

LEVELED BOOK • Y

# Golf



Written by Kira Freed



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## Focus Question

What makes golf a popular sport?

# Words to Know

amateurs  
durability  
endorsements  
etiquette  
focus  
mechanics

prestige  
professional  
propelling  
simulators  
tournament  
unique

Front cover: A golfer putting on a green near the ocean

Title page: A golf club (wood) on a teeing green

Page 3: A boy follows a ball's path with his eyes.

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## Correlation

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Larry Mize's winning shot in the 1987 Masters Tournament has been described as the greatest chip in golf history.

## The Greatest Chip

It's the final day of the 1987 Masters Tournament at Augusta National Golf Club in Augusta, Georgia. Larry Mize, a relative newcomer, has a challenge in front of him—he has to hit his ball over a patch of tall grass and onto the putting green. He takes a few calming practice swings before hitting a flawless chip shot, propelling the ball in an arc over the tall grass. The ball bounces a few times before rolling onto the putting green and directly into the coveted hole. Larry Mize wins the tournament! The crowd goes wild!

At first glance, observers of golf may think that whacking a ball into a hole in the ground is a fairly simple task, but nothing could be further from the truth. To excel at golf, players need patience, balance, **focus**, and abundant practice.

## Amateurs and Professionals

More than sixty million **amateurs** around the world enjoy golf for recreation. An estimated 23 million Americans were playing the sport in 2013, practicing on private or public golf courses across the country. Some golf courses can be expensive, but there are also plenty of affordable public courses. Beginners can also find junior or collegiate golf programs, which offer young people opportunities to learn, practice, or compete.

A small number of **professional** golfers compete full-time in tournaments and earn their income from prize money and **endorsements**. Top men's pro golfers compete in the U.S.-based Professional Golfers' Association (PGA) Tour as well as the European Tour, the Japan Golf Tour, and several others. Top women's pro golfers from around the world compete in the U.S.-based Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) Tour. The Champions Tour is a men's tournament for pro golfers over age fifty, while the Legends Tour is for female pros over forty-five. In addition, men's and women's golf each have several top professional tournaments, called *majors*. Winning a tour or a major brings **prestige** as well as money. Most professional golfers earn a living by teaching golf or operating golf courses or clubs.

## Countries with the Most Golf Courses



### Countries and Numbers of Golf Courses

- |                           |                        |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. United States (17,672) | 6. Germany (684)       |
| 2. United Kingdom (2,752) | 7. France (559)        |
| 3. Japan (2,442)          | 8. China (500)         |
| 4. Canada (2,300)         | 9. Sweden (480)        |
| 5. Australia (1,500)      | 10. South Africa (450) |

## Golf Around the World

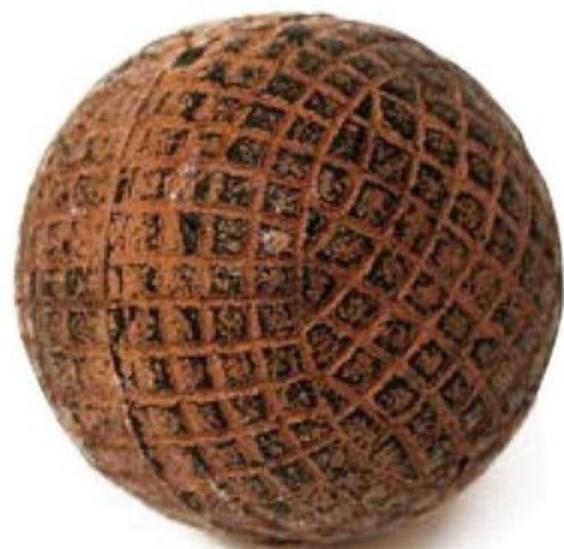
People play golf in more than 130 countries around the world, but it is especially popular in the United States, Great Britain, and Japan. The United States has more golf courses by far than any other country. However, when you compare each country's population with the number of golf courses it has, Scotland has the most, followed by New Zealand, Australia, and Ireland.

In addition to outdoor courses, many locations have indoor digital golf **simulators** where golfers can improve their skills.

## The Birth of Golf

Modern golf began in Scotland in the 1400s. The sport probably migrated to England in the early 1600s and spread to Australia, India, and other British colonies soon after. By the late 1800s, golf had become popular around the world.

Some historians think the first golf balls were made of wood. They were replaced in the early 1600s by feather-filled leather balls—“featheries”—which were costly and easily damaged. Golfers used clubs with wooden heads to reduce the damage to balls, but the high cost of featheries prevented most people from playing golf.



feathery golf ball

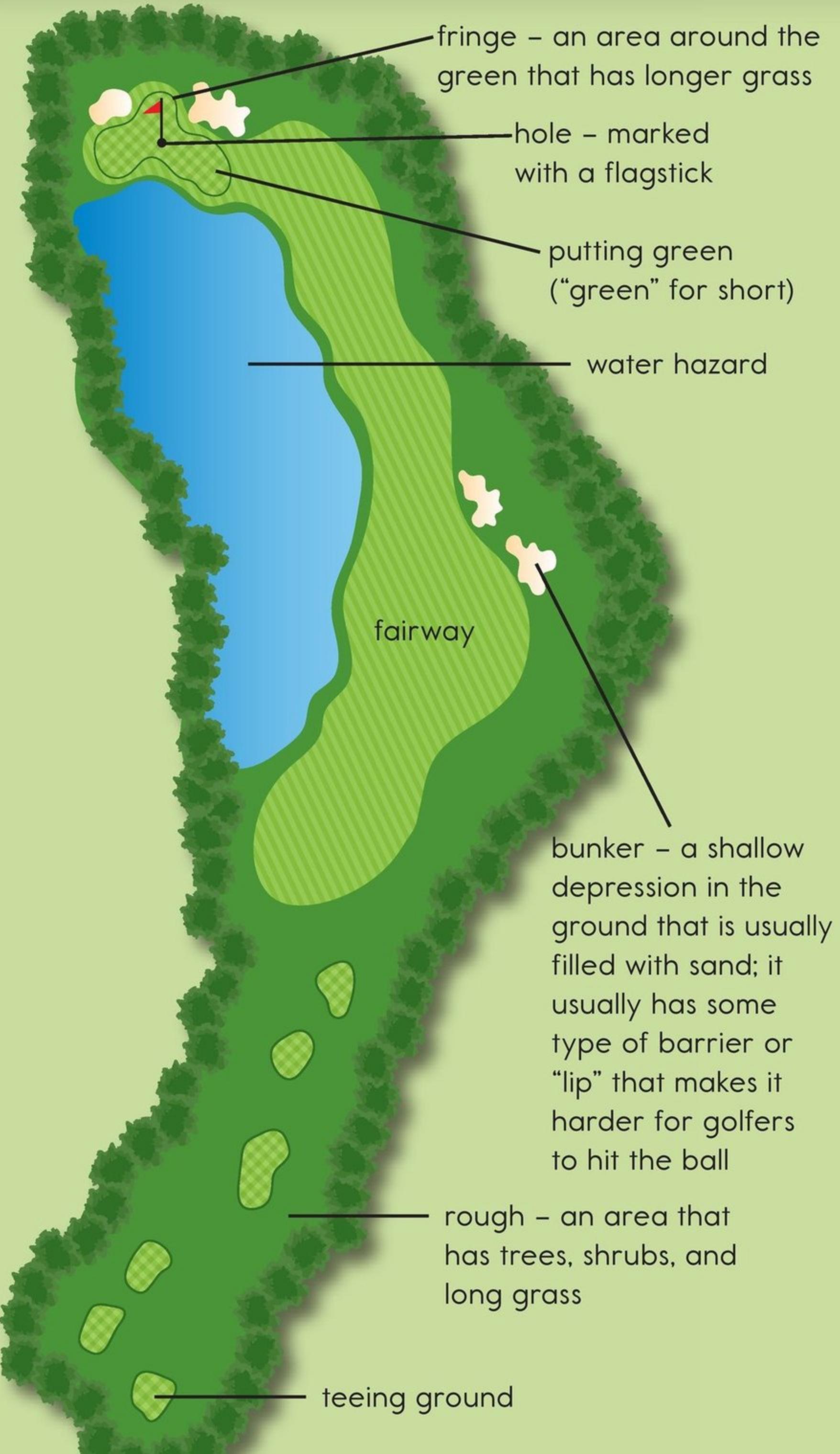
In 1848, manufacturers invented a rubbery type of ball, the “gutty,” using dried, heat-molded tree sap. More people began to play because the balls were more affordable, and their increased durability allowed golfers to begin using iron-headed clubs. Modern rubber-core balls wrapped in rubber thread first appeared in 1898 and were popular because they flew farther.



new ball

The dimpled surface on golf balls became a standard feature in the 1940s. The dimples help a ball fly higher and farther.

## Golf Hole



## Playing the Game

Golf requires calculation and concentration. Golfers hit a small, hard ball with different kinds of sticks, or clubs. The goal of the game is to move the ball great distances through the air, and then shorter distances on the ground, into a small hole in the ground with the fewest strokes, or hits.

Golfers play on a golf course, which is a large area of land that is carefully mowed and trimmed to define the sections of each hole. The sport of golf uses the word *hole* in two different ways. One type of hole is the small hole into which golfers hit the ball; the other is each of the nine or eighteen sections of the course. Each section, or hole, has a teeing ground, where golfers often place the ball on a small peg, called a *tee*, to hit it toward the hole. The fairway is the long stretch of grass over which the ball travels on its way to the hole. The area right around the hole is the putting green, or simply the green. Because of the long distance from the tee to the hole—between 100 and 600 yards (91–549 m)—it usually takes several strokes to get the ball there.



Wooden tees pushed into the ground steady golf balls on the teeing green.



This hole is almost surrounded by water and rough, with a large bunker as well. Other holes might have fewer hazards.

To make the game more challenging, most sections of the golf course have hazards—various types of obstacles that golfers try to avoid. Getting a ball out of a hazard may require extra strokes, which is bad for a golfer's game. The two main types of hazards are bunkers and water hazards.

Each of a golf course's holes also has a rough—an outer area that often has longer grass as well as shrubs and trees. Getting the ball out of the rough is more difficult because the less manicured grass makes it harder to hit the ball cleanly, and the shrubs and trees can interfere with a shot.

A golf game usually involves playing eighteen holes, so it's common for golf courses to have eighteen holes with **unique** layouts. On golf courses with only nine holes, golfers sometimes play the entire course twice.

Each hole is given a rating, called the *par*, based on the distance of the hole from the tee placement. Par is the ideal number of strokes needed to get the ball into the hole. Most holes are rated three, four, or five par, and great golfers sometimes use even fewer strokes. Adding up par for all eighteen holes yields a score called *par for the course*. A typical course has a par of seventy-two strokes. At the end of a game, golfers who play together—usually in a group of two to four—compare their totals for the entire course, and the person with the lowest score wins. Golfers can also play alone to practice the **mechanics** of their swing and improve their score against par or over their earlier scores on the same course.



A golf swing has three parts: backswing, downswing, and upswing. A good golf swing requires careful attention to many different factors.

In golf, the score is calculated by comparing the number of strokes to par. A score of one stroke over par on a hole is a *bogey*, and two strokes over par is a *double bogey*. A score of one stroke under par is a *birdie*, and two strokes under par is an *eagle*. If a golfer hits a single perfect shot the entire distance from the teeing ground to the hole, it's a *hole in one* and a cause for celebration.

It can take between three and five hours to play a round of golf, or eighteen holes. People who golf recreationally often ride the course in golf carts, while professional golfers are required to walk the entire course as they move from one hole to the next. Helpers called *caddies* carry their clubs.

### Golf Clubs

There are four main types of clubs.

Golfers use:

- irons for shorter shots
- woods/fairway metals to hit the ball long distances
- wedges for short, high shots or to get the ball out of the sand
- putters to roll the ball once it is on the green

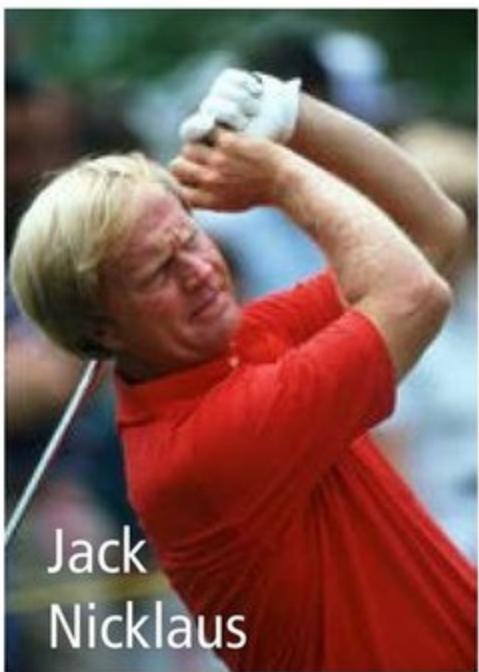
The first three types have numerous clubs with heads of different shapes that affect how high the ball goes.





Golfers wear loose clothing that allows them to move, a glove to help them grip clubs, and shoes with spikes.

**Course etiquette** is an important part of the game. Golfers respect the level of concentration it takes to make a good shot. They are careful not to distract other golfers with loud conversation or noise, and they stand back whenever someone is getting ready to take a swing. If a golfer sees that an airborne ball he or she has hit is flying toward another person or group on the course, the golfer yells “Fore!” to warn them to watch out. Another aspect of course etiquette is replacing divots—chunks of grass knocked loose by a golf club. Courteous golfers make sure they leave the golf course in good condition for the next players.

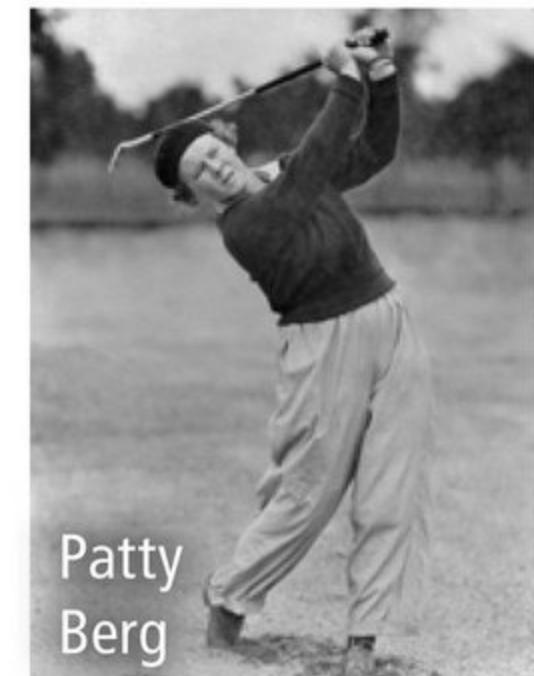


Jack  
Nicklaus

## Golf Legends

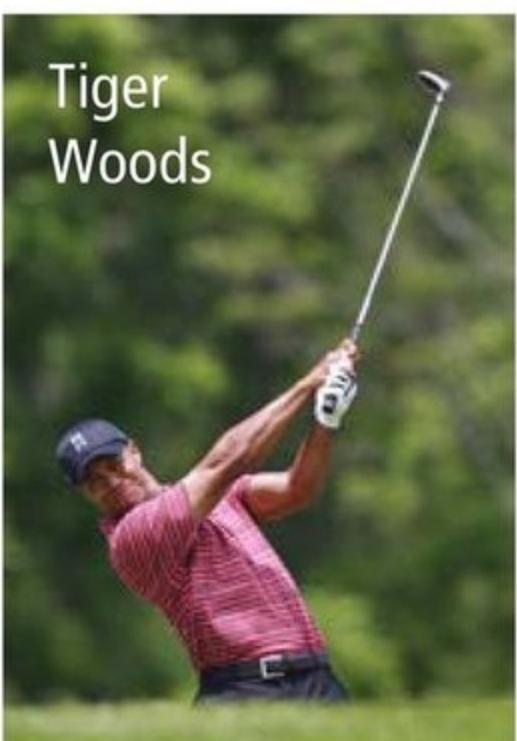
Jack Nicklaus, nicknamed the “Golden Bear,” is generally considered the greatest golfer in the history of the sport. During his professional career, from 1961 to 2005, he won over one hundred competitions, including a record-setting six Masters Tournaments among a total of eighteen majors.

Patty Berg’s professional golfing career began in 1940, after she had already won twenty-nine amateur titles. As a professional, she won an impressive sixty tournaments and fifteen major titles, and as one of the founders of the LPGA and its first president, she helped open doors for women in professional golf.



Patty  
Berg

Eldrick Tont “Tiger” Woods is considered by many to be one of the greatest golfers currently playing. His talents were evident by the time he was eight, and he became a professional golfer



Tiger  
Woods

in 1996 at the age of twenty. The following year, he won the Masters Tournament, becoming the youngest man to earn the title. He currently has more career victories on the PGA Tour than any other active player.



The 2008 Women's World Cup in South Africa was interrupted by baboons.

## Unusual Hazards

Golfers are aware of bunkers and ponds, but sometimes they encounter unexpected hazards as well. A baboon ran down a fairway at the 2014 Nedbank Challenge in South Africa, and a herd of kangaroos hopped around the course during the 2013 Women's Australian Open. No doubt the most unusual setting ever was . . . the Moon! Astronaut Alan Shepard went to the Moon in 1971 and hit a few golf balls while he was there.

Few players will ever experience golfing on the Moon or with baboons, but the ancient sport of golf is available to anyone with a club and a golf ball. With lots of practice, young players will learn what millions of golfers and at least one astronaut already know: golf is out of this world!

## Glossary

<b>amateurs</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	people who do activities for fun or as hobbies instead of as professions (p. 5)
<b>durability</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	strength; the ability to last for a long time (p. 7)
<b>endorsements</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	paid statements of approval or support for products or services (p. 5)
<b>etiquette</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the rules of polite behavior in a society or among members of a group (p. 13)
<b>focus</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	concentrated attention (p. 4)
<b>mechanics</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the details of how something operates (p. 11)
<b>prestige</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a level of high standing or respect (p. 5)
<b>professional</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	earning money for taking part in an activity rather than doing it purely for pleasure (p. 5)
<b>propelling</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	pushing somebody or something forward (p. 4)
<b>simulators</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	machines that model or imitate the appearance or condition of something, usually for training or practice (p. 6)
<b>tournament</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	series of games or competitions to determine final champions (p. 4)
<b>unique</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	one of a kind; unlike others (p. 10)

# Golf

A *Reading A-Z Level Y Leveled Book*

Word Count: 1,594

## Connections

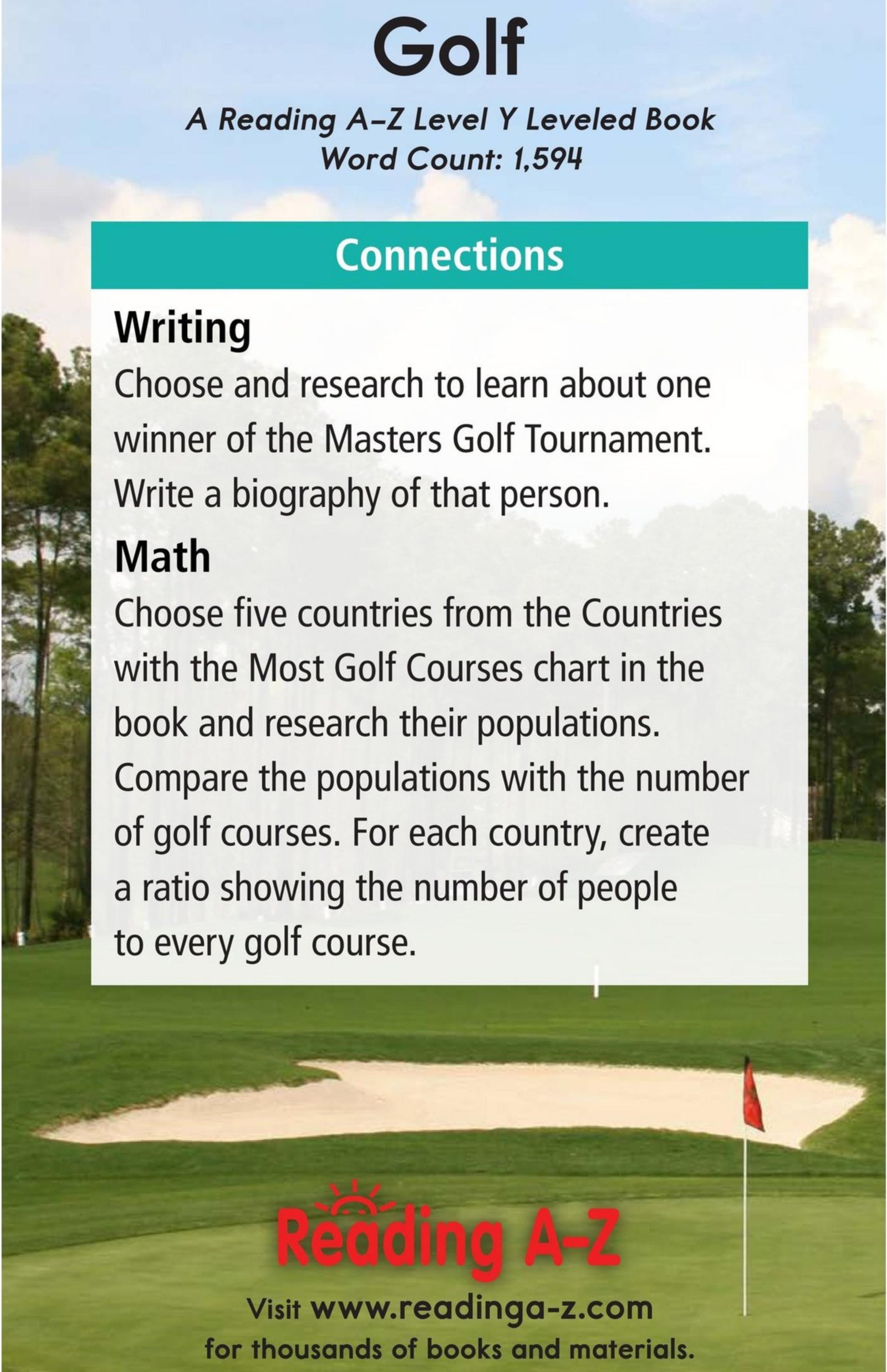
### Writing

Choose and research to learn about one winner of the Masters Golf Tournament. Write a biography of that person.

### Math

Choose five countries from the Countries with the Most Golf Courses chart in the book and research their populations.

Compare the populations with the number of golf courses. For each country, create a ratio showing the number of people to every golf course.



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