

Ricardo Martin

English 122B

November 26, 2013

Dr. Warner

Baseball: The Game of Life (Unit of Study)

Intro to the Unit:

Baseball is more than a sport, more than a game; it is a metaphor for the lessons of life and human interaction. Baseball is a sport that for years was segregated, unfair, and unequal. But, as time progressed, a few good men like Jackie Robinson, Larry Doby, Hank Thompson, and Willie Mays stunned and changed the world of baseball with their talent and perseverance, rather than looks. These men, along with many others, brought about color-blindness to the sport and fought for a more equal social interaction between human beings.

Baseball is a sport that teaches cooperation, tenacity, faith, self-worth, and respect. But more importantly, it is a game that teaches how to win, and how to deal with loss. All for which are vital traits in the development of a young adults education and perception. The modern young adult is on an odyssey for acceptance from their peers, parents, and society. Furthermore, what better way to teach acceptance then through a group activity like baseball.

Therefore, this unit of study focuses on sports, specifically baseball, and how through the literature of baseball, student can relate and learn how to gain and develop the character traits stated above.

As my centerpiece for the unit of study, I have chosen the Book titled The Natural, by author Bernard Malamud. Malamud's book highlights the career of a young prospect, or a young player who is being developed and has a good chance of joining the majors, and his journey for respect from his teammate, organization, and the fans. However, as fate might have it, after proving his worthiness, an incident occurs that cripples the young mans career. By teaching The Natural in the classroom, I intend to encourage the young adults to relate with Roy Hobbs, the prospect, and the obstacles commonly faced by both young athletes and young adults as they progress to maturity.

Launching the Unit (The Underdog):

Scott Hatteberg was a catcher when he started his career with the Boston Red Sox; however, after seven years with the team, he was released for his inability to throw out the runner. To many, this young man's career was over, however Billy Bean, manager of the Oakland Athletics, saw something more in Hatteberg.

To launch my unit of study, I will play a clip from the movie *Moneyball* which was based on the novel by Michael Lewis titled Moneyball: The Art of Winning An Unfair Game. After the clip, the students will be asked to answer a set of questions. The questions will allow the students not only to observe the emotions portrayed in the scene, but they will be given an opportunity put themselves in Hatteberg's cleats.

1. What emotions are depicted at the beginning of the scene?
2. Put yourself is Hetteberg's cleats. In a few words, describe what would be going through your mind before the pitch is thrown. What does it feel like? What will you chose to do with these emotions? Will they make or break you?

3. After seeing Hetteberg's accomplishment, describe how the emotions you were asked to channel could be relatable to you; in other words, tell me a story about an instance in life, not involving sports, where you have felt these same emotions.

The writing assignment will take time and will most likely take up the first 15 minutes of class. However, to prevent from any loss of creativity, whatever is not finished should be returned the next class period. The link to the video will be sent to each student, just in case they forget about the euphoria within the scene. This entry will become the introduction to a personal journal in which the students will be asked to relate their personal experiences with the novel's themes and characters (It would be a good idea, as a teacher to also write a journal with the students).

Centerpiece: The Natural:

Like Hetteberg, Roy Hobbs, the main character in Malamud's novel The Natural, faces an adversity that kept him out of the game (though Hobbs missed 15 year). After being resigned at the age of thirty-four, Hobbs proves himself as a player. However, the unpredictability of baseball made the experience of Hobbs return, a difficult one.

Throughout the novel, Malamud's incorporates many literary themes and symbols that go beyond baseball. Therefore as the students read the book, they will be asked to write in a personal journal comparing these themes and symbols to their own personal experiences.

Themes: (For all of the points, students will be asked to give examples from the text)

I. Love: What is love and how does Hobbs react to love?

- A. What else can we say Hobbs loves other than the three women he falls for instantaneously?

II. Victory: How does Hobbs feel when he wins?

- A. Compare that to a personal victory.
 - i. Have you ever felt either kind of love before?

III. Superstition: What are some symbols of superstition found within the text?

- A. How important are superstitions in sports?
 - i. If you play any sports, do you have any superstitions?
- B. Superstitions are not only limited to sports, so what are common superstitions you practice in your everyday life?

VI. Rejection/Loss: How does rejection affect Hobbs?

- B. When someone rejects you, how do you feel?
 - i. Also, how do you cope with rejection?
 - a. Compare your experiences with Hobbs.

Before concluding the book, arrange the tables and read a portion of your journal, as a teacher, in order to encourage others to share their comparisons. By listening to everyone's personal correlation with the book, we can conclude that: one, baseball goes beyond a game and, two, that the lessons one learns from baseball are not only similar, but applicable to everyone's life experience.

Extending the Unit:

To begin the extension to the unit, I would like to share an inspiring poem by a modern poet named Joe Flach. The poem, "The Perfect Life" ultimately sums up and concludes the unit of study.

In baseball there is an unwritten rule;

Whenever a pitcher is in the process of pitching a perfect game:

A game in which he has yet to give up a hit, has not walked a batter and no errors have been committed

His teammates do not talk to him; he does not mention it; and, everyone leaves him totally alone

For fear of jinxing the situation and being the cause of the end to his perfection.

Do not mistake my silence for contempt

Do not mistake my lack of self-promotion for disdain

Do not mistake my isolation for loneliness

It is just that I am in the process of pitching a perfect life

I am in the late innings of my baseball game

I have been fortunate enough not to have been batted about by any opposition

I have not experienced the misfortune of having anyone walk all over me

And my mistakes have not resulted in someone advancing freely to another base

My perfect game is in tact

My only hope is – I have not jinxed that fact by writing this poem.

Batter up. (Flach)

Other Y.A. Literature references:

Shakespeare Bats Cleanup By Ron Cortege

Young Kevin Boland, a baseball MVP, contracts mono and will be out of the game for quite some time. As a way of dealing with his injury, Boland reads a book of poetry and soon after finds himself writing poems. Although he receives some ridicule from his friend, Boland uses his poetry as an outlet (similar to the outlet baseball provided for him). The author Ron Cortege writes the book in free verse and implements a lot of poetic variety.

Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game by Michael Lewis

Moneyball is the story of the poorest team in baseball, the Oakland Athletics. The Athletics were widely known for developing great players and releasing them to the bigger teams, but not by choice. In the story Manager Billy Bean is fed up with corporate baseball and decides to recruit a 2002 team with players that never got a chance to play. Within Beans' theory, these players, because they were given an opportunity, would perform equally, if not better than any all-star. And he was right. In 2002 the A's clinched the division with "rookies and wash-ups." Although the team lost in the finals, Bean brought back a new mentality to baseball: a high salary cap, does not produce a good team, talent does.

Mexican White Boy by Matt de la Peña

Danny is a young man that is torn between two cultures. From his father's side he inherits the Mexican culture and from his mother the Anglo, however in the mix Danny finds it difficult to identify with either. On a visit to his fathers, Danny accepts his incredible pitching abilities. The problem, however, is that during a game situations, Danny finds himself lost and unable to throw a good pitch. As the book developed, Danny finds his pitch, as well a sense of identity.

Coach: Lessons on the Game of Life by Michael Lewis

The book highlights how important a role model a coach, of any sport, could be to the young adult. A coach has the ability to teach the young adult a variety of life lessons that will allow the young adult to succeed. The book is written through Michael Lewis' perspective and highlights the influence his baseball coach, Coach Fits, had in his development as an individual.

Work Cited

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Baseball: The Game of Life

“Baseball, it is said, is only a game. True.
And the Grand Canyon is only a hole in
Arizona.”

— George F. Will

By Ricardo “Ricky” Martin

THE UNDERDOG



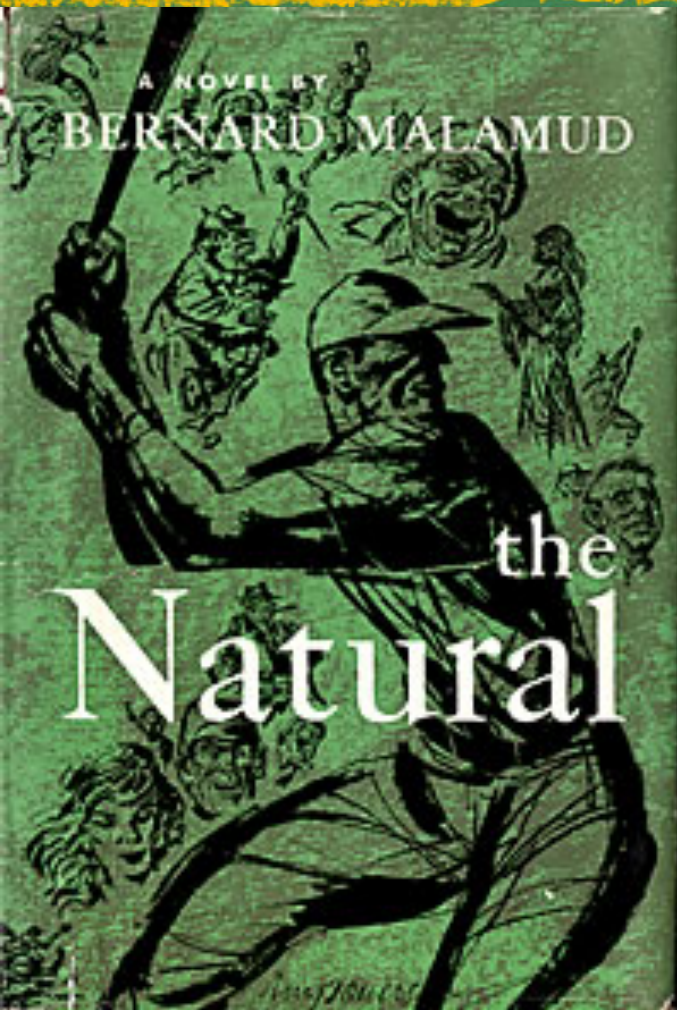
A Writing Exercise

- What emotions are depicted at the beginning of the scene?
- Put yourself in Hetteberg's cleats. In a few words, describe what would be going through your mind before the pitch is thrown. What does it feel like? What will you choose to do with these emotions? Will they make or break you?
- After seeing Hetteberg's accomplishment, describe how the emotions you were asked to channel could be relatable to you; in other words, tell me a story about an instance in life, not involving sports, where you have felt these same emotions.



Photo by Dave Kennedy

The Natural: Going Beyond Baseball.



I. Love

II. Victory

III. Superstitions

IV. Rejection/Loss

The Perfect Life By Joe Flach (Extending The Unit with Poetry)

In baseball there is an unwritten rule;

Whenever a pitcher is in the process of pitching a perfect game:

A game in which he has yet to give up a hit, has not walked a batter
and no errors have

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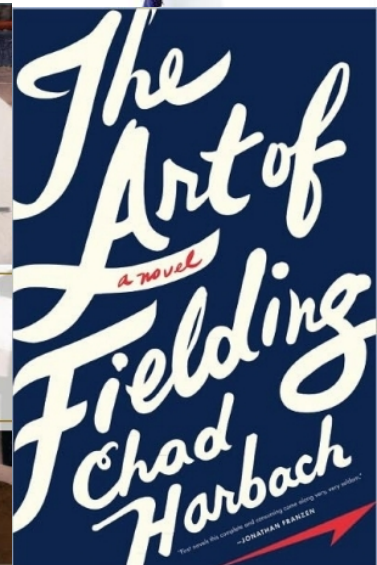
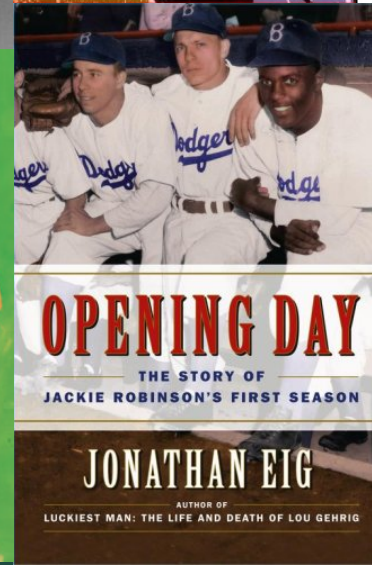
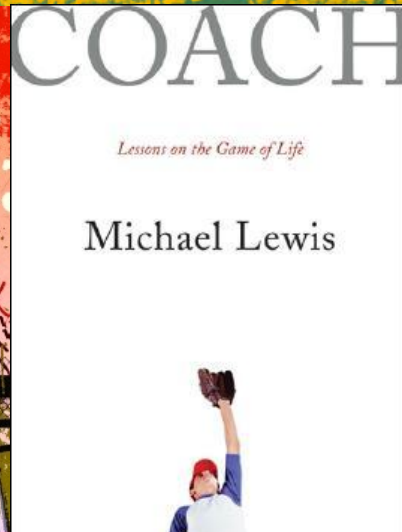
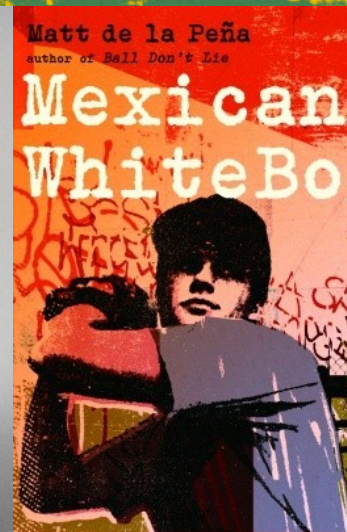
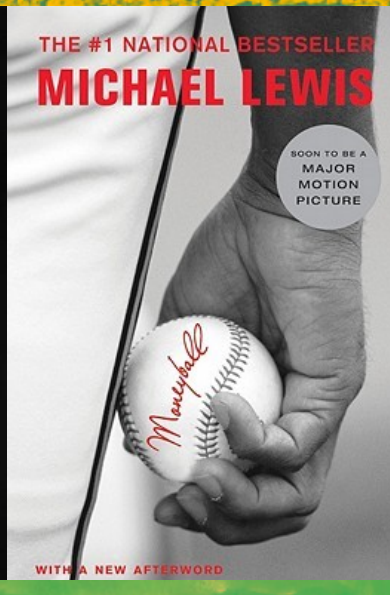
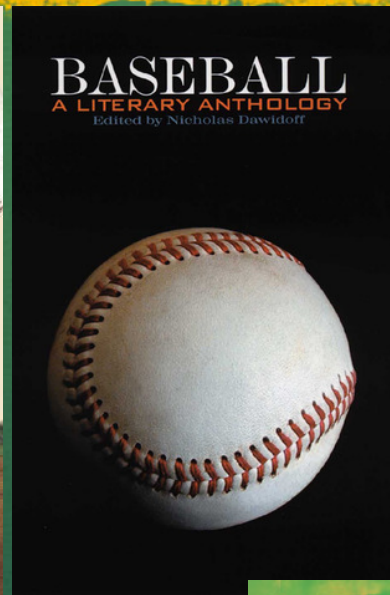
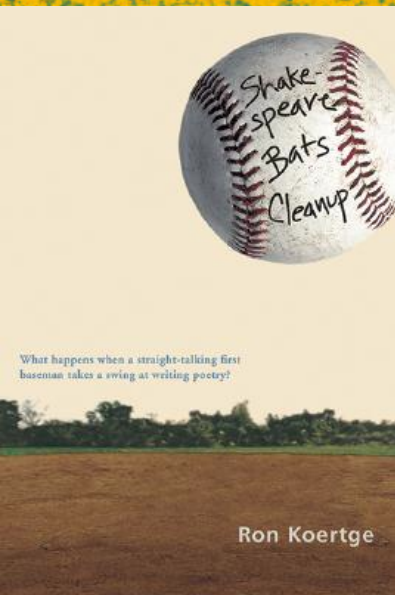
And my mistakes have not resulted in someone advancing freely to another base

My perfect game is in tact

My only hope is – I have not jinxed that fact by writing this poem.

Batter up.

Y.A. Literature (Extending The Unit)



“How can you not be romantic about baseball?”

