



BASEBALL

1. _____

Baseball is one of America's oldest and most popular spectator sports. Today, millions of people go to ballparks each year to watch professional baseball and it is enjoyed by millions more on television and radio. Baseball is called America's National Pastime because of its tradition and popularity, but it is played in many other parts of the world too.

2. _____

Baseball is a competitive game played between two teams of nine players each. To play baseball you need a bat (usually made of wood or metal) and a hard ball. Each team takes it in turn at bat, while the other team is in the field. The player called the pitcher throws the ball towards the batter, who tries to hit it. Players score points, called runs, by hitting the ball and running around the four bases in the baseball field before a fielder puts them out. Batters and runners can be put out in different ways.

The game is divided into nine sections. These are called innings. If the game is tied after nine innings, the teams continue to play until one has scored more runs at the end of an extra inning.

3. _____

Nobody knows exactly when the game of baseball started, but baseball today probably came from two British games; cricket and rounders. By the 1900s, baseball had become very popular in the United States, and teams around America had organized themselves into Leagues. Today there are two important Leagues, the National League and the American League. At the end of every

season the leader of each League plays the other during the World Series.

4. _____

Professional baseball has a players' Association. The Association defends the rights of baseball players and lobbies for better salaries and benefits. Occasionally baseball players go on strike. When this happens there is no baseball and baseball fans get very angry!

People have also criticized baseball recently for the names of certain teams. The Cincinnati Reds, the Cleveland Indians and the Atlanta Braves are all based on names for Native Americans that many people think are offensive.

5. _____

There are some baseball players that almost all Americans recognize. Ty Cobb, Babe Ruth, Christy Mathewson and Joe DiMaggio are all household names. Jackie Robinson was also a famous baseball player. He was the first black player to play in the major leagues in 1947.

Mark McGwire, Sammy Sosa, Carl Ripken Jr and Barry Bonds are all more recent baseball figures. Famous players in baseball are honored in the Baseball Hall of Fame, which is in Cooperstown, New York.





Activities

1. Read the article quickly. Put the titles of the paragraphs in the correct places. There is one extra title that you do not need to use.

- a) Baseball's Origins
- b) Baseball Heroes
- c) Baseball and Radio
- d) America's National Pastime
- e) Baseball Problems
- f) How to play baseball

2. Work with a partner. Explain the significance of the following.

- the bat
- a run
- the pitcher
- an inning
- rounders
- The World Series
- The Atlanta Braves
- Jackie Robinson
- Cooperstown

3. Does your country have a national pastime? Prepare a short presentation. Answer the following questions.

What is it?

Where did it originate?

Are there any famous controversies or scandals associated with it?

Are there any famous players who are household names?

4. Play ball! Learn some more about baseball with this game. Work with a group. Read the rules and play the game. Your teacher has the answers.