

ITEM PROPERTIES

Item Type: External Copy Block Subject: English Language Arts Max Score: 1
Grade: G5 Standard Alignment: 5.RC.14.RI

Wiffle Ball: A New Way to Play Ball

- 1 You're enjoying a game of baseball when—SMASH!—the ball goes through an upstairs window. Now there's a window to fix and apologies to make. What if you had used a plastic Wiffle Ball instead? The window wouldn't be broken, and your game would still be on. The Wiffle Ball is evidence of how even simple inventions can solve problems.

- 2 David Mullany was the inventor of the Wiffle Ball. He came up with the idea after watching his son play baseball in the yard. Instead of a normal baseball, Mullany's son used a small golf ball made of plastic. When hit, it wouldn't go as far as a real baseball. This meant no time was wasted retrieving the ball from down the street, or worse—a grouchy neighbor's yard. Best of all, the lighter plastic material meant no broken windows.

- 3 Mullany needed to construct a ball that was large enough to hit, but light enough to be safe. He had a friend who worked for a perfume company. The company sold perfume in hollow, round containers. The round containers were about the size of a baseball. He got samples to try to design into a ball that could be used in a game. Mullany predicted that cutting slots in the ball would make it even lighter and easier to throw. After much repetition, Mullany came up with a peculiar design that had eight curved slots on one side. In 1957, he patented the new invention.

- 4 Along with the unique design, the Wiffle Ball also has a unique name. The origin of the name started with the word "whiff" which was a baseball term that meant "a swing and a miss." Mullany turned the word into Wiffle for his new creation. The term was perfect for Mullany's ball, because it captured the laid-back and fun nature of the new sport.

- 5 The Wiffle Ball is now a recognizable toy, but it began with just an idea. Wiffle Ball games can be played in smaller spaces than baseball, such as a backyard or community park. They are safe to use around cars and buildings, and soft enough that they won't hurt younger players. Some older players love Wiffle Balls because they are easier to throw than baseballs and are less likely to cause a sore arm. Unlike baseball, Wiffle Ball can be enjoyed by almost anyone. Tournaments for all

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ages are held around the world. There’s even a Wiffle Ball World Championship in Illinois.

- 6 Wiffle Balls are still made by the same company, which is now run by Mullany’s grandsons. In 2017, the Wiffle Ball was even inducted into the National Toy Hall of Fame. It may just be a plastic ball, but the Wiffle Ball turned out to be a real home run of an invention.

What evidence in the passage explains why Mullany wanted a ball that was different from a regular baseball? Click the boxes to select **two** sentences from paragraphs 2–3.

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SCORING GUIDELINES

1 point:

Student selects two of four choices:

Example Solution

“When hit, it wouldn’t go as far as a real baseball.”

OR

“This meant no time was wasted retrieving the ball from down the street, or worse—a grouchy neighbor’s yard.”

OR

“Best of all, the lighter plastic material meant no broken windows.”

OR

“Mullany needed to construct a ball that was large enough to hit, but light enough to be safe.”

OR

“Mullany predicted that cutting slots in the ball would make it even lighter and easier to throw.”

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Read the sentence.

“Unlike baseball, Wiffle Ball can be enjoyed by almost anyone.” (paragraph 5)

Click the box to select a sentence from the passage that supports this opinion.

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SCORING GUIDELINES

1 point:

The student selected one of four choices from paragraph 5:

Example Solution

“Wiffle Ball games can be played in smaller spaces than baseball, such as a backyard or community park.”

OR

“They are safe to use around cars and buildings, and soft enough that they won’t hurt younger players.”

OR

“Some older players love Wiffle Balls because they are easier to throw than baseballs and are less likely to cause a sore arm.”

OR

“Tournaments for all ages are held around the world.”

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