



Modern Marvels: Baseball Parks Teacher's Guide

America's national pastime is played on venues that range from urban sandlots to multi-million dollar stadiums. Baseball parks are as unique as they are plentiful. These structures reflect the nation's love of the game, and the architectural transformations that have taken place over time. This one-hour episode describes the construction of some of the nation's most storied ballparks, from the original Yankee Stadium to the most recent and high-tech stadiums of today. Sports historians and baseball enthusiasts describe the meaning and significance of baseball in the U.S. and throughout the world. Historical video footage and photographs used in this one hour documentary help make each ballpark come to life. Teachers may want to use clips from this program for course units on particular chapters in U.S. history, or to provide visuals in their course units or lectures on American culture and architecture.

OBJECTIVES

Students will learn the impact of baseball on American history and culture. They will chart the evolution of baseball parks with the changes in American society, and the relationship between architecture and history.

CURRICULUM LINKS

Modern Marvels: Baseball Parks would be useful for classes on American History, American Culture, Urban Studies, Geography and Architecture. It is appropriate for middle school and high school students.

VOCABULARY

Using the dictionary at www.merriamwebster.com, an Internet resource such as www.history.com, or an encyclopedia, ask students to define or explain the significance of the following terms. They may also want to keep their own list of important terms or "words to know" as they are watching this program.

- [Ambiance](#)
- [Amenities](#)
- [Coincidence](#)
- [Cupola](#)
- [Derision](#)
- [Endeavor](#)

- Idiosyncrasy
- Opulent
- Proximity
- Quaint
- Sacrilege
- Typify

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Baseball is a part of the American experience. Discuss the role of baseball in American history and culture. Does baseball play a role in your life?
2. Baseball Parks are called American icons. What is an icon? Can you name other examples?
3. Discuss the imagery of baseball parks on the collective American memory.
4. Discuss how technology has influenced and changed baseball parks over the years.
5. Baltimore's Camden Yards is a recent, very successful baseball park. What is the secret of this park's success? Why is it different from parks built between the 1960s and the 1980s?
6. Many of the early parks were constructed of wood that was susceptible to fire. How did fire force builders to change the construction of baseball parks?
7. What was the "spite fence" at Shibe Park?
8. Discuss the individual characteristics of urban baseball parks.
9. How did floodlights impact the game of baseball?
10. Compare and contrast old baseball parks and newer baseball parks.

EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

1. In small groups, have students design a ballpark for a major league baseball team. Things each group should consider: where to build the stadium and why, budget, vendors and sponsors, and transportation options. Each group can develop their designs in PowerPoint format, as a diorama, or any other method, and include a written plan describing their overall approach to the project.
2. There are many famous baseball games that have been played over the past two centuries. Many Americans can remember exactly where they were and what they were doing when a certain play happened. Have students research a famous game and pretend they were the announcer at the game. Students can write a short history of why the game was so important at that time and then record a play-by-play segment from the game. Remind them to try to make it as realistic as possible and really get into the character of announcer. If they are unable to record these announcements, students can write them down in script form.
3. Ask students to find someone who has been greatly affected by the game of baseball or is passionate about the sport and interview them. Students should research the teams and locations that were important to the person they are going to interview to have appropriate background

information before talking to them. Students should also create a list of pertinent questions before the interviews. The interviews can be recorded in audio, video or written format. Students can share these interviews with the larger class or group after they're completed.

WEBSITES

The Fields of Major League Baseball
<http://www.ballparksofbaseball.com/>

Baseball Almanac
<http://www.baseball-almanac.com/stadium.shtml>

Official Site of Major League Baseball
www.mlb.com

Britannica: Baseball
<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-229944/baseball>

BOOKS

Gershman, Michael. *Diamonds: Evolution of the Ballpark* (Houghton Mifflin, 1995).

Hogan, Kenneth. *America's Ballparks* (Pediment, 2003).

Leventhal, Joshua. *Take Me Out to the Ballpark: An Illustrated Tour of Baseball Parks Past and Present* (Blackdog & Leventhal Publishers, 2006).

Palacios, Oscar. *Ballpark Sourcebook: Diamond Diagrams* (STATS Publishing Inc., 1998).

Vecsey, George. *A History of America's Favorite Game* (Modern Library, 2006).