

"The One Constant Through All the Years Has Been Baseball" by Dennis May, Kirkland Town Library Staff

Do you long to hear the crack of a bat as it hits a fastball? Is the sharp slap of a baseball mitt as it miraculously catches a sharp 130 mph line drive one of your favorite sounds? Do you love the roar of the crowd as a baseball leaves the stadium like a rocket? On April 7, Major League Baseball is back, and Opening Day cannot get here fast enough.

Whether you follow the season religiously, taking in every detail (like me) or watch the games as a casual viewer, you have to admit that baseball is special. For a game that is seemingly so simple, it is far from predictable. It's a sport where new rules are implemented each year, players move to different franchises during the offseason, and teams with a losing record up until the last two months can catch fire and go on to win the World Series. You know what else?

No other sport in history has inspired as many movies, books, and pieces of art, with films like [A League of Their Own](#), [The Natural](#), [Field of Dreams](#), [Major League](#), [The Sandlot](#), and [Bull Durham](#), and books such as *Moneyball*, *Man of Spikes*, and *The Universal Baseball Association*. If you take a day trip to Cooperstown and visit the Baseball Hall of Fame, you can find an art gallery with breathtaking pieces like Jared French's *Safe* and Norman Rockwell's *The Rookie*.

To get in the spirit of baseball season, you can find many great titles at the Kirkland Town Library. These are a few of my favorites:

[The Catcher Was a Spy](#): Released in 2018, this movie follows a baseball veteran playing for the Red Sox who joins World War II to spy on Nazi Germany's effort to build the first atomic bomb. Apart from the intriguing combination of baseball and espionage, this film is also based on a remarkable true story!

[The Sandlot](#): This feel good film tells the story of Scotty Smalls and his new friends spending the summer playing baseball and their many attempts to save a prized ball from the Beast. It's heartwarming and will inevitably leave you telling everyone you know, "Heroes get remembered, but legends never die."

[A League of Their Own](#): "There's no crying in baseball!" or so goes the famous quote. This uplifting movie about the real-life All American Girls Professional Baseball League sees the nation's men get drafted to World War II and its women playing baseball. The story follows the journey of the Rockford Peaches through a baseball season like no other.

Although baseball movies get much of the publicity, don't limit yourself to the screen! There are a number of excellent books featuring America's favorite past time, ranging through nonfiction, historical fiction, and coming-of-age stories:

*How Baseball Happened: Outrageous Lies Exposed! The True Story Revealed* by Thomas W. Gilbert flips the sport's history on its head and asks "Who's really responsible for this game?" Was it really Abner Doubleday or is that a myth? Through old newspaper clippings and diary entries, Gilbert seeks to record the true birth of America's game. It's informative and often surprisingly funny.

*The Given Day* by Dennis Lehane is the first novel in the author's Coughlin trilogy. Set in 1918 Boston, the story follows police officer Danny Coughlin and Luther Laurence, a Black amateur baseball player, as they navigate race relations and the forming of famed Boston Social Club. Among the historical figures featured in Lehane's story is the Sultan of Swat himself: the great Babe Ruth.

*Swing* by Kwame Alexander and Mary Rand Hess follows seventeen year old Noah and his best friend Walt (aka "Swing") as they navigate their way through highschool, first love, perfecting baseball, and learning what it means to be cool. As outside forces like racial division and prejudices threaten their everyday lives, Noah and Walt must decide what is really important when it comes to love, friendship, sacrifice, and fate.

Of course, these few titles only scratch the surface of the Kirkland Town Library's deep baseball collection. Starting on April 7th, visit the library to check out the baseball display at the front desk and get yourself into the swing (pun intended) of baseball season!