



Baseball at Night, 1934
Morris Kantor

LEISURE

Writing a Sports Article

Arts Integration:	Visual Arts and Language Arts
Target Audience:	Grades 4-12
Description:	Students analyze a painting of a night baseball game and write a make-believe news article about the painting.
Curricular Objectives:	
Visual Arts:	The student makes connections between the visual arts, other disciplines and the real world.
English/Language Arts:	The student will use pre-writing strategies to generate ideas. The student identifies, analyzes and applies knowledge from reading the picture to establish a main idea and supporting details (who, what, where, when, how, and why) for an imaginary news report.
Lesson Logistics:	
Materials:	Image of painting by Morris Kantor: <i>Baseball at Night, 1934</i> http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=12930 Details of the field lights and radio station can be found at http://www.npr.org/programs/wesat/features/2001/010713.baseball.html
	Paper and pen or pencil
Space:	Classroom (no specific arrangement needed except for creative drama lesson)
Vocabulary:	
Social Studies/History:	Depression



Lesson Strategy:

Starting the Lesson:

- How many of you have ever been to a baseball game? Where was it? What was it like?
- In the 1930s, even though there was a Depression and people were very poor, they still wanted entertainment. Many people enjoyed sporting events like baseball.

Building the Learning Experiences:

- Begin exploring Kantor's artwork by making observations about the work. To begin, these observations should be statements of fact, not interpretation. Ask, "What is happening here?" As students respond, follow up by asking, "What makes you say that?" Encourage the students to find evidence in the art that supports the main idea. Then ask, "What else do you see?" to help develop observation skills. Often observations lead to interpretation. Some additional questions to consider asking that prompt interpretation are:
 - In what kind of community did this baseball game take place? (The artist lived in upstate New York, and the setting for this game was inspired by a stadium in West Nyack, NY.)
 - What can you infer about the size of the city where the game takes place? (The house so close to the field implies that this is a small town)
 - When is the game being played? How do you know? (Night baseball games were popular because people who worked during the day to attend. Major league baseball did not play its first night game until 1935, but league play and exhibition games had played night games since at least 1930.)
 - Who is attending the ballgame? (The audience is mostly men and women.)
 - Do you think this is a major or minor league ballgame, or a hometown team? What makes you think so? (A major league game would be played in larger stadium. According to the catalogue for the exhibition, the West Nyack stadium "hosted games played by minor league teams, barnstorming professionals, local semipro groups of firemen and policemen, and club members.")ⁱ
 - How can you tell the players on two teams apart? (One team has red socks and the other team gray socks.)
 - What do you think the people broadcasting the game on the radio might be saying about the action? (Look at the lead the first base runner has.)
- Imagine that you are a newspaper reporter and that you are going to write about this game. Using the painting as your guide, write an article that includes the main idea of what happened. Use the discussion the class had to help you write supporting details that include who, what, where, when, how and why.

Assessment:

- Students can write a make-believe sports article that reflects information gleaned from Kantor's painting
- Student's article includes the main idea of the painting, with supporting details that tell who, what, where, when, how and why.



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Summary:

- Paintings are one way to learn what life was like at different times.
- In 1934 people made time for leisure activities; many enjoyed attending baseball games.

Documentation:

In English/Language Arts we wrote sports articles based on a 1934 painting of a baseball game by Morris Kantor.

Post a reproduction of the paintings and copies of the sports articles.

Social Studies Extensions:

All Grades

Compare Then and Now

- Americans had fun in a number of ways during the 1930s. Explore the other paintings that show leisure activities by going to http://americanart.si.edu/education/picturing_the_1930s/. Click on the theater to enter the Website. Using the map icon, go the room marked “Leisure,” which is on the second floor. Clicking on the paintings in this gallery will enlarge them. While you are in the room, you can use the controller button to take you to the far left and right of the gallery. On the left wall is an Aaron Siskind photograph of a band playing at the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem, and a Marjorie Post Wolcott photograph of coal miners playing cards. On the far right is a John Steuart Curry image of trapeze artists from the circus. Clicking on the camera will give you film of a soap box derby. Items on the table include a college football game, and a photograph of the legendary Babe Ruth playing in Chicago’s Comiskey Park (a major league stadium for the Chicago White Sox), and artist Reginald Marsh’s scrapbook with a picture of the Metropolitan Opera House. (There is also an album cover and clicking on it will play a folksong about Roosevelt ending prohibition.) Make a then and now chart to show leisure activities in the 1930s and leisure activities now.

Research and Report

- In the 1930s, major league baseball was segregated. Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier when he was hired by the (then) Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947. Until that time, African Americans played in Negro leagues. Research and report on the history of the Negro Leagues.

<http://www.negroleaguebaseball.com/history101.html> **Arts Experiences for Another Day:**



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All Schools

Creative Writing and Drama

- Imagine that you are in the broadcast booth calling this game for the radio. What would you say so that the people listening could “see” what is happening on the field? How would you use your voice to make the game sound exciting?

Drama

- Create a podcast that tells your feelings about playing baseball or attending a baseball game. Go to www.faae.org for tips on creating a podcast. You can hear a podcast done by the Smithsonian American Art Museum at http://eyelevel.si.edu/2006/07/our_first_podca.html. The discussion on the painting is about halfway through (following a discussion about the renovation of the museum and paintings by Edward Hopper).

Drama and Movement

- Dramatize a baseball game. How does the pitcher move? What stance does the catcher have? How does the umpire hover over the plate? What does it look like to take a lead off first base? How does the batter swing? How is the movement different when you swing away and when you bunt?

Compare and Contrast Visual Arts Images

- Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast Kantor’s painting of a baseball game with one by Marjorie Phillips’ *Night Baseball*, which can be found at http://www.phillipscollection.org/research/american_art/artwork/Phillips_M-Night_Baseball.htm. (Click on the picture to enlarge it.)

Music

- During the seventh inning of baseball games, people very often sing “Take Me Out to the Ballgame.” The lyrics for this song, originally written in 1908, were somewhat different. Research the history of the song at http://www.baseball-almanac.com/poetry/po_stmo.shtml and share your findings with the class. In 1934, people sang the song with an organ accompaniment. (You may listen to the organ playing the song at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Take_Me_Out_to_the_Ball_Game.) What would you hear if you went to a ballgame today?
- The “Star Spangled Banner” is played before the start of every major league baseball game.

Putting It All Together

- Make a dynamic podcast or video by combining images of the paintings and music, and filming the dramatization of the baseball game.

Photo credit for page 1:

Baseball at Night, 1934

Morris Kantor

Born: Minsk, Russia 1896

Died: Nyack, New York 1974

oil on linen 37 x 47 1/4 in. (94.0 x 120.0 cm.)

Smithsonian American Art Museum Gift of Mrs. Morris Kantor

1976.146.18

ⁱ Wagner, Anne Prentice. *1934: A New Deal for Artists*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian American Art Museum, 102.