

Basketball

A Reading A-Z Level Y Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,536

LEVELED BOOK • Y

Connections

Writing

Choose a famous NBA player. Research the player's life, including his childhood, early years, and basketball career. Write a biography and create a poster about the player.

Social Studies

Research to learn more about the WNBA. Compare and contrast the NBA and the WNBA using a Venn diagram. Then use the information to write an essay that compares these two leagues and explains why they are both important to basketball today.

Basketball

Reading A-Z

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Written by Randolph Heard

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Glossary

acclaim (<i>n.</i>)	strong or enthusiastic praise or approval (p. 14)
competitive (<i>adj.</i>)	of or relating to a rivalry between individuals, teams, or businesses (p. 8)
defense (<i>n.</i>)	the action of attempting to keep an opposing team from scoring; players who attempt to keep an opposing team from scoring (p. 10)
dribbles (<i>v.</i>)	quickly moves the ball forward in basketball, soccer, or field hockey using repeated bounces or taps with the hands, feet, or a stick (p. 4)
durability (<i>n.</i>)	the quality of being sturdy and able to last for a long time (p. 12)
interference (<i>n.</i>)	the act of preventing something from moving forward or being completed (p. 9)
leagues (<i>n.</i>)	groups of teams that play each other in sports (p. 8)
offense (<i>n.</i>)	the action of attempting to score against an opposing team; players who attempt to help their team score against an opposing team (p. 10)
opposing (<i>adj.</i>)	of or relating to competition or conflict with someone or something (p. 4)
phenomenal (<i>adj.</i>)	amazing or impressive (p. 13)
rebound (<i>n.</i>)	the act of bouncing back off a hard surface (p. 11)
strategies (<i>n.</i>)	careful plans for solving a problem or achieving a goal (p. 10)

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Focus Question

What makes basketball different from other popular sports?

Words to Know

acclaim	leagues
competitive	offense
defense	opposing
dribbles	phenomenal
durability	rebound
interference	strategies

Front and back cover: Kobe Bryant competes for team USA in the gold medal game at the Olympic Games in London in 2012.

Title page: The King Charles Unicycle Basketball team puts on a demonstration on Governors Island in New York City.

Page 3: Players in a wheelchair basketball game in Burkina Faso, West Africa

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Level Y Leveled Book
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Correlation

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More Than Just a Little Game

Basketball has come a long way since its simple beginnings. Media coverage of the sport keeps fan interest peaked all year, and with basketball courts available in neighborhood parks, schools, and even in some driveways around the world, anyone who is interested in learning the game will find it easy to do. Schools and basketball clubs in communities everywhere supply options for practicing the sport or joining a team. Who knows where the next great basketball stars will come from?



The United States men's and women's basketball teams have dominated the Olympics (top, right). Students play in gyms and playgrounds everywhere (left).



Michael Jordan is often regarded as the greatest player ever in basketball. Along with being one of the best defensive players and holding an impressive number of records, Jordan gained the nicknames “Air Jordan” and “His Airness” for his ability to leap into the air doing his famous slam dunks.

In high school, media sensation and basketball superstar LeBron James led his team to three Ohio state championships. Immediately after graduating, he was picked to join the Cleveland Cavaliers, where he broke records as the youngest player in NBA history to be Rookie of the Year and score ten thousand career points.

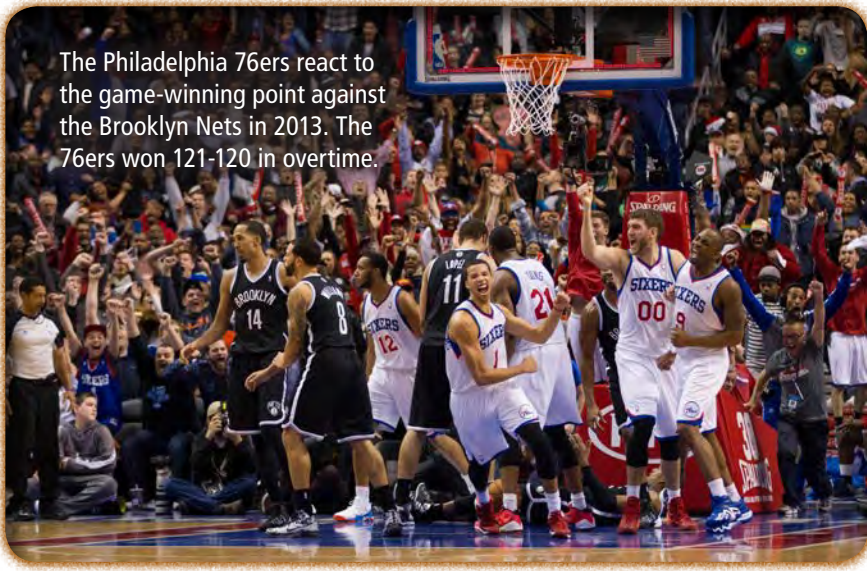


Often bullied as a child, Brittney Griner overcame her early difficulties to consistently break records and attract **acclaim** as one of the best female athletes in the sport. She stands 6 feet 8 inches (203 cm) tall and wears men’s size-seventeen shoes. George Mikan might have made basketball the sport of “big men,” but Griner has made it also the sport of “big women.”



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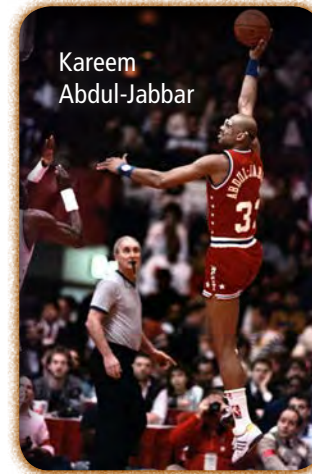


The Philadelphia 76ers react to the game-winning point against the Brooklyn Nets in 2013. The 76ers won 121-120 in overtime.

Seconds to Go!

There are only a few nerve-racking seconds left on the clock. The game is tied. A player **dribbles** the ball downcourt, looking for an opening. Suddenly he passes the ball into the hands of a teammate near the **opposing** team's hoop. That player jumps high and slam-dunks the ball through the hoop—just as the buzzer blasts and time runs out! The standing, electrified crowd roars! This basketball game is over!

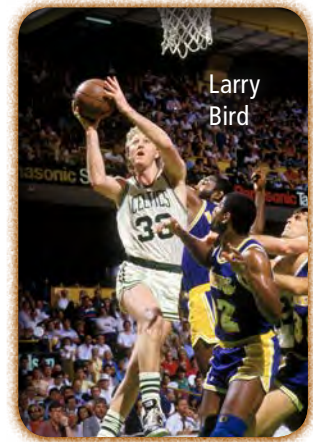
Whether the game is on a professional level or with friends in the neighborhood, basketball is a thrilling game that challenges players to be lightning fast, both mentally and physically. In any arena, the game is focused on one endlessly fun goal: getting an orange ball to go through a hoop.



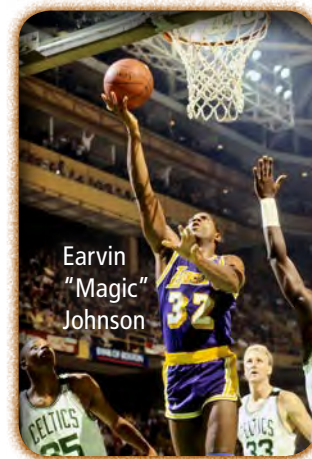
Kareem Abdul-Jabbar

Another player who always made a big difference for his teams was Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. After he won seventy-one consecutive games with his high school team, perhaps it was no surprise that he turned out to be the all-time leading scorer in the NBA.

Larry Bird started with **phenomenal** success on the court as a small forward and a power forward. He set a record as the only person in NBA history to be named Most Valuable Player, Coach of the Year, and Executive of the Year.



Larry Bird



Earvin "Magic" Johnson

Earvin "Magic" Johnson became famous on the court with the Los Angeles Lakers and the Olympic Dream Team. He amazed fans with his all-around mastery of the game, particularly his ability to pass the ball in surprising and skillful ways—almost as if it was magic!

Rulers of the Court

Basketball has had many outstanding players with vivid personalities and record-breaking accomplishments.

At 6 feet 10 inches (208 cm), George Mikan was one of the first “big men” who redefined the sport of basketball in the 1950s. Before that, basketball was thought to be for small and nimble players.



George Mikan

In the 1960s and 1970s, Wilt Chamberlain, at 7 feet 1 inch (216 cm), earned the top records in scoring, rebounding, and **durability**. He is considered to be one of the most outstanding players in NBA history.



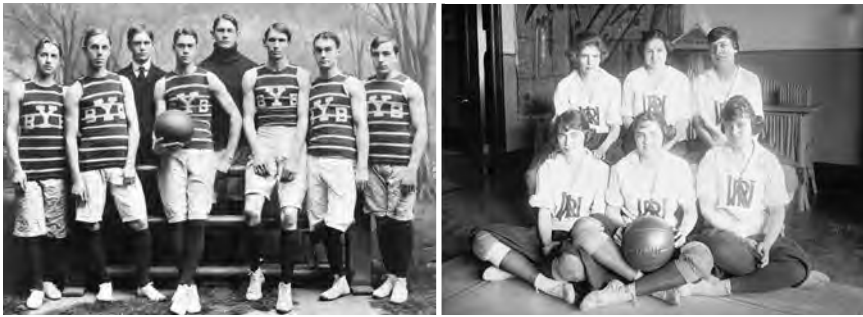
Wilt Chamberlain

The Game of Peach Baskets

The game of basketball was created in 1891 by Canadian-born Dr. James Naismith, a physical education instructor working in Springfield, Massachusetts. He wanted to keep his restless students physically occupied with an indoor sport on rainy or cold winter days. Dr. Naismith created the rules and nailed peach baskets to a balcony rail at each end of a gymnasium. Unlike today's hoops, the peach baskets had bottoms, so balls that made it into the basket had to be removed manually. Also, basketball originally had no dribbling. Players bounce-passed the ball to move it around the court.



James Naismith was born in Canada and studied physical education in Montreal before moving to the United States to teach.



The Yale University men's team poses for a photo in 1901. Yale has had a men's basketball team since 1896. Women's basketball teams became popular at this time as well.

Basketball quickly became popular within the United States, particularly in schools, because all that people needed to play was a ball, a basket, and a court. Later on, the bottom was removed from the peach baskets, and the baskets were replaced with metal hoops. The sport became popular worldwide after the end of World War II. In 1949, the American National Basketball Association (NBA) was established and became key to the tremendous growth of basketball as a professional sport.

Do You Know?

- The backboard was invented to stop spectators in the balcony from knocking away shots!
- Basketballs weren't always the orange balls used today. Before the 1950s, they were brown.



When a shooter misses a shot and the ball bounces off the hoop or backboard, players from both teams jump to catch the ball on the **rebound**. A player who is good at recovering rebounds can help his or her team keep control of the ball.

Coaches organize their players in a variety of roles, or positions. The *point guard* is usually the best ball handler. The point guard sets up the team's offensive plays by controlling the ball and making sure it reaches the right player at the right time. The *shooting guard* takes a lot of long-range shots on offense and guards the other team's best perimeter player on defense. The *small forward* uses his or her speed to make shots close to the basket on offense and to steal the ball on defense. The *power forward* plays with his or her back to the basket on offense and plays either under the basket or against the opposing power forward on defense. The *center* uses his or her height to score on offense and to protect the basket on defense.

The Tall and Short of It

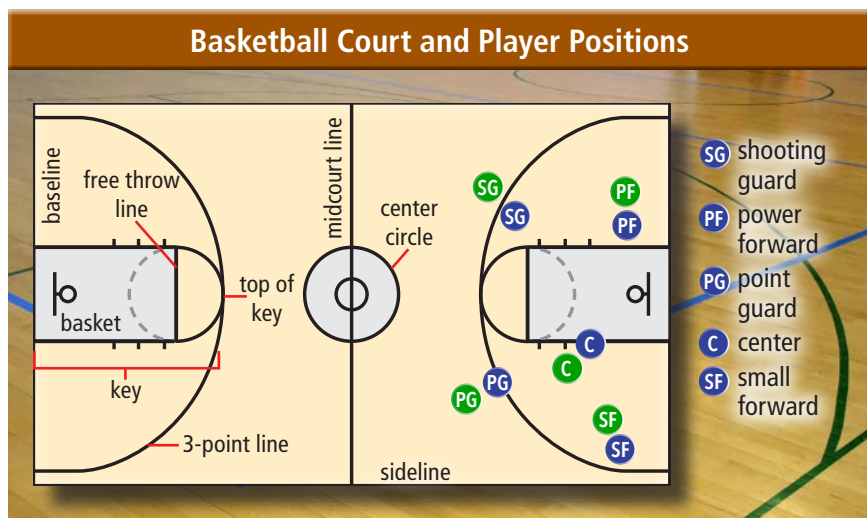
- The tallest players ever in the NBA were Manute Bol and Gheorghe Muresan, who were both 7 feet 7 inches (231 cm) tall.
- Muggsy Bogues was the shortest NBA player in history, at 5 feet 3 inches (160 cm).



Players constantly try to position themselves where they can either shoot the ball or pass it to a teammate with a chance of a good shot. Opposing players try to block shots or steal the ball. The ball can only be moved while dribbling or by passing.

As the basketball moves up and down the court, each team swiftly switches to **defense** or **offense**, depending on whether it has possession of the ball. The two most common defensive **strategies** are either *zone defense*, in which players defend a part of the court, or *man-to-man defense*, in which players guard a specific opponent.

There are a variety of offensive strategies, which usually involve a player who does not have the ball making a quick dash or change in direction (called a *cut*) to receive the ball and shoot.



A Growing Sport

Today, many people play basketball. Men, women, boys, and girls in almost every nation enjoy the sport.

In the United States, the NBA is the biggest and most famous professional basketball organization, with 30 teams. College basketball features about 336 teams nationally, with the largest organization being the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association). Today, almost every high school has a basketball team.

Since 1892, only a year after Dr. Naismith invented basketball, women have been active in the sport. Today, with superstar basketball players such as Carol Blazejowski, Ann Meyers, and Lynette Woodard, and with the formation of the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), women's basketball has acquired a much larger fan base.

High school teams compete in state championships in the United States.





People wait outside the Philippine Arena, which is used for basketball as well as other sports and entertainment events.

The number of fans and players has continued to grow globally in women's and men's amateur and professional teams. According to the International Basketball Federation (*Fédération Internationale de Basketball* in French, or FIBA), at least 450 million people play basketball worldwide.

There are basketball **leagues** all over the world. A global basketball championship called the FIBA Basketball World Cup is held every four years, and the game has been a highly **competitive** event featured in the Olympic Games since 1936. In China, India, Australia, and especially the Philippines, basketball has been wildly popular for about one hundred years. In fact, the largest basketball venue in the world is the Philippine Arena, which can accommodate fifty-five thousand fans. The next largest venues are in the United States, Serbia, and Canada.

Dribble, Run, Pass, Shoot!

A basketball game is divided into four quarters, which in the NBA are each twelve minutes long. Two teams of five players play the game on a court shaped like a rectangle. A hoop is mounted on a backboard 10 feet (3 m) above the floor at each end of the court.

The object of the game is to get the highest score. Players score points by shooting the basketball through the opposing team's hoop. Making a shot is most often worth two points, unless it is shot from outside the three-point line, in which case it's worth three points.

Players can also score points by making foul shots. A referee can award free throws to a player who has suffered a foul, which occurs when another player accidentally or intentionally breaks the rules or makes unfair physical contact. The referee blows his or her whistle and uses hand signals to indicate what foul was committed. The referee may award between one and three free throws, or foul shots, to a player depending on the type of foul committed. The shots are worth one point each and are taken from behind the free throw line without **interference** from the defending team. Free throws can often mean the difference between winning and losing a game.