

Nathaniel Gingrich — “Baseball”

*A focused essay, with an exploration of structure as well, on baseball. It's a **rough cut** right now. I'll be adding more to the footnotes as it goes on. -ng*

Baseball¹ is² a³ game⁴ of⁵ failure.⁶

¹ I was introduced to baseball at age four. My father [Why not more active: “My father introduced me to baseball at age four. He played”] ~~was playing~~ in an adult men’s league and my mother would take us to the games often. I used to hang on ~~to~~ the fences behind home plate and would have to be reminded ~~to~~ not ~~to~~ insert my fingers into the links for fear they would be hit by a tipped foul ball. Soon, I was playing tee-ball myself; the game and I were made for each other.

² Baseball *is*. It’s a real function. ~~For~~ For years groups of men and women have been gathering on the fenced-in gardens of competition. At times it seems to grow and take on a life of its own, a breathing entity that allows different men to play it, grow with it, take on its challenges, triumph in their own ways, but never beat it. Baseball has been around for much longer than they have and will continue to be so for many years after. [Say this more compactly with less cliché.]

³ Baseball is a singular sport. ~~There’s only one. Always has been, always will be.~~ One. Only one. [Like this? Is it more “singular”? Can you say this even more singularly?]

⁴ It is—at its very center—a game. Millions ~~of dollars are made and spent~~ ~~make and spend~~ millions in its name, but it’s also a child’s game. A trait ~~which~~ so often becomes lost in other sports. The child can often be seen in the players and fans themselves. How they pause to marvel every time a homerun is hit. Watching the ball arc gracefully, every eye in the stadium locked on its path as it makes its lonely flight out ~~of the stadium, and~~ cheering when it finds its place among the observers.

⁵ So many things ~~are~~ possessed ~~by~~ baseball. So many more ~~are~~ part of it. It encompasses the best and worst emotions humans have to offer. It sees these outbursts and demonstrations and doesn’t fight or embrace them, instead it merely envelopes them, preserving the good, crushing the bad.

⁶ The only sport in which the players fail more often than they succeed. In football you can outlast the opponent, overpower, overrun them; the same opportunities exist in basketball or soccer. In baseball there are advantages the more you practice and prepare, yet you still know whenever you go up to hit that the best in the world succeed only 3 out of 10 times. The more times you try, the more times you are going to fail. It just makes it better those three times you succeed.

Ever read the classic essay—and comedy routine—“Baseball Green, Football Red”? Seems you may be trying for something similar. This is a clever idea, but footnotes need to fit the title words more carefully and deeply, as in #3. As for #5, “of” does indicate possession, but what else? It also indicates being “possessed by.” It also indicates family, place of origin, etc. Each word needs to build, too. You’re moving towards failure, so what does this indicate about the “arc” of the essay—“arc,” a word you use to signify one of baseball’s great successes, the home run. What might this paradox indicate?