

GRAND SLAM ACTIVITIES

FOR THE CLASSROOM

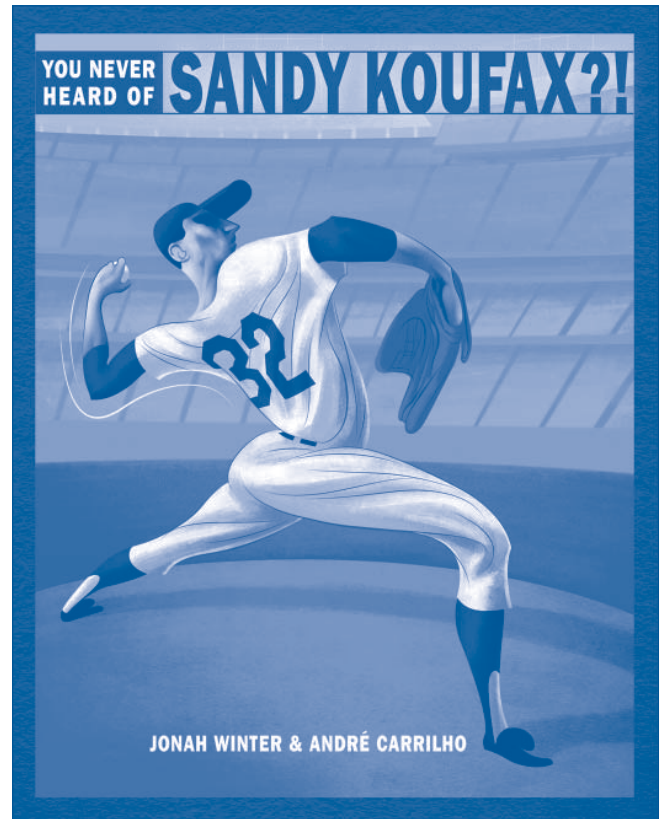
ABOUT THE BOOK

In this picture book biography of the greatest left-handed pitcher to ever play the game of baseball, we see exactly what made Sandy Koufax so amazing. We hear that the beginning of Sandy's career on the Brooklyn Dodgers was rocky, that he was shy, and that he was one of the only Jews in the game back then. We watch him quit, only to return the next season, firing one rocket after another over the plate. And we see him in pain because of an over-used left arm, eventually retiring at the peak of his career. Finally, we are told that people are still "scratchin' their heads over Sandy," who remains a modest hero and a mystery to this day.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR

Jonah Winter is the author of *Muhammad Ali: Champion of the World*, *Roberto Clemente*, and *Dizzy*. He lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

André Carrilho is the illustrator of *Porch Lies* by Patricia C. McKissack, which received three starred reviews. This is his first picture book. He lives in Lisbon, Portugal.



Schwartz & Wade Books HC: 978-0-375-83738-8
GLB: 978-0-375-93738-5

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

- Display the book to your students and ask the following questions:
 - What do you think this book is about? How do you know that?
 - What can you tell about Sandy Koufax from the art?
 - Can you guess what position he played?
- Brainstorm baseball team and player names, and then create a chart.
- Name the field positions in baseball. Create a blank baseball diamond and field and position sticky-note labels in the appropriate locations.
- Work with children to identify team cities on a map of North America.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

MATH/SCIENCE

REASONING/SOCIAL SCIENCE: Are left-handed people in their right minds? Some sources report that about 13% of the population around the world is left-handed. One of the most famous left-handers in American sports history is Sandy Koufax!

Share these facts with the class:

The left side of the brain (right-hand control) controls speech, language, writing, logic, math, and science. The right side of the brain (left-hand control) controls music, art, creativity, perception, and emotions.

- How many students in the class are left-handed? How many are right-handed?
- Make a graph comparing these numbers.
- Ask students to find out about the other members of their families: how many are right-handed and how many are left-handed? Add this data to your chart.
- Do the left-handed students have other traits in common (such as a strength in art, music, math, or sports)? What about the right-handed students?
- Create a Venn diagram illustrating the class findings.
- Take a look around your room and see how many things are right- or left-handed. Doors, common tools such as scissors, musical instruments, computer mice, and even notebooks can be tough for left-handers to deal with!
- What conclusions can your students draw from their observations?

STATISTICS: Choose a favorite baseball player (the class can agree on one, you can divide the students up into “fan clubs,” or you can allow each student to select a favorite). Use the newspaper in the classroom to follow that player’s performance for two weeks. Compare the number of hits the player makes (a walk, or “base on balls,” doesn’t count!) to the number of times the player is at bat in order to calculate the player’s batting average.

Younger students can compute their own simple batting averages (for instance, 2 hits out of 4 at-bats would be an average of $\frac{2}{4}$ or 50% or .500) using a tee-ball tee in a playground batting practice session.



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

ART

ART/CHARACTER EDUCATION: Be a baseball fan! Stay cool at the game with a “baseball fan.” Cut 6–8-inch circles from cardboard (no stick required, but it would be appropriate to make baseball bat–shaped sticks, if you like). Have students use markers, crayons, and other art supplies to decorate the circles any way they like—as players’ faces, baseballs, team logos—the more creative, the better. Use the fans to keep cool at warm summer games!

Design your own team/class logo and uniform. Have students brainstorm, discuss, and come to consensus on a class team name and logo. Use the logo to “brand” your class and encourage the kind of teamwork that helped Sandy Koufax to become the best pitcher he could be. The work and behavior of each member of the team affects the success of the rest!

LANGUAGE ARTS/VOCABULARY

HYPERBOLE/SIMILE STUDY: “Hittin’ a Koufax fastball,” Willie said, “was like tryin’ to drink coffee with a fork.” This is an example of a type of language called hyperbole. Hyperbole often compares two things, just like a simile does. The difference is that hyperbole is an exaggeration. For example: “Her eyes were as big as saucers.” It looks like a simile, but it is

comparing the size of someone’s eyes to the size of dishes. Imagine a pair of eyes that big! Can your students think of some common sayings that use hyperbole? (“She sings like an angel.” “He can run like the wind.”)



Illustration © 2009 by André Carrilho

SPELLER UP!: This spelling and/or definition bee is played like baseball, with the word caller taking the part of pitcher. Prepare, or have the students prepare, “baseballs” (circular pieces of paper) with vocabulary words the class is working on. These should, of course, include vocabulary from *You Never Heard of Sandy Koufax?!* Shuffle the word cards and split them up into two baseball caps. Divide the class into two teams. The teacher can play the part of the pitcher, or each team can choose a pitcher from its roster. The pitcher selects a word from the team baseball cap, and then asks the first opposing “batter” to spell and/or define the word. Got it right? Move to first base! If the next batter also gets it right, the players advance, but if the batter answers incorrectly, he’s out, and the other team gets a turn to be up at bat. The team with the most “runs” wins.

Suggested vocabulary words:

Ace	Assist	Baseball
Brooklyn	Control	Dough
Equipment	Hotshot	Hurler
Jersey	League	Major
Mound	Nervous	Pennant
Pitcher	Practice	Pro
Retire	Rookie	Sandlot
Scout	Strike	Strikeout
Teammates	Trolley	Uniform
Unpredictable	Zone	

POETRY/DRAMATIC PLAY: The classic baseball poem “Casey at the Bat” by Ernest Lawrence Thayer lends itself to classroom choral reading and reader’s theater. Read the poem to and with your students, and then assign roles and produce your own play. Take the opportunity to incorporate student-designed costumes, programs, tickets, and so forth. There’s a role for everyone in the class!

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

MUSIC

Join your students in a rousing rendition of the ballpark favorite “Take Me Out to the Ball Game.” Substitute your team’s name for “home team” (be ready for a little friendly rivalry!), and don’t forget to add a little extra home-plate umpire gusto when you sing, “One, two, three strikes, you’re out!”

*Take me out to the ball game,
Take me out with the crowd.
Buy me some peanuts and Cracker Jack,
I don’t care if I never get back,
Let me root, root, root for the home team,
If they don’t win it’s a shame.
For it’s one, two, three strikes, you’re out,
At the old ball game.*

PIN THE PITCHER ON THE MOUND: For a game like Pin the Tail on the Donkey, create a poster depicting a baseball field. Mark the baselines, the bases, and the pitcher’s mound. Have the children create or find a picture of a baseball player to be the “playing piece” they will use. Place a piece of rolled masking tape or double-sided adhesive tape on the back of the picture. Use a sleeping mask, bandana, or baseball cap pulled very low to blindfold the children. Whether or not you want the children to “wind up” (spin two or three times) is up to you. Let the children take turns trying to Pin the Pitcher on the Mound. Closest one wins!

SNACK TIME

Set up a classroom refreshment stand. Some of the items you’ll want to offer your “fans” are popcorn, pretzels, hot dogs, and of course, Cracker Jack!

Bake or buy plain cupcakes—one for each student. Provide vanilla frosting, red licorice laces, and/or red cake decorating gel and let the kids create their own baseball cupcakes!

INTERNET RESOURCES

The official site of Major League Baseball
www.MLB.com

National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum
web.baseballhalloffame.org/index.jsp

The official site of the Los Angeles Dodgers
losangeles.dodgers.mlb.com/la/history/timeline08.jsp

This Day in History 1962:
Sandy Koufax pitches first no-hitter
www.history.com/this-day-in-history.do?action=Article&id=57015

Prepared by Kathy Krasniewicz, Director of Youth Services, Perrot Memorial Library
Random House Children’s Books · School and Library Marketing · 1745 Broadway, Mail Drop 10-4 · New York, NY 10019 · BN0902 · 12/08

