

Goals/Objectives/Student Outcomes:

Students will:

- Trace the development of sports in Iowa.
- Use sports as a tool to develop writing skills in 4 different styles of writing: diary/journal, creative, letter, and directional.
- Discuss the effects of sports on the lifestyles of Iowans.

Materials:

1. A zip-lock plastic bag kit for each student containing:
 - 1 get well card
 - 3 pages personal stationary
 - 2 thank you notes
 - 1 invitation
 - 1 sheet formal stationary
 - pages arranged to form a small journal
2. Notebook paper
3. Pencils
4. A variety of sports equipment
5. Display table

Background:

Based on "From Knickers to High Fives," by the Putnam Museum of History and Natural Science:

Native Americans have lived in what is now Iowa or hunted on its land and fished its streams for at least 10,000 years. The story of sports in Iowa begins with the Native Americans whose sporting activities are generally believed to have derived from religious ceremonies for seasonal festivals. The game was a significant part of each ceremony. The ceremonies were probably intended to cure sickness, increase plant and animal fertility, or celebrate a good hunt or harvest. Native Americans also played games for fun and to increase the skills necessary for survival. Various ball games such as lacrosse and shinny were played as well as skill building games such as archery and foot, horse, or canoe racing.

As non-natives moved into the area, they brought with them different

cultures and traditions. These people were independent, aggressive, and competitive. They got plenty of exercise with the daily chores of washing clothes, splitting firewood, and working and traveling in all types of weather. There was little tradition of sports at this time. In fact the concept of sport in the mid-19th century appears to have been associated with violent and bloody activities such as fighting and no-holds-barred wrestling. Many churches, especially the Protestant denominations, discouraged sports as being not conducive to the health of the soul.

Those ideas began to change, however. German immigrants to Iowa brought with them a philosophy of life that included physical fitness. Exercise helped build a better person, one with a "sound mind in a sound body." Over the years people founded Turner Societies whose purpose was sports, exercise and gymnastics. Many men and later women participated in classes held by Turners.

During the early days of the Civil War, Union General Abner Doubleday is credited with the invention of baseball as a diversion from the rigors of camp life. It was a uniquely American game, fast, organized, precise, and often intense, very unlike its English precedent, cricket. In the decades that followed, new games appeared, including basketball, volley-ball, rowing, football, tennis, golf, and boxing by the Marquis of Queensbury's rules.

Along with the sports appeared a host of supporting or enabling devices—leagues, college staffs, professional coaches and trainers, sports writers, equipment manufacturers, and professionally designed and groomed playing fields.

Why did this happen? The growth of the middle class, the greater amounts of free time, a generally expanding American economy, a growing population, the social concern for health, and the belief that young people must fill their time with wholesome activities each played a part in the development of American sports.

Historian Donal Mrozek of Kansas State University has written an enlightening study entitled *Sport and the American Mentality, 1880-1910*. In it he states that three changes in America combined to make growth of sport possible: Sports could play a role in the emergence of a national culture in America; the changing role of women and the possibility of sport playing a new role in their lives; and the value placed by Americans on energy, activity, and movement in every area of work and play as personified by President Teddy Roosevelt.

We can see the beginning of team sport as we know it in the era after the Civil War. There also were many different activities that individual Iowans could participate in such as ice skating, bobsledding, boxing, and wrestling. The YMCA-YWCA tradition appeared in Iowa around this time. The YMCA's had reading rooms, baths, and sports activities for teams and individuals. Schools began forming football and basketball teams, a tradition that continues today with strong intra- and inter-city rivalries.

In addition, some late 19th century families had money to spend on their leisure time activities and as a result, clubs were founded to promote special activities. Clubs also satisfied the need for members to socialize and to provide socially acceptable activities to fill the idle hours of younger members. Some clubs that were formed for a particular sport crossed over economic and social boundaries within the communities. Still other clubs or teams organized by ethnic groups preserved games that were traditional to those cultures, and gave people of common heritage a way to keep in touch.

After the turn of the century, fitness and sport participation spilled from schools as young athletes took their lessons and competitive spirit onto playgrounds and playing fields. As professional sport writers began compiling statistics and highlighting heroes, sponsors and spectators encouraged the development of professional sport with money and attendance.

During the hard times of war and economic depression, the need for entertainment and a recreational outlet seemed to increase. Spirits were raised, time was filled, and money could be made. During the wars as teams broke up and members left for the fronts, many of the workers who were making the necessary tools of war played in industrial league baseball teams.

After World War II a booming economy and more leisure hours increased the demand for places to play and for sporting events to attend. Athletes excelled and fans loved the competitive spectacles. School related sporting activities increased as did the national visibility of sports heroes.

Title IX, which was part of the federal government's Education Act of 1972, required equal access for all athletes to facilities, equipment, coaching, and programs. This piece of legislation drastically changed physical education and athletic competition at the interscholastic and intercollegiate level as once-closed competitive doors were opened to women.

Today, advances in medicine, changing attitudes and waning economic conditions have affected fitness and sport in Iowa. The quest for a healthier lifestyle brought fitness to the forefront while spending conscious sport consumers now seek the most return for the leisure dollar.

Excerpt from *The Goldfinch* 10 (April 1989), by Katharyn Bine Brosseau:

Traditional games have simple rules so that kids of many ages can play. Many traditional games, like Leapfrog and Follow-the-Leader need at least two players, but can be more fun with more people. In games like Red Rover, kids have to choose teams and play against one another.

Children in Iowa didn't play baseball in the mid-19th century (it wasn't invented yet). But they did have fun playing Leap-frog, Red Rover, and Follow-the Leader.

Why do kids play games? They play for entertainment. Many outdoor games are good exercise, too. Kids also learn how to cooperate with others, how to solve problems, and how to get along with others.

Some games even teach kids how to behave. Simon Says, and old traditional game, teaches kids to copy others' actions when they didn't know what to do. Captain May I (also called Mother May I) shows kids how to polite when asking others for favors.

Excerpt from *The Goldfinch* 4 (September 1982), by Angelita Reyes:

Among the many sports people enjoyed in the late 19th century were archery, croquet, tennis, golf, bowling, and horseshoe pitching. These sports emphasized individual skill more than teamwork. Because vigorous activity was not required, it was acceptable for women to take part in most of these sports. In addition, long dresses did not get in the way too much when women competed in these games.

To play croquet, a certain number of hoops and pegs are set up on the lawn. Each player takes a mallet and ball. The objective of the game is to strike the ball through the hoops in the proper order. The first person to finish wins. When croquet was played, good manners and gentle behavior were as important as following the rules.

After 1876, bicycling became a popular sport. The League of American Wheelman was organized to help popularize bicycle riding. Because the League wanted more people to ride bicycles, it encouraged races all over the country. Women could be members but were barred from racing competition. In 1895, the League had many active members in Iowa.

Cycling influenced women's fashions. Because of the way a bicycle was built and used, women had to wear shorter skirts than they had worn before. Some daring women even wore baggy trousers called bloomers. Cyclists also worked to improve Iowa's roads and streets as well as those in the rest of the nation. At the time roads were seldom paved. To have an enjoyable ride, cyclists needed smooth roads without ruts and holes.

Procedure:

1. List things that helped the growth of sports. Tell how each item on the list made it possible for more people to participate in sports.
2. Clothing is a clue to the amount of physical activity in which women participated in the past. Find examples of women's fashions for the years 1860 through 1960. Look in the encyclopedia or in a book about the history of costume.
3. Discuss the value of taking part in sports. Think about ideas such as learning to be a good sport, teamwork, and physical fitness.
4. Make a list of the many types of sports and games that Iowans play. Make a list of individual and team sports. In which sports would people participate most of their lives.
5. Talk about some games or sports played in other states that are not played in Iowa or are not as popular in Iowa as in other states.
6. Sports news reporting has changed since the first reports appeared in newspapers. Read the 1867 news report of a baseball game on page of *The Goldfinch* (vol. 4 #1 Sept. 1982). Find a recent newspaper report of a baseball game and compare the two. What differences are found in the reports? How has sports writing changed?
7. One class period: Describe the history of sports in Iowa by answering the questions below and using the background information.
 - a. Who were the first people to live in the land we now call Iowa?
 - b. What are some of the tribes that have lived or live in Iowa?
 - c. Why do we play games today?

- d. What were other purposes could Native American games have had?
- e. How can you tell early non-native settlers got plenty of exercise?
- f. Do you agree with the statement "a healthy person has a sound mind in a sound body"? Why or why not?
- g. Why did participation in sports grow after the Civil War?
- h. Why were (and are) sports clubs formed?
- i. Why would sports be more important to people during hard times or war?
- j. How did Title IX change school sports?

8. Four class periods. Pass out a writing kit to each student. Tell students that in this unit they will sharpen their letter writing skills. They will be given a sports situation. After each description there is an assignment to be completed by using materials from the kit. Use your language textbook to review proper form for business and friendly letters.

Letter 1: Your friend Ken Ploen just was voted into the Canadian Football League Hall of Fame. Write a letter of congratulations. (Ken Ploen graduated from Clinton High School in 1954 and was an All-State football and basketball player as well as hurdler in track. At the University of Iowa he quarterbacked the Hawkeyes to victory in the 1957 Rose Bowl game. He joined the Canadian Football League with the Winnipeg Blue Bombers, retiring in 1967. In 1975 he was elected to the Canadian Football League Hall of Fame.)

Letter 2: You are staying with your aunt, uncle, and cousins on the beach. You are really getting to be a beach bum! You go barefoot every day, swim, hike the dunes, and take a successful fishing trip. Write your parents a friendly letter telling them about your vacation.

Letter 3: You've just spent the weekend with friends of your parents. Their son was a terrible tennis player, but you did get to teach him some of Jim Leach's wrestling moves. When home, you write a thank-you note for their hospitality. (Jim Leach, the man who now represents Iowa's First District in Congress, won the Iowa State wrestling championship at 138 pounds in 1960. He participated in wrestling, football, and rugby at Princeton University.)

Letter 4: Yesterday your mother brought home an antique lamp. While pretending you were Judy Thompson practicing her backhand, you break it. Quickly, you write a letter of apology. (Former tennis pro Judy Thompson played on the Virginia Slims circuit in the late 1960s. Taking up the sport in her senior year in high school, Thompson continued her career at the University of Northern Iowa before joining the pro ranks.)

Letter 5: You are president of the "Si" Roberts Fan Club. You've just learned that you might be voted out of office next election. You're desperate and decide to do some electioneering. So you write an invitation to attend a "Si" Roberts autograph party—after checking with "Si" first, of course! (Simon "Si" Roberts was the 1954 Iowa State wrestling champion at 133 pounds. At the University of Iowa, Roberts was three time NCAA champion at 147 pounds. Si was the first black state wrestling champion and the first black wrestling official in the Quad Cities.)

Letter 6: Looking through last Sunday's paper, you read an ad for a sale on sweat suits. This reminds you of your grandma's jogging program. Thoughtfully you write a business letter ordering her the outfit.

Letter 7: It's your birthday and you open a present from your favorite aunt. It's a new soccer ball! With gratitude and politeness, you write a thank you note.

Letter 8: You are watching the TV news when you hear that your favorite baseball star, Gene Baker, was hurt in last night's game against the Cardinals. He's now in the hospital. Concerned, you write a get-well note. (Gene Baker has something many Iowans would give their eyeteeth for—a World Series ring! Baker played infield for the Chicago Cubs from 1953-1956 and the Pittsburgh Pirates from 1957-1961 and was named to the National League All Star Team in 1955. After the 1961 World Series season with Pittsburgh, he became a scout for the Pirate's organization.)

9. One class period. Recording the events and emotions of your lore through a journal or diary is an interesting and rewarding experience. In this lesson students blend their imaginations with this writing style.

a. Set out a variety of sports equipment (balls, rackets, shoes, etc.).

b. Ask the students to pretend they are one piece of that equipment and write 5 entries in their journal detailing the life of that equipment from its point of view.

10. One class period. Directional writing is a necessary part of technical writing and unless well written, can easily confuse readers. Ask the children to write directions detailing how to do anything pertaining to a sport, such as:

- a. How to play volleyball
- b. How to set up a baseball diamond
- c. How to dress for watching a football game on a cold day
- d. How to get to your high school stadium from your school

Assessment of Outcomes:

Each student compiles their writings into a book to show their teacher, principal, and parents. This book serves as an assessment of mastery.

Extensions and Adaptations:

- Have the students design and make the cards for their writing kits.
- Have the students learn games from long ago such as shinny.
- Bring community residents in to tell about sports greats from your town or school.

Resources:

- "Sports." *The Goldfinch* 4 (September 1982).
- "Folklife." *The Goldfinch* 10 (April 1989):11-12.