

Baseball Cards

By Cindy Grigg

Do you collect baseball cards? Many people do. Did you know that baseball cards have been around more than one hundred years? A few years after the Civil War ended, cards were used to advertise many kinds of products. Baseball cards soon became favorites. Cards with pictures of individual baseball players and whole teams were first put into packages of tobacco in 1887. The cards served a useful purpose. They helped protect the cigarettes from being crushed. They were also an added reason for customers to buy the product.

At that time, American cities were growing. Factory workers had some time off work, and they needed something to do for entertainment. Many immigrants came to America in the years after the Civil War. They spoke many languages, but everyone could understand the game of baseball. Watching baseball games was a favorite pastime for people in cities. Baseball cards were popular. The cards were small and easy to collect.

Honus Wagner was the star of the Pittsburgh Pirates in the early 1900s. His picture was printed on a card and sold in packs of cigarettes. He ordered that his card be removed from packages. It was said that he didn't want children buying cigarettes because of his card. As a result, the Wagner card was very rare. Not many of them were made.



When World War I came along, people forgot about collecting baseball cards. Then in the 1930s, gum companies began including baseball cards in packages of gum. Again the cards were popular. Then World War II stopped the cards again. Paper became scarce during the war. Many of the older cards were recycled to make new paper.

After the war was over, the Bowman Company began selling sets of baseball cards. There were up to 240 cards in a set. Topps began selling cards in 1951. Topps bought the Bowman Company a few years later. In 1981, Fleet and Donrus began selling baseball cards. In the late 1980s, Score and Upper Deck started selling cards, too. Then the cards took another downturn. By 2010, only Topps had a license with MLB to make the cards. Today, the early cards are rare. Some have become very valuable. In 2007, a Honus Wagner card sold for over two million dollars!

Baseball Cards

Questions

- _____ 1. For which team did Honus Wagner play?
- A. Washington Redskins
 - B. New York Giants
 - C. Pittsburgh Pirates
 - D. Chicago White Sox
- _____ 2. Baseball cards were put into packages of tobacco for what purpose?
- A. to protect the cigarettes from being crushed
 - B. to encourage people to buy the cigarettes
 - C. both A and B
 - D. There was no purpose.

Name _____



Date _____

- _____ 3. Identifying cause and effect: *Many of the older cards were recycled to make new paper.* What was the effect of this?
- A. Older cards became rarer and more valuable.
 - B. Watching baseball games was a favorite pastime for people in cities.
 - C. People forgot about collecting baseball cards.
 - D. The Bowman Company began selling sets of baseball cards.

- _____ 4. The author's main purpose for writing this story was _____.
- A. to express the writer's personal feelings about baseball cards
 - B. to inform readers about the history of baseball cards
 - C. to persuade readers to buy baseball cards
 - D. to entertain readers with stories from the early days of baseball

5. When were the first baseball cards put into packs of cigarettes?

6. List one reason you think baseball was a popular entertainment in the late 1800s.

Imagine you found an original Honus Wagner baseball card. Now imagine someone offered to buy it from you for two million dollars! What would you do with the money? Write a paragraph about your purchases.
