

Literary Essay: Grade 5

Writing Unit 2

A Literary Essay
Based on the Book
Baseball Saved Us by Ken Mochizuki

Depending on how you look at it, baseball can be a game of fun, a serious sport, or a way to cope with difficulties in life. The game itself requires cooperation, strategy, and above all, determination. After reading the story, *Baseball Saved Us*, and talking about it with others, it seems that not everyone thinks about the story in the same way. Some people think that the story is about a group of Japanese-Americans who play baseball just to keep busy while they are detained in an internment camp during World War II. They think that the people just wanted to do something fun because they were bored. But I think the story is much more than that. I think *Baseball Saved Us* is really about how the power of determination helped a group of Americans cope who were unjustly detained and wanted to have some sense of normalcy in their lives once again.

Early in the story, there is evidence of the power of determination. For example, the narrator states that the Japanese-Americans didn't have anything they needed for baseball, but they found ways to get what they needed. They created the baseball field with shovels and water. They build bleachers out of trees. They sewed uniforms out of mattress covers. All the while, the guards were watching to make sure they did not step out of line. These Japanese-Americans were being confined after Japan had declared war on the United States - even though they had nothing to do with it. This shows that, through the power of determination, they were able to experience a part of the everyday life they once enjoyed.

Later in the story, in one of the last games of the year to decide the championship, a young boy nicknamed Shorty showed determination when he was up to bat with two strikes and a runner on second. He wanted to prove to himself, the other kids, and the guards that he could play well, even though he usually grounded out. The other players teased him when he was up to bat. He "glanced at the guardhouse behind the left field foul line and saw the man in the tower, leaning on the rail with the blinding sun glinting off his sunglasses. He was always watching, always staring." This suddenly made him mad. He gripped the bat harder and decided that he was going to hit the ball past the guardhouse even if it killed him. And he did! He crossed home plate, and his teammates lifted him onto their shoulders in celebration. This shows that Shorty, through the power of determination, was able to prove to himself and to others that he was a strong player.

At the end of the story, when the Japanese-Americans were released from the internment camp and returned home, Shorty showed determination during the first game of the season. Everything was not really better at home as he hoped it would be. Shorty was getting teased because he was the only Japanese-American on the team. He "looked at the pitcher. The sun glinted off his glasses as he stood on the mound, like the guard in the tower." Shorty

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desperately wanted to show his teammates that he was not the enemy. He "swung and felt that solid whack again." In the end, Shorty's power of determination helped him win the game for his team.

Now, as I think about the power of determination, I realize that much of what we can accomplish in life is because of how strongly we feel on the inside. When we dig down deep and will ourselves to accomplish our goals, we are far more successful than if we rely solely on our physical ability. In my life, I have found that determination is the key to getting good grades in school, doing well in sports, and reaching other goals. It takes body and mind to accomplish what we want in life. If you dig down deep and find your own reason to be determined, it will make a difference in your life.