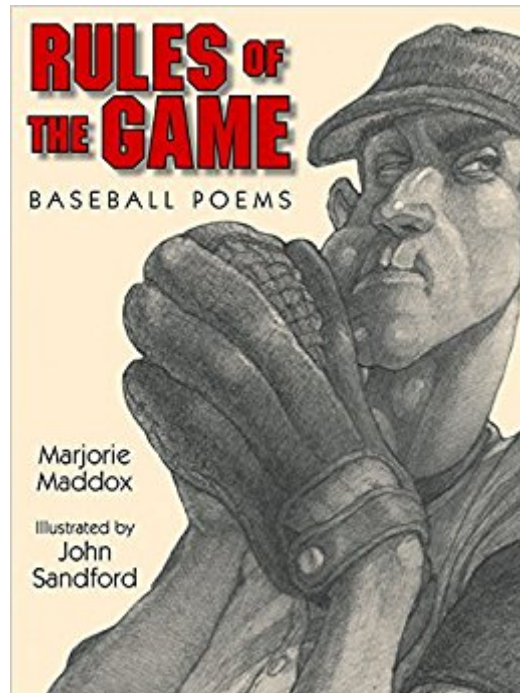




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Rules Of The Game: Baseball Poems



Synopsis

Baseball is a game of fine points and grand gestures, small blunders and bold accomplishments - the hook slide into second, the humble bunt, the unexpected wild pitch, the bases-loaded home run. Poet and baseball fan Marjorie Maddox pays tribute to these and other details that make the national pastime an enduring and engaging sport for players and fans alike. Surprising wordplay and striking images offer a unique perspective of this classic American game.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Grade 5
In this collection of approximately 40 brief poems, Maddox focuses on aspects of the game from pitching and hitting to base-running and fielding. Her carefully constructed word pictures offer dramatic snapshots of infield flies and collisions between fielders, sacrifice bunts, balks and pitch-outs, stolen bases, and grand slams. "A Strike by any other name is a (sometimes) foul, is a swing/that swats only air, is doing nothing when the ball's right there/three times is an out is an out is an out." An umpire and a player face off in the large illustration laid across one spread: under the umpire, the poem "Out" concludes "all hard-pitched hope outthrown, thrown out/of luck, of heart, of the hard heat of summer/and what won't be." On the facing page, the poem "Safe" states, "What-could-be hunkers down here,/dares to snare the numbers,/spike out the sure thing,/outlaw the out." Compact yet full of meaning, these selections offer glimpses of the game's pleasures and poignant moments. Sandford's black-and-white pencil drawings add to the drama, focusing viewers' attention on the gangly pitcher's calculating gaze or the single-minded pursuit of the pony-tailed infielder. Maddox's whimsical wordplay will be savored by casual sports

fans and hardcore baseball addicts alike. —Marilyn Taniguchi, Beverly Hills Public Library, CA
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The overlap between poetry readers and baseball fans at this age range may be small, but for those in the middle of that particular Venn diagram, this is indeed a rare treat. Which isn't to say others won't gain something from this book. Sports fans will find themselves nodding in recognition of Maddox's sophisticated grasp of the game's intricacies, while language mavens will appreciate her joyous wordplay and dead-on command of poetic devices, even if they don't quite catch all of the allusions. A knuckleball becomes "that pigeon / flapping awkwardly / out the barn door of a hand" and a line drive "a sharp swing of invisible string on which the ball careens." Some of the best lines are the simplest: a sacrifice bunt "kills it with a tap." Sanford's charcoal pencil drawings, backed by sepia-toned pages, may not exactly grab readers, but they impart a classy timelessness to the book that's a nice match to its subject. For the right reader, this could be an eye-opening glimpse of poetry doing what prose cannot. Grades 5-8. --Ian Chipman

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