

Name _____ Date _____

History of Baseball

Baseball is a very popular sport in the United States. Americans start learning and playing the game so early in life that the sport has become known as “the national pastime.” Baseball is one game that can be played by people of average height and weight.

Baseball started sometime between 1861 - 1865 but it was called “rounders.” Soon, the players made the game better by keeping score and record keeping. Today there are so many records of great baseball accomplishments such as when Roger Maris got 61 home runs which broke Babe Ruth’s record of 60 home runs in 1927.

The first professional baseball league was born in 1871. By the 20th century, most large cities in the eastern United States had a professional baseball team. The teams were divided into two leagues, the National and American. During the regular season a team played only against teams within its league. The best team in each league was said to have won the pennant. The two pennant winners met at the end of the regular season for the World Series. Whichever team won four out of seven games was the champion for that year. This system is still used today.

Great players started to emerge in the 1920s, when Babe Ruth led the New York Yankees to several World Series titles and became a national hero because of ability to hit so many home runs. Another great player was Jackie Robinson when in 1947, he became the first African American to play in the major leagues. Starting in the 1950s, baseball expanded and western cities got professional teams. The western teams either started their own teams called expansion teams or they tried to convince players from eastern teams to join their team.

Until the 1970s, the owners of baseball teams owned the players. Since then, the rules have changed so that players are free to join any team. Teams now bid on the star players and the star players can make millions of dollars a year. Baseball has slowly become a sport and a business. Some fans don’t like the business side of baseball.

It’s agreed that baseball was introduced to Japan by an American professor between the 1870s and 1930s. Professional Japanese baseball began in the 1930s when the Japanese Professional Baseball League was formed. In the 1990s, a Japanese player, Hideo Nomo became a star pitcher for the Los Angeles Dodgers. Baseball is also widely played in Cuba and other Caribbean nations.

Some interesting facts about baseball are:

1. The first World Series was played between Pittsburg and Boston in 1903. It was a nine-game series and Boston won 5-3.
2. The New York Yankees have won 26 World Series titles, which is more than any other team.
3. Mickey Mantle who played for the New York Yankees holds the record for the most homeruns of 18 and RBI 40 in World Series History.
4. The first time the stars from the National League played the stars in the American League was in 1933.
5. Baltimore Orioles shortstop Cal Ripken Jr. didn’t miss a game in 16 years.
6. Pete Rose who played for the Cincinnati Reds holds the all-time record for hits (4,256) and games played (3,562).
7. In 2001, San Francisco’s Barry Bond broke the single season home run record with 73. Mark McGuire from the St. Louis Cardinals held the record until 1998 with 70 home runs.
8. Famous players that have hit four home runs in one game are Lou Gehrig, Willie Mays, Chuck Klein and Gil Hodges.
9. Pitcher Nolan Ryan played 27 seasons and struck out more batters in his career than any other pitcher.
10. Barry Bonds won the National League MVP 7 times.
11. Philadelphia A’s manager Connie Mack has 3, 755 career victories, more than any other manager in history.
12. The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum was created in 1935 and is located in Cooperstown, N.Y.

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Part A: Fill in the blanks below with the correct word.

1. Baseball was called _____ when it started.
2. Americans start learning and playing baseball at an early _____.
3. The first _____ baseball _____ was born in 1871.
4. _____ American states were the first to have professional baseball teams.
5. The best team in each _____ played in the _____.
6. The World Series is the best four games out of _____.
7. _____ was the first African American to play in the major leagues.
8. Western American cities started to get professional baseball teams in the _____.
9. An _____ introduced baseball to Japan.
10. Western teams were called _____ teams.

Part B: Circle True or False to answer the questions below.

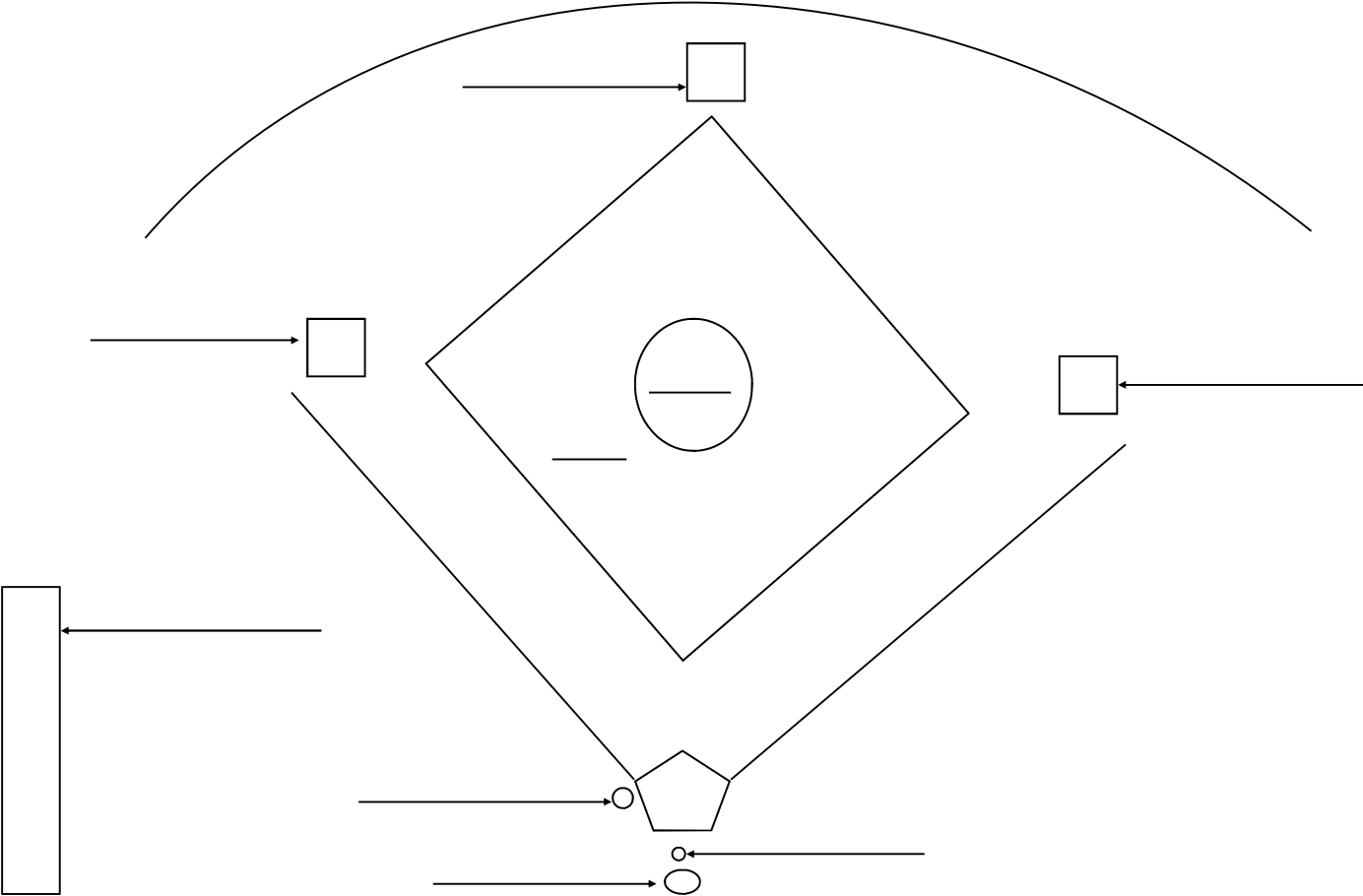
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|---|------|-------|
| 1. Baseball is popular in the United States. | True | False |
| 2. Babe Ruth was the first African American baseball player to play in the major leagues. | True | False |
| 3. There are four games in the World Series. | True | False |
| 4. Baseball players don't have to be very tall and thin. | True | False |
| 5. Baseball is American's National Pastime. | True | False |
| 6. Baseball teams are divided into two leagues. | True | False |
| 7. The first professional baseball team was formed in 1871. | True | False |
| 8. During the regular season, baseball teams can play any team they want. | True | False |
| 9. Baseball is considered a sport and a business. | True | False |
| 10. An American teacher introduced baseball to Japan. | True | False |

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Use the words from the Word Box and write where the positions are in the picture.

second baseman	umpire	pitcher	catcher	right outfielder	batter
third baseman	shortstop	center outfielder	first baseman	dugout	left outfielder



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Part A:

1. rounders
2. age
3. professional, league
4. Eastern
5. league, World Series
6. seven
7. Jackie Robinson
8. 1950s
9. American Professor
10. expansion

1. True
2. False
3. False
4. True
5. True
6. True
7. False
8. False
9. True
10. False

Part B:

