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"REMEMBER THE TITANS", "THE ROOKIE" AND "MIRACLE"

WALT DISNEY PICTURES  
PRESENTS

# THE GREATEST GAME EVER PLAYED

BASED ON A TRUE STORY



BILL PAXTON

Dear Educator:

Ever since I discovered the story of a determined young man named Francis Ouimet and his road to the 1913 U.S. Open, I knew I wanted to make a movie about his incredible journey from caddy to America's first golf hero. As a son of immigrants, Francis overcame enormous prejudices of the day and succeeded in changing the image of golf as an exclusionary, rich man's game. In every respect he was the Tiger Woods of his day, a role model who made a lasting impact on the sport.

As the director of 'The Greatest Game Ever Played,' I wanted to make a film that goes beyond the world of sports.

I believe the movie will inspire your students and offer many valuable lessons that can be applied to their own lives. Francis Ouimet's story is as relevant and resonant today as it ever was. I hope that you and your students will enjoy learning about this great, unsung hero.

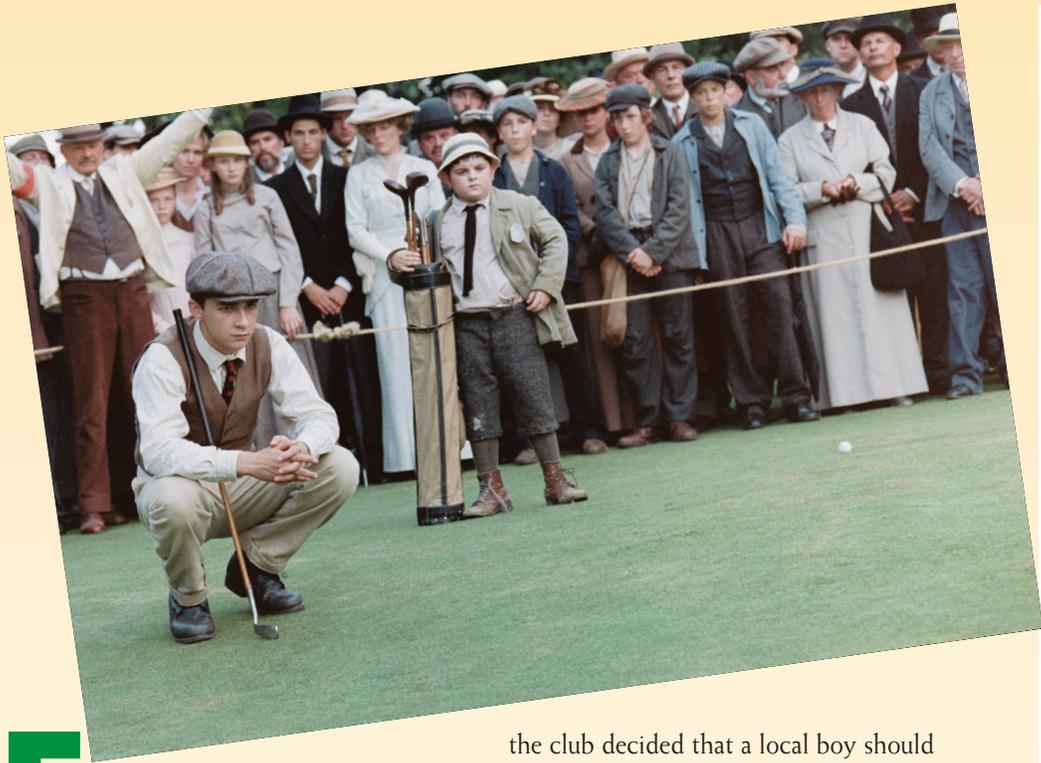
Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Bill Paxton

COMING TO THEATERS SEPTEMBER 30

# THE GREATEST GAME EVER PLAYED



Every sport celebrates one game as the greatest of all. In golf, the greatest game was played at the 1913 U.S. Open, when an American amateur named Francis Ouimet (pronounced *wee-met*) took on the all-time British champion and won. It was an amazing upset, and you can see how it all happened in **The Greatest Game Ever Played**, a new Walt Disney film coming to theaters on September 30.

The action takes place near Boston, at a golf course called The Country Club. Francis Ouimet knew this course well because he had grown up across the street and had caddied at The Country Club for years. But Francis was not allowed to play the course. In those days, golf was a sport for rich people, and Francis was poor. So even though Francis loved golf, and was very good at it, he eventually had to give up the game to take a full-time job to help support his family.

When the U.S. Open came to The Country Club, however, some members of

the club decided that a local boy should take part, so they invited Francis to play. They didn't care that he came from a poor family. They just knew he was good. For Francis, this was a dream come true. He would be competing against the world's first international golf superstar, Harry Vardon, five-time winner of the British Open, whom Francis had idolized all his life. Even though he was out of practice, Francis decided he had to play.

No one expected Francis to win the Open. In fact, they were surprised that he was only four strokes behind Vardon at the end of the first day. And they were shocked when he managed to tie Vardon at the end of the second day, forcing a playoff. Suddenly, Francis was famous, cheered as the American who might finally beat the British at their own game. Thousands crowded the golf course to see Francis play that final round – the greatest game ever played – and millions celebrated when he sank his final putt to claim the victory.

**Part 1** When you see **The Greatest Game Ever Played**, you'll meet Bernard Darwin, a British sports reporter who ends up rooting for the American underdog as Francis steadily closes in on his historic victory. Imagine that you are a sports reporter standing alongside Bernard Darwin as Francis Ouimet makes his final putt. How would you describe that moment? How would you help your reader understand how much is at stake? How would you show the intensity in Francis as he prepares to take his shot, and the joy he feels when it falls in the cup? Play the moment over in your imagination, then use the back of this sheet to write your own sports report on the climax of the greatest game ever played

**Part 2** After you see **The Greatest Game Ever Played**, take another look at your description of Francis Ouimet's winning shot. What details did you notice in the film that could help bring your description to life? What did you learn about Francis



and his opponent, Harry Vardon, that might add drama to the moment? Use this new information to revise your sports report. Then compare reports with your classmates to explore how every reporter sees things a bit differently, even when they are describing the same scene.



# PORTRAIT OF A CHAMPION

## Part 2

Now test your sports writing talents by gathering information for a profile of an athlete in your family. You might interview a parent who plays golf, an uncle who played high school football, a grandparent who once won a bowling trophy, even that cousin who always beats you at badminton. Plan your questions, then conduct your interview in person, on the telephone, by email or instant messenger. When you've gathered your information, put it into a profile of your family's star athlete

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In *The Greatest Game Ever Played*, Francis Ouimet starts out as a lowly caddy and ends up as an American sports hero – the Tiger Woods of his time. Suddenly, people everywhere wanted to know all about him, and sports writers were there to give them the story, with profiles that offered an insider's look at Francis Ouimet and his achievement.

## MEET A SELF-MADE SPORTS HERO

Francis Ouimet shocked the golf world with his victory over British champion Harry Vardon in the 1913 U.S. Open. But it was no shock to those who grew up with Francis, just the climax to a life of come-from-behind victories.

The son of a French-Canadian immigrant, Francis started life one stroke down in the eyes of Boston society, where families who can't claim an ancestor on the Mayflower are considered latecomers. To make matters worse, Francis grew up across the street from a high society stronghold, The Country Club, whose members were all well-born and wealthy. "My father was head gardener there," Francis recalled, "until one day they just fired him. No reason. No warning. Just collect your pay and be on your way. He was never very fond of golf after that."

Francis, on the other hand, was fond of golf from the time he was a toddler. "When I was four years old, I would stand in my backyard and watch them play across the street for hours." Those first lessons eventually led Francis to build his own two-hole course in a pasture behind his home, where he taught himself the game. In time he even ventured across the street, to work as a caddy. "I'd talk golf with the club pro and try to learn by watching the club members play, but it was against the rules for caddies to play the course – though I'll admit I snuck in a few holes over the years, playing at daybreak when no one would see me."

In 1911, Francis finally got the chance to play The Country Club course straight through, when he competed in the National Amateur Championships. Many of the club's members thought it disgraceful for a caddy to trade shots with true amateurs, but Francis believed that his talent entitled him to a place in the tournament. In fact, he was so confident in his abilities that he persuaded his family to loan him the \$50 entry fee – a fortune in his father's eyes, who forced Francis to promise that he would give up golf if he didn't win. Not surprisingly, despite his talent, Francis cracked under all this pressure and failed to make the cut. True to his word, he packed up his dreams of a golf career and took "a respectable job," as his father called it, working as a stock boy at a sporting goods store.

And that's where a friendly member of The Country Club found him two years later when the organizers of the U.S. Open asked if there was a local boy good enough to go up against the world's best golfers. Despite his promise to his father and lack of practice, Francis knew this was his last chance to live out his dream. He took the chance, took on the game's toughest professionals, and to the cheers of a nation, made that dream come true.

What questions did the sports writer ask?

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What questions would you have asked?

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## Part 1

Sports profiles are usually based on interviews. The sports writer prepares questions to gather information from the athlete, and sometimes from the athlete's family and friends. But it takes experience to ask the right questions.

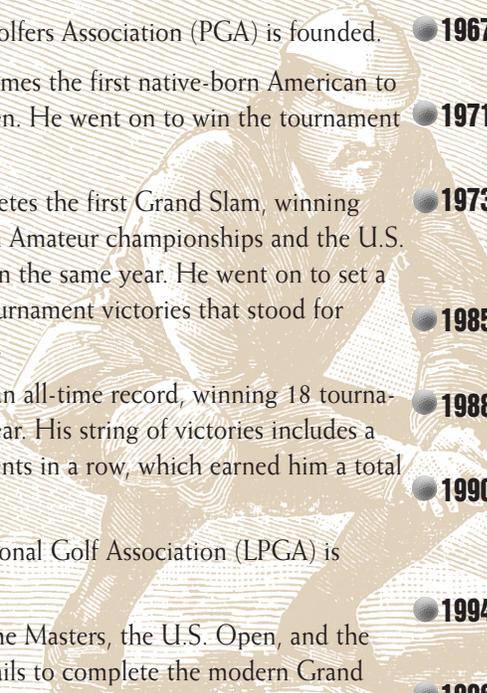
Read this profile of Francis Ouimet. See if you can figure out what questions the sports writer asked to get the information in the profile. Write those questions in the space provided. Then write at least two more questions you would have asked if you had been doing the interview.



# MAKING HISTORY

**T**he *Greatest Game Ever Played* takes us back to a turning-point in the history of golf. Before Francis Ouimet won the 1913 U.S. Open, golf had been seen as an upper class sport, played almost exclusively by members of the social elite. And in the United States, it was considered a British sport, since all the best players came from there. But Francis Ouimet changed all that. He showed that golf was a sport for everyone, no matter what your family background, and he made it an American sport, paving the way for future superstars like Jack Nicklaus, Nancy Lopez, and Tiger Woods.

How has golf changed in the years since Francis Ouimet won his place in history? Read the timeline below to find out. Then make sports history yourself – as a sports writer. Research one event on the timeline using Internet and library resources. Write a short history of the event in the space provided, or on a separate sheet of paper.

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- **1916** The Professional Golfers Association (PGA) is founded.
  - **1922** Walter Hagen becomes the first native-born American to win the British Open. He went on to win the tournament four times.
  - **1930** Bobby Jones completes the first Grand Slam, winning the U.S. and British Amateur championships and the U.S. and British Opens in the same year. He went on to set a record for major tournament victories that stood for more than 40 years.
  - **1945** Byron Nelson sets an all-time record, winning 18 tournaments in a single year. His string of victories includes a record 11 tournaments in a row, which earned him a total of \$30,000.
  - **1950** The Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) is founded.
  - **1953** Ben Hogan wins The Masters, the U.S. Open, and the British Open, but fails to complete the modern Grand Slam when he loses in the PGA Championship.
  - **1960** Arnold Palmer comes back from six shots down to win the U.S. Open, then wins the Masters. Halfway to the Grand Slam, he enters the British Open, but finishes second. Still, his run at the record books revives world-wide interest in the game.
  - **1961** The "Caucasians-only" clause is stricken from the PGA constitution, opening the organization to all golfers regardless of their ethnic background.
  - **1963** Arnold Palmer becomes the first professional golfer to win more than \$100,000 in prize money in a single year.
  - **1967** Charlie Sifford wins the Greater Hartford Open, becoming the first African-American to win a PGA tournament.
  - **1971** Astronaut Alan Shepard stows a golf club aboard his Apollo spacecraft and hits a golf ball on the moon.
  - **1973** Jack Nicklaus breaks Bobby Jones' record for most major victories when he wins his 14th at the PGA Championship.
  - **1985** Nancy Lopez sets the LPGA 72-hole record, shooting 268 in the Henredon Classic.
  - **1988** Curtis Strange becomes the first professional golfer to win more than \$1 million in a single season.
  - **1990** Controversy at a golf club that prohibits black members leads the PGA to insist on nondiscriminatory membership policies at all clubs hosting professional tournaments.
  - **1994** At age 18, Tiger Woods becomes the youngest man ever to win the U.S. Amateur championship.
  - **1996** Tiger Woods becomes the only golfer to win three consecutive U.S. Amateur titles.
  - **2000** Tiger Woods wins the U.S. Open by 15 strokes, the largest margin of victory ever recorded in any major tournament.
  - **2001** Tiger Woods becomes the first golfer ever to win all four major tournaments in a row: the 2000 U.S. Open, the 2000 British Open, the 2000 PGA Championship, and the 2001 Masters.
  - **2005** With victories in the Masters and the British Open, Tiger Woods becomes the first golfer to win more than \$50 million in prize money over his career.

## My Piece of Golf History

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# THE GREATEST UPSET

In *The Greatest Game Ever Played*, we see Francis Ouimet score one of the biggest upsets in sports history when he outplays the British champion, Harry Vardon. At the time, however, this victory was probably not called an “upset,” since that term did not become popular until 1919, when the great race horse Man O’ War lost the only race of his career to a longshot named Upset.

Since then, there have been many memorable upsets in the world of sports, and many arguments about which was the most amazing, most incredible, most inspiring of all. Some favorites in this debate are described below. Choose one event and use your sports writing skills to get into the debate yourself. In the space provided, list the reasons why you think your chosen event was the greatest sports upset of all time. Then, on the back of this sheet or a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph that persuades your reader of your point of view.

**A**t the 1980 Winter Olympic Games in Lake Placid, New York, the U.S. hockey team was a collection of college kids with little world-class experience. In the semi-final round, they faced the Soviet Union, which had won the gold 8 times before and had already beaten the Americans 10-3 in an exhibition game. No one gave the U.S. any chance, but somehow they managed to tie the game in the final period, and in the final minutes, U.S. team captain Mike Eruzione fired a wrist shot to win it 4-3. Two days later, the Americans capped this “miracle on ice” by defeating Finland for the Olympic gold.

**W**hen Rulon Gardner was growing up on his family’s dairy farm, other kids made fun of his weight. But Gardner grew up strong and could wrestle a steer to the ground. He took this wrestling talent to the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney, Australia, where he faced Alexander Karelin, a Russian champion who had not lost a match in 13 years. Gardner was the underdog – inexperienced, untested – but he turned the tables on Karelin in a grueling contest and pinned him to win the gold medal.

**T**he Villanova Wildcats were an eighth-seed underdog when they met the defending champion Georgetown Hoyas in the 1985 NCAA Basketball Finals. On paper, they just couldn’t match up to their bigger, taller, stronger opponent. But on the court Villanova combined tough defense with brilliant shot-making to stay in the game. Then in the second half they improved their shooting to an almost impossible 90 percent, winning the championship 66-64.

**I**n 2004, it had been 86 years since the Boston Red Sox had won a World Series, and they seemed destined to wait yet another year when they fell behind the New York Yankees 3 games to none in the Championship Series. No team had ever beaten those odds, but the Red Sox were determined to try. Two runs down in the ninth inning of Game 4, they staged a rally to tie the game and won it with a walk-off home run. Then they won another game, and another, until finally they had come all the way back to beat the Yankees, 4 games to 3. And the magic continued in the World Series, where they extended their string of consecutive victories by sweeping the St. Louis Cardinals in four games and ending an 86-year-long record of defeat.



## The Greatest Sports Upset was

My reasons

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# THE GREATEST GAME EVER PLAYED

## INTRODUCTION

Coming to theaters nationwide on September 30, *The Greatest Game Ever Played* is a new film from Walt Disney Pictures that tells the inspiring, true story of Francis Ouimet, who conquers prejudice, self-doubt, and society's working-class stereotypes to win the 1913 U.S. Open and usher in the modern era of golf. As a caddy at The Country Club, Francis is fascinated by pro golfers, like British star Harry Vardon, and discovers his own aptitude for the game. Despite his talents, the elitist club members look down on Francis, the son of a gardener. But others see his potential and encourage Francis to rise above his insecurities and the cutthroat competition to play for the love of the game and the pride of being the best. *The Greatest Game Ever Played* is directed by acclaimed director Bill Paxton, and stars former Disney Channel star Shia LaBeouf from "Holes."

This study guide takes *The Greatest Game Ever Played* as the starting point for classroom activities that use different forms of sports writing to reinforce language arts lessons in description, narration, exposition, persuasion, and research. The activities are self-contained and do not require that students have seen the film, although they will enrich that viewing experience.

## TARGET AUDIENCE

This study guide is designed for use with students in grades 5-8 as a supplement to the language arts curriculum.

## EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- ◆ To introduce various forms of sports writing through the story of America's first golf hero, Francis Ouimet, as presented in the new film *The Greatest Game Ever Played*.
- ◆ To engage students in sports writing activities that reinforce skills in description, exposition, narration, persuasion, and research.
- ◆ To provide background information and context that will enrich students' viewing experience when they see *The Greatest Game Ever Played* in theaters.

## USING THE STUDY GUIDE

- ◆ Photocopy the reproducible activity sheets included in this guide to provide a complete set for each student in your class. Make a master copy of the complete study guide to share with other teachers at your school.
- ◆ The classroom activities are designed for use in the order presented, but you may vary the order to meet your students' needs.
- ◆ Please fill out and return the enclosed teacher response card to remain eligible to receive free LearningWorks educational programs in the future.

## ACTIVITY 1 THE GREATEST GAME EVER PLAYED

This activity introduces students to the story of Francis Ouimet (pronounced *wee-met*), whose unexpected victory in the 1913 U.S. Open made him a national hero and paved the

way for golf to become a national pastime. Students read a summary of this event, as portrayed in the film *The Greatest Game Ever Played*, then imagine themselves sports reporters on the scene and write a description of the shot that made Ouimet a champion.

Begin the activity by asking students what they already know about golf. Do they or members of their family play the game? Do they ever watch golf tournaments on television? Are they familiar with any famous golfers? Explain that they are going to learn about America's first famous golfer, Francis Ouimet, and learn some ways that sports writers use basic techniques like description, narration, and persuasion to make sporting events come alive for the fans.

Distribute the activity sheet and read the summary of Francis Ouimet's 1913 U.S. Open victory as a class. Use the activity sheet illustrations to help students realize that Francis was still nearly a teenager when he went up against the world's best golfers. Then have students focus on the illustration of Francis sizing up his final putt. Talk about what is going on in the picture, drawing on students' own knowledge of the game and its terminology. Finally, have students use the illustration as a prompt for their own imaginative description of this climactic moment of the tournament.

Conclude the activity by asking students to share their descriptive paragraphs in a class discussion. When students have seen *The Greatest Game Ever Played*, use Part 2 of this activity to have them revise their descriptive paragraphs, based on the film, and explore how their individual perspectives affect their view of the action.

### Follow-Up Activities

1. As a collaborative project, have students create a dictionary of golf terms, including the origin of terms like stymie, putt, and tee.
2. Encourage students to bring in examples of good descriptive sports writing they find in the newspaper, in sports magazines, and on the Internet.

## ACTIVITY 2 PORTRAIT OF A CHAMPION

This activity takes students "behind the scenes" of Francis Ouimet's U.S. Open victory to learn about his life and personality. Students read a profile that highlights some of the obstacles Francis overcame on his way to the championship, and analyze this piece of expository sports writing to figure out what questions the interviewer might have asked to gather the information.

Introduce the activity by helping stu-

dents distinguish between descriptive sports reports and sports articles that use background information to give a portrait of a team or athlete. Distribute the activity sheet and use the profile of Francis Ouimet to reinforce this distinction. Remind students that sports writers usually conduct interviews to gather this type of information, then explain that they will be reversing this process, reading the profile for clues to the interview questions that elicited this information.

Have students complete Part 1 of the activity individually or in small groups, then share the questions they come up with in a class discussion. Part 2 of the activity asks students to interview a family athlete and write a profile based on the information they gather. You can have students complete this part of the activity as homework or as a short-term project.

### Follow-Up Activities

1. Ask students to bring in articles that profile their favorite athletes, actors, and recording artists. Explore the extent to which these profiles are shaped, not by the writer, but by the star's ability to construct or project a persona.
2. Have students use profile writing techniques to analyze characters in fiction. Working in pairs, one student prepares to impersonate the character while the other prepares interview questions. Let students collaborate on writing their character profile.

## ACTIVITY 3 MAKING HISTORY

This activity underscores Francis Ouimet's impact on golf history and provides an overview of developments in the sport since his time. Students use this information to formulate a research topic and write a brief historical narrative about one episode in the history of golf.

Distribute the activity sheet and begin by talking with students about the changes Francis Ouimet brought to golf and how those changes can still be felt today. Public golf courses, weekly televised golf tournaments, even the availability of golf equipment at Wal-Mart are all evidence that golf has become a national pastime, enjoyed by people in all walks of life. In fact, golf has become so popular that it is hard to imagine it was once as exclusively for the well-to-do as polo is today.

Review the golf timeline in a class discussion, helping students note trends such as the steady increase of prize money, the growing inclusiveness of the sport, and the regular emergence of true superstars, like Bobby Jones, Jack Nicklaus, and Tiger Woods, who take the game to a new level. Most golf historians

believe that Francis Ouimet was also a star of that caliber – the true Tiger Woods of his time.

Have students choose an event from the timeline and provide them with class time for research and writing, or have students complete the activity at home.

### Follow-Up Activities

1. As a class project, have students research and write the history of a local high school or recreational sports team.
2. Invite students to read an article or book about the history of a favorite team or athlete, and write a summary or review.

## ACTIVITY 4 THE GREATEST UPSET

This activity places Francis Ouimet's U.S. Open victory in the context of other amazing upsets in the history of sports. Students read about four famous upsets and write a persuasive paragraph about the one they think is the greatest upset of all.

Introduce the activity with a class discussion exploring the tradition of argument and persuasion in sports writing. Invite students to talk about and compare the talents of sports columnists and commentators they follow, both in print and on television. Other examples can be found on sports-talk radio programs and all-sports cable network roundtable programs. In addition, most students have probably argued sports topics – who's the best, why did they lose, can they win – with friends and relatives. Draw on all these experiences to help students connect the "real world" of persuasive sports writing with the persuasive writing techniques they use in school.

Distribute the activity sheets and review the sports upsets described on the sheet. Encourage students to add their own details and opinions about these famous events, using class discussion to help set the stage for their persuasive writing. Then have students choose the upset they would rank number one, list the reasons for their choice in the space provided on the sheet, and write a persuasive paragraph arguing for their point of view. Conclude by having students share their arguments in class, perhaps in a sports roundtable format.

### Follow-Up Activities

1. Have students bring in examples of persuasive sports writing and write their own rejoinders.
2. Invite students to compare the techniques of sports argument with the techniques of political argument used in newspaper editorials and by commentators on all-news cable networks. How are evidence, logic, and rhetoric deployed in these different fields? Do both offer examples of sound argument?

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# THE GREATEST GAME EVER PLAYED

COMING TO  
THEATERS  
SEPTEMBER 30

DATED MATERIAL

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