

## Released Item Passages

Today you will read two texts and watch a video about the history of women’s baseball. As you review the three sources, you will gather information and answer questions about integrating texts with visual information in order to write an essay.

Read “Amateur Women’s Baseball Teams Existed as Early as 1866.” Then answer the questions.

### Amateur Women’s Baseball Teams Existed as Early as 1866

by Helen Thompson



**1** It was the bottom of the 9th, the bases were loaded, there was a full count. One run separated the two teams. Around 1,500 spectators filled the stands of the Lenox Oval in uptown New York City. And on this particular Sunday, they were no doubt on the edge of their seats. As the pitcher began her wind up, a cop walked onto the field to hand the third baseman a subpoena.

**2** That’s how a scrimmage game between the “Reds” and the “Blues” ended, according to an account in the *New York Tribune*. The game took place May 25, 1913. It is one of the few publicized outings of New York’s female Giants. Historians don’t seem to know much about this short-lived, unofficial female counterpart to the popular men’s baseball team of the time, Greg Young and Tom Meyers write for their popular New York City history blog/podcast, *The Bowery Boys*.

**3** Amateur girls baseball teams date to as early as 1866. This was long before candy honcho Phil Wrigley launched the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League in the 1940s. It was dramatized by *A League of Their Own*. They were dubbed “Bloomer Girls” for the baggy Turkish-style trousers they’d wear during games. These teams became particularly popular in the late 1890s and early 1900s, typically challenging local men’s teams to games.

**4** Michael Carlebach is a historian and photojournalist. He pins the conception of this particular New York team on the shoulders of then-Giants manager John McGraw. Some

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of the girls were trained baseball players recruited from local high schools, while others came from other sports. Ida Schnall served as their captain and had a background in swimming and diving. The U.S. Olympic Committee had barred women from competing in the 1912 games in Stockholm, Sweden, so she decided to try her arm at baseball.

5 The infamous May 25th game at the Lenox Oval, a sporting arena at the corner of 145th and Lenox Avenue, was supposed to be an exhibition scrimmage where the team split up into two squads, the “Blue Stockings” and the “Red Stockings.” They played each other. When things got exciting at the bottom of the 9th inning, Schnall was pitching, but she never got to finish the game.

6 Under New York law, teams weren’t allowed to sell tickets to games on Sundays, but a policeman had caught the third baseman, 17-year-old Helen Lenker, selling programs before the game. The cops shut down the game and ordered her to appear before a judge in Harlem. Lenker explained that she had simply been handing the programs out, when spectators (including the policeman) started giving her money of their own avail. Though the New York Tribune alleged that she had charmed her way out of the predicament, the next day the judge dismissed the charges.

7 The game likely received press coverage because the cops showed up, Meyers and Young posit. There’s some evidence that the female Giants played against and with members of the men’s New York Giants team – none appear to be wearing disguises. The team lasted about a year. While the female Giants only took the field in 1913, “Bloomer Girls” teams remained popular until the 1930s.

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Read the passage from *The Belles of Baseball: The All-American Girls Professional Baseball League*. Then answer the questions.

from *The Belles of Baseball: The All-American Girls Professional Baseball League*

by Nel Yomtov

1 In 1943, Philip K. Wrigley, the owner of Major League Baseball’s Chicago Cubs and president of the Wrigley Chewing Gum Company, formed what came to be known as the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League. His goal was to provide inexpensive entertainment to residents of midwestern towns and cities after the United States’ 1941

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entry into World War II (1939–1945). He also sought to encourage the public's continued interest in baseball so fans would still support it after the war. Many of the townspeople supported the war effort by working in nearby factories that produced planes, vehicles, and other essential materials.

2 During its 12 seasons, from 1943 to 1954, the league recruited more than 550 women ballplayers. They came from all parts of the United States, Canada, and even Cuba. Most of the women were in their late teens or early 20s. Several players were only 15 years old when they were signed by the league to play. The women came mainly from working-class families, and many had grown up on farms.

3 These young athletes were drawn to the league for one reason: they loved to play baseball. According to former AAGPBL player Lois J. Youngen:

They loved to win, they loved to make a great catch, they loved to feel the crack of the wooden bat on the ball and to know it would be a base hit. . . .  
Playing baseball was more important than the money (as long as you had enough to survive).

4 The women who joined the AAGPBL were outstanding, accomplished athletes. Pitcher Jean Faut played eight years in the league, posting a lifetime win-loss record of 140–64, with a 1.23 earned run average (ERA). Doris Sams served double duty as an outfielder and a pitcher. She notched a lifetime batting average of .290 and was twice named the AAGPBL's Player of the Year. Strikeout queen [Dottie] Collins won 20 or more games in four consecutive seasons and won 117 games in her six-year career. The best all-around player in the league, [Dorothy] Kamenshek, was a hard-hitting first basewoman who won two batting titles and finished her career with a .293 batting average, among the highest in league history.

5 Through the years, the AAGPBL underwent numerous changes in rules, ball size, and field layout. Originally established as a softball league with standard underhand pitching, the league continually evolved toward regulation men's baseball. Distances to the pitcher's mound and between the bases were lengthened. An increasingly smaller ball was used. Base stealing and leading off the bases were permitted. Through it all, highly skilled women athletes successfully adapted to a rough-and-tumble version of male baseball.

6 For much of its existence, the AAGPBL was a resounding success. In one year alone, nearly one million fans poured into ballparks to watch the women perform. In time,

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according to author Barbara Gregorich, even “the men who managed them came to believe there was nothing these women couldn’t do.”

7 Playing professional baseball wasn’t an easy life, and the women of the AAGPBL endured many hardships and inconveniences. But nothing could prevent them from playing baseball.

### Baseball’s Female Barrier Breakers

8 The women of the AAGPBL were up to the challenge of playing exciting, action-packed hardball—and more. By skillfully playing what was generally considered a male sport with power, speed, and grace, they challenged society’s notions of women’s roles in the World War II era. The players also provided a critical morale boost to a nation enduring a bloody and costly war. Their endeavor was truly patriotic.

9 The AAGPBL provided women the opportunity to play in front of packed stadiums of loyal and adoring fans. By living their dreams, these unheralded women helped pave the way for millions of other female athletes in the years that followed.

## TIMELINE

### 1866

The first organized women’s baseball teams in the United States start at Vassar College.

### 1867

A team of African-American women, the Dolly Vardens, is the first professional baseball club in the United States for either men or women.

### 1890

W. S. Franklin organizes the Young Ladies Baseball Club #1 to play against men’s teams across the United States and Canada.

### 1890s–1930s

Women’s Bloomer Girls teams play men’s local, semipro, and minor league squads throughout the United States.

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**1925**

The all-female Philadelphia Bobbies travel to Japan to play exhibition games against men's teams.

**1941**

In December, Japan attacks US naval forces at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Tens of thousands of American men and women, including major league baseball players, join the armed forces.

**1943**

In February, Philip K. Wrigley announces his plans to form the All-American Girls Softball League; in May, the league begins its first season with four teams.

**1944**

The season begins with a new league name, the All-American Girls Professional Ball League (AAGPBL), and two new teams for a total of six teams; at the end of the season, Wrigley sells the league to Arthur Meyerhoff.

**1945**

In August, World War II ends; in the third season, AAGPBL attendance soars to 450,000.

**1946**

In April, spring training is conducted in Pascagoula, Mississippi; in May, the league begins its fourth season with eight teams; the ball size is reduced to 11 inches (28 cm), and sidearm pitching is allowed; attendance climbs to 750,000.

**1947**

Pitchers are required to throw sidearm; spring training is held in Havana, Cuba.

**1948**

Overhand pitching is allowed; with new squads formed in Chicago and Springfield (Illinois), the league begins its most successful year with ten teams; more than 910,000 fans see AAGPBL games.

**1949**

The seventh season begins with eight teams; attendance drops, signaling the beginning of the league's financial woes.

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**1950**

Attendance continues to decline; at the end of the season, team directors purchase the league from Meyerhoff and operate their teams independently.

**1952**

The AAGPBL begins its tenth season with six teams.

**1953**

Total debt of the six remaining teams exceeds \$80,000, prompting the league to consider shutting down.

**1954**

Only five teams play in the twelfth and final season of the league, sometimes relying on fan donations to stay afloat; in September, all five teams fold. The AAGPBL ceases operation.

**1988**

The National Baseball Hall of Fame opens its permanent Women in Baseball exhibit.

**1992**

In July, the film about the AAGPBL, *A League of Their Own*, debuts at theaters throughout the United States.

From THE BELLES OF BASEBALL: THE ALL-AMERICAN GIRLS PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL LEAGUE by Nel Yomtov, ABDO Publishing. © 2017. Reproduced with permission.

In 2011, a reporter from the Providence Journal interviewed Wilma Briggs, who played in the All American Girls Professional Baseball League from 1948 to 1954. She played six years with the Fort Wayne Daisies and a season with the South Bend Blue Sox. Watch the video *Wilma Briggs reminisces about her baseball career*. Then answer the questions.

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Wilma Briggs reminisces about her baseball career

by Kathy Borchers

"Wilma Briggs reminisces about her baseball career," from The Providence Journal. Courtesy of Kathy Borchers - USA TODAY NETWORK.

The Video *Wilma Briggs reminisces about her baseball career* is located on the Pearson Support site in the Illinois portal

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