

The Wonderful World Series

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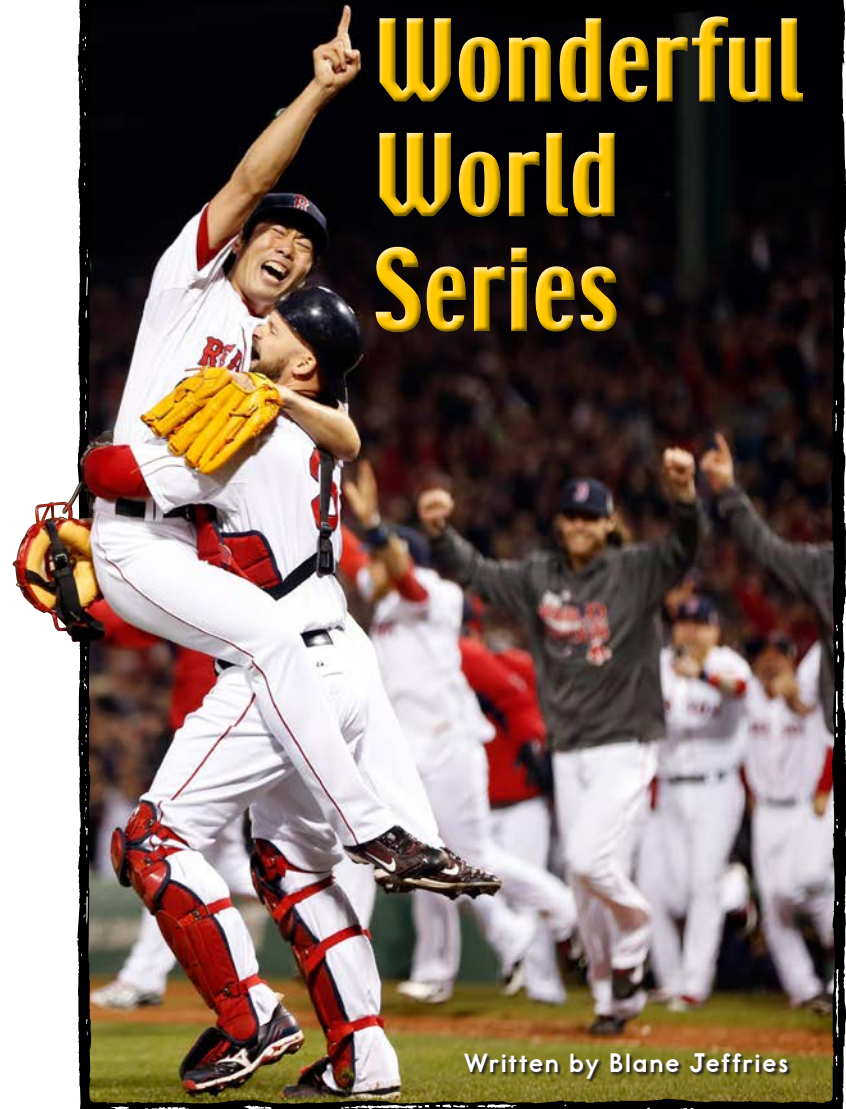


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LEVELED BOOK • X

The Wonderful World Series



Written by Blane Jeffries

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Glossary

caliber (<i>n.</i>)	the degree of skill, ability, or importance (p. 7)
division (<i>n.</i>)	a separate group that is part of a larger organization or group (p. 10)
feats (<i>n.</i>)	amazing actions or accomplishments (p. 12)
league (<i>n.</i>)	a group of sports teams that play each other (p. 4)
playoffs (<i>n.</i>)	a series of games played after the end of the regular season to determine a champion (p. 10)
professional (<i>adj.</i>)	earning money for taking part in an activity rather than doing it purely for pleasure (p. 6)
season (<i>n.</i>)	a certain time of year when something usually happens, such as a sport being played or a type of weather taking place (p. 4)
shutouts (<i>n.</i>)	games in which one side never scores (p. 9)
triple play (<i>n.</i>)	a play in baseball that gets three players out (p. 15)
underdog (<i>n.</i>)	the expected loser in a struggle or contest (p. 8)
wild card (<i>n.</i>)	a player or team chosen to take part in a competition after the other competitors have qualified (p. 10)
World Series (<i>n.</i>)	the annual championship of U.S. Major League Baseball (p. 4)

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Front cover: The Boston Red Sox rejoice after defeating the St. Louis Cardinals in game six of the World Series, 2013.

Back cover: Fans cheer during a 2008 World Series game at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles.

Title page: The San Francisco Giants jump for joy after defeating the Detroit Tigers in game one of the World Series, 2012.

The Wonderful World Series
Level X Leveled Book
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Correlation	
LEVEL X	
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Reading Recovery	40
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Here’s the first pitch from a third pitcher, Charlie Hough . . . Smack! It’s going, going . . . Kiss it goodbye! Reggie Jackson is the first player to hit three home runs in a single World Series game since Babe Ruth in 1928. More remarkably, he did it on the first pitch each time.

Jackson set another World Series record in 1978, hitting a total of five home runs and earning the nickname “Mr. October.”

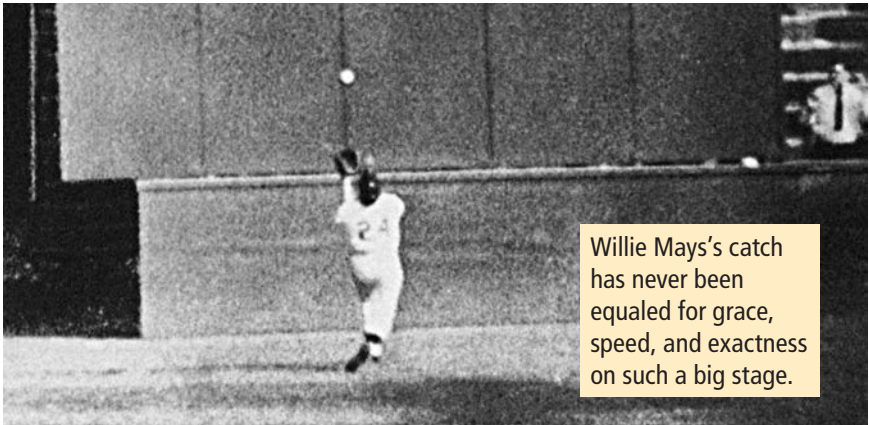
Perfect Plays

The grand stage of the World Series has also hosted two of the rarest feats in baseball. In 1920, it was a one-man **triple play**. In one play, second baseman Bill Wambsganss made all three defensive outs by himself! In 1956, Don Larsen pitched a perfect game. Not one opposing batter got on base.

What will happen at this year’s World Series? Come October, tune in and find out.

Underdog Upset

After seven dreadful and frequently embarrassing years when the franchise first started, the lowly New York Mets, who finished ninth in 1968, beat 100-to-1 odds and made the World Series in 1969. They went on to overcome the highly favored Baltimore Orioles 4-1, earning them the nickname “Miracle Mets.”



Willie Mays’s catch has never been equaled for grace, speed, and exactness on such a big stage.

“Unbelievable! Miraculous!” cry the broadcasters. Then Mays has the presence of mind to whirl and uncork an amazing throw back to the infield. The startled runners return to their bases.

This long out killed the Indians’ momentum and set the tone for the series, which the Giants won four games in a row.

Reggie Jackson, “Mr. October”
NY Yankees vs. LA Dodgers, Game 6, 1977

The Yankees are ahead, three games to two, and lead 7-3 in the eighth. Up steps Reggie Jackson. What a game he’s had! He hit home runs in the fourth and fifth innings, both times on the first pitch and from different pitchers.



Reggie Jackson

World Series Wins by League 1903–2013

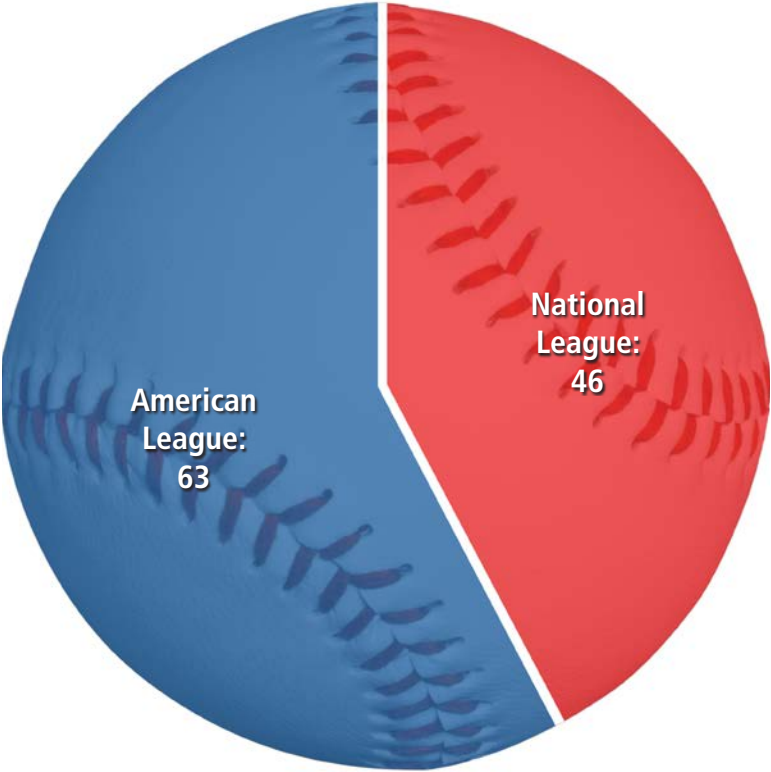


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Baseball's Grandest Stage

Your favorite team is ahead in the **World Series**, three games to two. One more win means a championship. Now they're behind 6-5 in the bottom of the ninth inning. With one down and two men on, up comes Joe Carter. He drove in 121 runs in the regular **season**, third best in the **league**. The slugger knocked in a run earlier but has not had a good series.

The 52,195 voices in the stadium swing between hushed silence and throaty roars. Meanwhile, 40 million people watch the game on television. The opposing team's ace reliever, Mitch Williams, brings the count to two balls, two strikes. What will he throw next? Will Carter be the hero or the goat? Here's the pitch . . . the swing . . . *Crack!*



The Commissioner's Trophy goes to the team that wins the World Series.

The ball soars high, higher . . . will it get out? It does! The hometown crowd goes wild as Carter leaps around the bases. It's a game-winning, series-winning, walk-off three-run home run. Never before in the history of the World Series has a player clinched the "Fall Classic" with a come-from-behind home run.

The pitcher throws a strike. Ruth holds up a finger, seemingly pointing toward center field. The pitcher throws another called strike. Ruth holds up the finger again, as if saying, "Throw me another one like that, and I'll hit it to center field." The pitcher takes the challenge. Ruth swings and sends the ball over the wall in deep center field. The crowd goes silent, and Ruth laughs while rounding the bases.

Did Ruth really "call" where he was going to hit the ball? Or was Ruth holding up his fingers to note the count? Was he just trying to quiet the crowd? There's no instant replay to help us know what really happened in that World Series game, nor does it really matter. Ruth's colorful performance in front of a World Series crowd has become a baseball legend.

Willie Mays's Catch

NY Giants vs. Cleveland Indians, Game 1, 1954

With the score tied 2-2 in the eighth, the Indians have put two runners on base. Vic Wertz blasts one to deep center field. The Giants' Willie Mays turns at the crack of the bat. He sprints straight to the outfield wall, some 450 feet (137 m) from home plate. Like a football wide receiver, he extends his hands at just the right moment and makes an over-the-shoulder catch.

World Series Highlights

Christy Mathewson's performance in the 1905 World Series made him a superstar. The World Series grew as well, becoming the climax of professional American sports. Back then, football was mostly a college game. Basketball, invented only a few years earlier, was decades away from becoming a professional sport. Hockey and soccer, popular in other countries, were not well known in the United States. Baseball, especially the World Series, was the most talked-about, reported-on, and eagerly awaited sporting event. The attention focused on the World Series inspired the players, too. Some of baseball's most amazing and memorable **feats** have happened during the World Series.

Babe Ruth's Called Shot

NY Yankees vs. Chicago Cubs, Game 3, 1932

The Cubs are down two games to none. Their fans boo loudly when Yankees home-run king, Babe Ruth, hits one out in the first inning. By the fifth, the Cubs have tied the game 4-4. Ruth comes up to an even louder chorus of boos.



Babe Ruth



Toronto Blue Jay Joe Carter made World Series history in 1993 with his home run in the bottom of the ninth inning.

This thrilling, dramatic ending sounds like a Hollywood movie. It's not. It's the true story of the 1993 World Series. Unbelievable moments of clutch hitting, clever pitching, and great fielding have been woven through the World Series' century-plus history. October is when stars showcase their amazing talents and when unknown players shine in the spotlight of baseball's grandest stage.



The National League's Chicago White Stockings (future White Sox) in 1882

The First World Series

Baseball captured the country's imagination in the mid-nineteenth century when amateurs played the game for fun and exercise. Interest in the game led to the creation of a National League (NL) of **professional** teams in 1876. Other professional leagues came and went in the following decades. Sometimes the best teams in each league played against each other, but these season-ending games were never very popular.



The trip to the first World Series, in 1903, was not as complicated. Back then, there were only sixteen teams, eight in each league. There were no playoffs, either; the team from each league with the best season record went straight to the World Series.

The World Series is a best-of-seven playoff. It pits the two teams against each other for as many games as it takes for one of the teams to win four games. Two games are played at the home stadium of one team. The next three games (if necessary) are played at the home stadium of the other team. The final two games (if necessary) are played back at the first team's home stadium. By game seven, someone has to win the series.

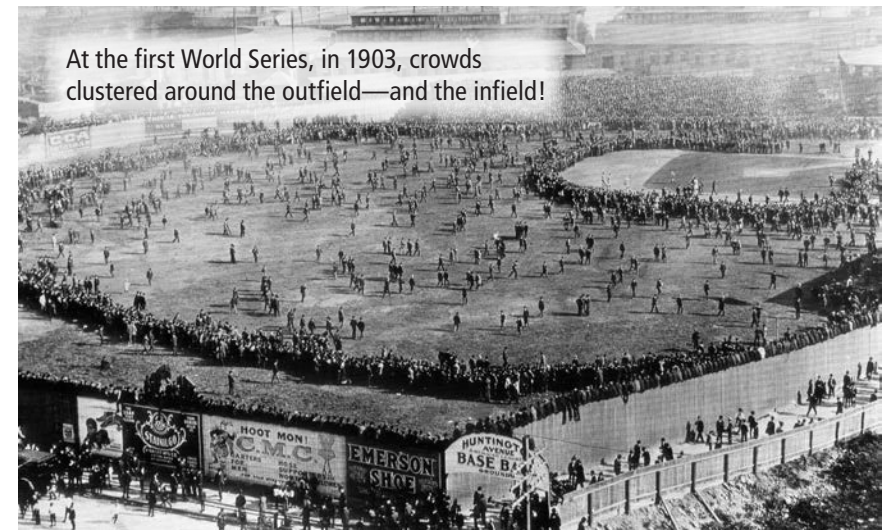
The Road to the World Series

Today, the World Series is the high point of the Major League Baseball (MLB) season. The winner of the American League (AL) **playoffs** faces the winner of the National League (NL) playoffs in a best-of-seven series. The team that wins the World Series gets to claim the Commissioner's Trophy along with bragging rights as the "best in the world" for a year.

Reaching the World Series, though, is a long, hard trip. First, each of the thirty MLB teams (15 teams in each league) plays 162 games. The regular season lasts from April through September. Then there are playoffs in each league: a **wild card** playoff, two **division** series, and a league championship. Here's how it works: Each league has fifteen teams in three geographic divisions (East, Central, West). Each division has five teams. The leader of each division—the team with the best season record—automatically earns a spot in the playoffs. That's six teams. Two teams from each league with the next-best records are the "wild card" teams. They play a one-game playoff for the last spot in the Division Series. So ten teams in total make the playoffs. The AL team and the NL team that win their leagues' playoffs advance to the World Series.

By 1901, however, demand for play of a high **caliber** led to the creation of a new, competitive American League (AL). At first, team owners and players in the NL ignored the AL, calling it a minor league. Meanwhile, though, the AL had lured players away from the NL. Many of its teams were in the same cities as the NL, and fans of the public's national pastime went to see AL games. That hurt NL team owners where they felt it most: their pocketbooks.

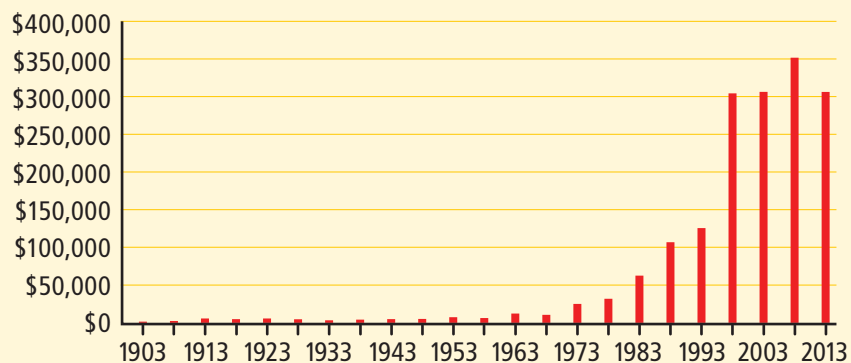
The owners quickly realized they could make extra money by staging a contest between the top teams from both leagues. The players would share in the gate fees. So, in 1903, the AL Boston Americans, nicknamed the Pilgrims, took on the NL's best: the Pittsburgh Pirates.



At the first World Series, in 1903, crowds clustered around the outfield—and the infield!

This first series between the NL and AL was not a formal competition. Yet it offered a range of heart-stopping highs and heartbreaking lows. Such moments have since become a constant of the World Series. The **underdog** Boston team, down three games to one, came back with four straight victories. The AL pitching great Cy Young won two of those games. Meanwhile, Honus Wagner, the NL batting champ, choked under the pressure. He hit a measly .222 and made six errors.

Winner's Share



Each player on the team gets a bonus for winning the World Series. The payment is based on a percentage of income from World Series tickets. The percentage going to players has risen in recent decades. Tickets have also grown very expensive. Fortunately, fans today can watch the game on TV.

single game ticket price	
1903	50¢
1967	\$4
2013	\$423



Christy Mathewson's record-setting three shutouts in the 1905 World Series have never been equaled. "Matty" was modern baseball's first superstar.

In 1904, the NL-leading New York Giants refused to accept the post-season challenge from the AL. In October 1905, though, the NL Giants took on the AL powerhouse Philadelphia Athletics. What a history-making series it was! The baseball wisdom of "good pitching beats good hitting" was on display. The Giants' pitcher Christy Mathewson, just 25, had won 94 games in the last three seasons. Over the course of six days, he threw three **shutouts**. That's 27 innings without a single run scoring. He did it with style, too, striking out 18 and walking only one batter.

From that year on, a best-of-seven World Series became an official event.