and fielding whenever the fielding team makes three outs. One turn batting for both teams, beginning with the visiting team, constitutes an inning. A game is made up of nine innings, and the team with the greater number of runs at the end of the game wins.

*When playing in an American League park, the pitcher does not bat. Instead, he is replaced by the 'designated hitter', who does not play a position in the field.



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1. In which country does modern day baseball have its roots?



2. What older games can baseball likely be traced to?



3. Who is credited with inventing the modern game of baseball?



4. In what year did the first professional baseball team form and what was the name of the team?



5. Today, how many teams are in the American and National Leagues?



6. Baseball has changed since the beginning of the game. What are three ways in which the game has changed? Use examples from the text to support your answer.

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SAMPLE

Ten Greatest Players of All-Time by Position

Pitcher – Walter Johnson – Washington Senators

Walter Johnson was one of baseball's most dominant pitchers for 20 years from 1907-1927. He threw so hard that his fastball was said to "hiss as it went by"

During his career Johnson's Washington Senators were regularly one of the worst teams in baseball. It was often said about Washington: "First in War, First in Peace and Last in the American League." Despite playing for a terrible team, Johnson still won 417 games (2nd all-time), threw 110 shutouts (1st all-time) and struck out 3,508 batters (8th all-time).

Walter Johnson finally got to play in the World Series in 1924 and was the hero, pitching the Senators with four scoreless relief innings in Games 7.





Name _____

True or False?

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 2. ____ Abner Doubleday wrote the first rules of baseball.
 3. ____ The New York Knickerbockers played against the New Jersey Baseball Club in the first recorded baseball game in 1846.
 4. ____ The first professional team was the Cincinnati White Stockings.
 5. ____ The American and National Leagues are divided into three divisions each.
 6. ____ There are more teams in the American League than in the National League.
 7. ____ The first World Series was played in 1903.
 8. ____ The baseball season is one of the longest in major league sports.
 9. ____ An MLB baseball is used for an average of 12 pitches.
 10. ____ The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum was created to celebrate baseball's 100th anniversary.

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Baseball Logic

Use the clues below to find out which uniform numbers four friends like best. The numbers are 9, 11, 30 and 62.

	Sara	James	Lucy	Andrew
9				
11				
30				
62				

- Sara's and Lucy's favorite numbers are odd numbers.
- Andrew's favorite number is a multiple of 10.
- Lucy's favorite number is larger than Sara's.

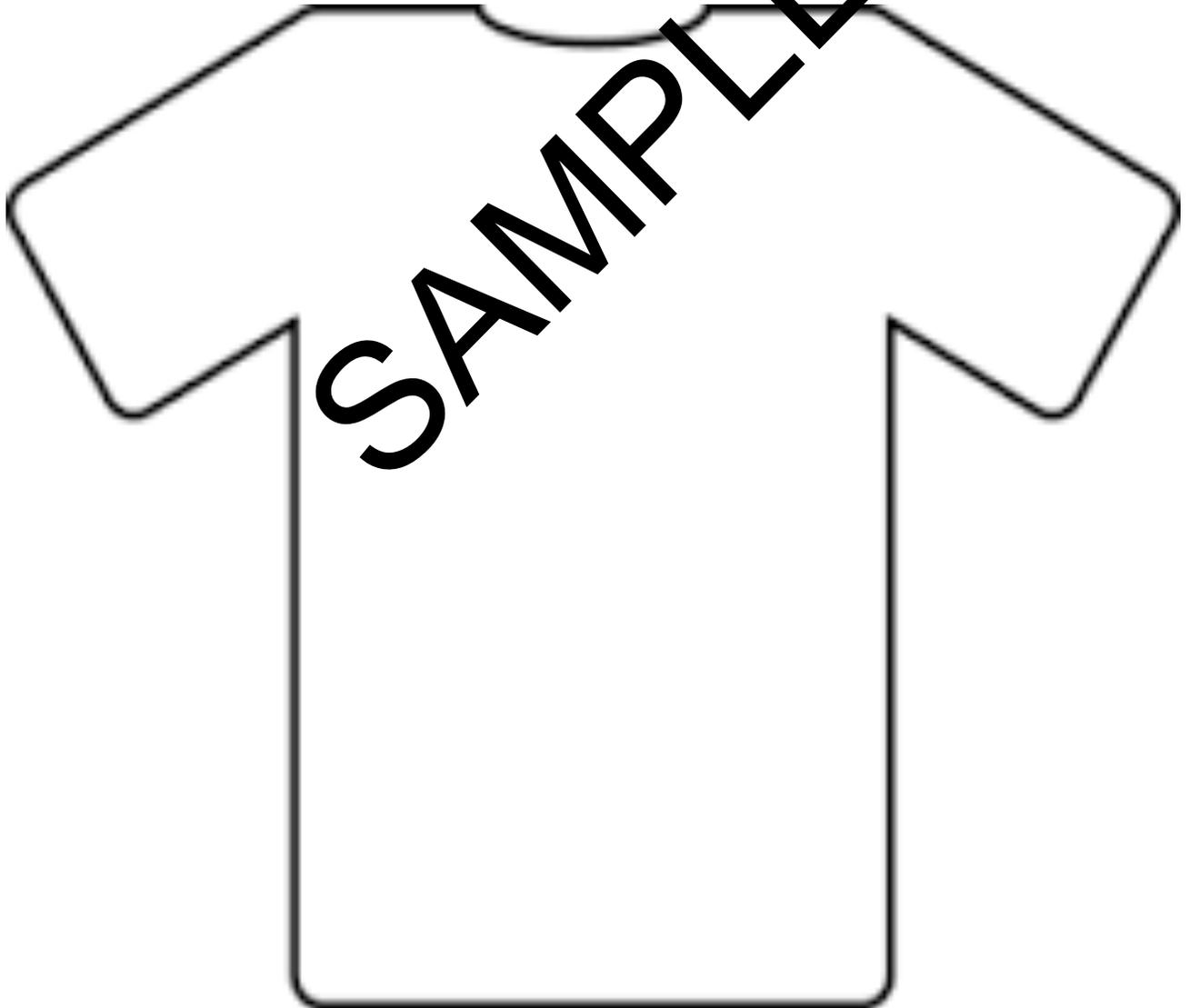
Use the next set of clues to discover the favorite ball park foods of the four friends.

	Sara	James	Lucy	Andrew
Popcorn				
Peanuts				
Ice Cream				
Pizza				

- James is not a fan of sweets.
- Lucy is allergic to nuts.
- Sara prefers to eat her snacks with a spoon.
- Andrew likes to add butter to his snacks.

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If you could create an MLB team, what would your team's jersey and cap look like?





Who's On First?

By Bud Abbott and Lou Costello

A Reader's Theater Script For Two Parts

Circa 1937, the skit was usually performed on the team's radio series at the start of the baseball season. Abbott wants to make sure Costello knows everyone's name on the team...

It is worthwhile to have students watch the original skit prior to performing it. This will give them a better sense of timing and the emotion to be conveyed through their voice expression throughout the script. Here is a link to an original recording:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kTcRRaXV-fg>

The names given in the routine for the players at each position are:

First Base: Who
Second Base: What
Third Base: I Don't Know
Left field: Why
Center field: Because
Pitcher: Tomorrow
Catcher: Today
Shortstop: I Don't Give a Darn

ANSWER KEY

Baseball Timeline

Place a dot and the letter of its event above each date to make the timeline complete.



- A. Walter Johnson finally got to pitch in a World Series. (1924)
- B. The National League was formed. (1876)
- C. First recorded baseball game. (1846)
- D. Babe Ruth was traded from the Boston Red Sox to the New York Yankees. (1919)
- E. Ted Williams had his last at-bat. (1961)
- F. The American league was formed. (1901)
- G. First World Series. (1903)
- H. Cal Ripken broke Lou Gehrig's record for most consecutive game appearances. (1995)
- I. Rogers Hornsby set the all-time record batting average for one season. (1924)
- J. Opening of the Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. (1935)