
Brother Rich
English III
Summer 2014

SPS ~ Summer Reading: The Natural by Bernard Malamud

Preferred (not required) text:
New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.
ISBN 13: 978-0-374-50200-3.



"In order to understand America, you have to understand baseball" (Alexis de Tocqueville).

Before we start...

Here's an important disclaimer for those of you who don't like sports or who don't know anything about baseball.

This is not just a book about baseball; **this is a book about what it means to be human – to be a man.**

(You don't believe me? Read the last sentence of the Introduction on page xii.)

This is a book about what you want – or, perhaps, what you say you want... and all the other things that seem to get in the way of your getting what it was you said you wanted.

It's about goals and objectives – and about forgetting our objectives.

It's about junior year.

It's about the prayer service Coach Barwick will lead for us during the first week of school in August.

It's about what you'll write on the 3x5 index card and place on the altar... and what you do after that.

Get the book. (If you get the edition cited above, you will have the advantage of your page numbers matching mine.)

If you get a print copy, get a high-lighter.

Get a pencil.

Read the book – before school starts in August.

Use the reading guide.

Start with the research I suggest before you read the book so that you will understand the historical references and mythological allusions.

Next, read 10 or 12 questions, noting the page numbers, and then read the book, looking for the answers to the questions. High-light the answers in the book and write down some short answers on this reading guide or on loose leaf in a binder. (You'll use the binder in class next year.)

All of this is for you – to help you understand and remember what you read.

I will **not** collect your answers to the reading guide. This guide will help you on quizzes and in class discussions. You'll thank me later.

Do a little research.

Who is Babe Ruth?

What kind of childhood did he have?

What position did he start out playing?

Then what positions did he play?



What nicknames did he have?

What kind of on-field and off-field troubles did the Babe have?

What legends do you know about?

Like the time he pointed his bat in the direction in which he was going to hit a homerun?

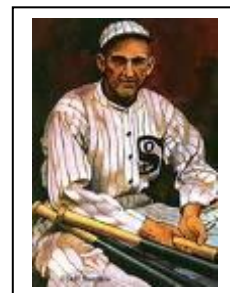
Or the time a dad asked Ruth to hit a homerun to save his son's life?

Who is Joe Jackson?

What was his nickname? How did he get it?

What do you know about the 1919 "Black Sox" scandal?

And how was Jackson involved in it?



What do you know about King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table?

What was the name of King Arthur's sword? How did he get it?

Who was the Fisher King?

What is the connection between his wound and the welfare of his kingdom?

If you have the preferred paperback, read the Introduction to The Natural (especially pages xi-xii).



What happened to Eddie Waitkus?

Who is Mickey Mantle?

Who is Joe DiMaggio?

OK now read the book...

The Natural ~ "Pre-Game" (pp.1 – 39)

1. Who is the protagonist? Where is he?

What is significant about the fact that he has no timepiece (3)?

2. Briefly summarize his dream.

What might be the significance of the last four words "to hang on forever" (4)?

3. Why is Roy going to Chicago (5)?

4. Summarize Sam's dream (10-11). Interpret it.



5. What's the weird headline and article (13)?
6. Who was Eddie Waitkus (xi)?
7. Who is Max Mercy (13)?
8. Who is the Whammer (13-14)?
9. What does Sam say about Roy (14-15)?
10. Who is Harriet Bird (15)?
11. What's with the "shame," "ambitions," and "doubts" (17)?
12. What's the bet (19)?
- * The Whammer pointed with his bat to the place he was going to "murder the ball" (24). Who else did that?
13. Identify the allusions/references at the bottom of 25 / top of 26.
14. What is Roy's "pronouncement" (26)?
15. What is Harriet's reaction (26)?
16. Complete the line, "*Sometimes when I walk down the street...*" (27).
17. Explain, "Is that all?" (27).
18. Explain, "What more is there?" (27).
19. Explain, "...he still didn't know..." (28).
20. What did Roy "tweak" (29)? What does this reveal about Roy?
21. Who calls Roy in the hotel (33)?
22. Describe the scene when Roy opens the door (34).
23. What does Harriet ask him before she shoots (34)?
24. Why does she ask him that?



Reading Guide Part #2: "Batter Up!" (pp. 39-107)

25. Who is Pop Fisher ?
26. Who is Red Blow ?
27. Which team is this (39)?

28. What's broken – and, evidently, has been broken for a long time?

29. Who is the “bastard partner” (40)?

What was the “darkest day” of Pop’s life?

30. Who is Bump?

31. Explain: “He was traveling (on the train that never stopped)...” (41).

32. How old is he (42)?

Explain: “I only recently got back in the game” (42).

33. What’s the name of the team (44)?

OK, guess why...

34. “How’s it look?” Roy asked. “A dream but why the tears” (45).

What’s the *play on words* with Dizzy’s answer: “A dream”?

Why did Roy have tears in his eyes?

35. Roy hears a voice he recognizes and doesn’t like (48).

Whose voice? Where did he first hear that voice?

36. Who is Pop’s niece?

Whom is she dating?

37. Why does Roy feel “ashamed to be recognized” (48)?

Why is Roy “soaked in sweat and shame” (51)?

38. What does Roy say when Red asks him, “When are you eating?” (53). [HMMMM....sound familiar?]

39. What’s ironic about the movie (54)?

40. What does Red want to do for Pop (57)?

What does Red want Roy to give Pop (58)?

41. What was Roy thinking about when he climbed into bed (58)?

42. **Fill in the Blanks:** *The bed felt like it was in _____.* *He was headed into a place where*

_____. *He felt a roaring _____.*

He felt he was walking down the long _____ carrying _____.

The knock and _____ answered the door....



43. He imagined he was in a _____ somewhere in the _____.
He had a long and satisfying _____.

44. Who got into bed with him? How were her hands and feet?

45. What are the last eight words?

46. What is the name of Roy's bat (61)?

Where did Roy get his bat (63)?

Where did he get the wood?

47. What does Red want Roy to do to/for Pop (68)?

Why / For what?

48. What did Pop yell to Roy (73)?

49. Fill in the blank: "...he was sick to death of waiting, and tongue-out _____ to begin" (74).

50. What happened to the ball Roy hit (74)?

What's on the cover of your book?

What did Roy say to Pop in the locker room (75)?

51. One day after the accident," what did Pop do for Roy (77)?

52. What did Red Blow say to Pop about Roy (78)?

53. Explain "...a long memory for what he wanted..." (82).

* What does Roy want / What does he *hunger* for?

54. "So he blazed away for her with his golden bat" (84),

Malamud makes repeated allusions to the legends of King Arthur, the knights of Round Table, and chivalry from the Middle Ages. Explain the line above in terms of the chivalric concept of courtly love and a knight winning tournaments and battles for his lady.

55. Roy realized that "a guy needed cash" (88). For what?

How does this become a part of the theme of Roy's "*hunger*"?

56 "*The love of money is the root of all evil*" (93).

Who says this to whom?

Why does he say it?

What is *ironic* about it?



Where does the saying come from?

How does Roy respond?

The judge says to Roy that “emphasis on money will pervert your values.”

How might this be *foreshadowing* and *irony*?

57. Note the way Roy says, “thirty five thousand,” “twenty five,” “fifteen” (93-95).

What is happening?

58. Note the way the judge talks about “the absence of light,” “fear,” “an exquisite mystical experience” (94-95). Explain.

* Much of the beauty of the book (for me) and some of the confusion (for you) comes from Malamud’s dialogue and description of scenes in *mystical* terms. Keep your eyes (and heart) open....

59. Roy says to the judge, “...you were not building up my good will...” (95).

What does he mean?

How is that *ironic*?

60. What are the judge’s last words to Roy (96)?

* Keep this in mind as foreshadowing.

61. “‘You’ll get yours,’ the beggar said. ‘You too,’ he said to Roy and spat on the sidewalk” (98).

* OK, this probably another example of _____?

* Watch for the *repetition* – the number of times this phrase is repeated...

62. Who is Gus (99)?

63. “Roy read it (the menu) and although he was *hungry* couldn’t concentrate on food” (100).

Which word does Malamud keep repeating? Why?

64. “‘I got nothing to bet on,’” Roy said, his mouth full of meat and potatoes” (102).

* What is the beauty of this line? (C’mon, what is one of the major themes?)

65. “‘Maybe someday you might be able to do me a favor” (106).

Who says this to whom?

What literary technique do you think Malamud is using again?

OK, you are half-way through the book. You don’t need a whole bunch of questions to guide your reading anymore. You know who’s who and what’s what. So, read, enjoy, - and keep high-lighting.

66. Now that you finished the book, think about the names Malamud uses.

Can you think of any symbolism, significance, irony, or allusions?

Roy Hobbs

the Whammer

Harriet Bird

the Knights

Wonderboy

Red Blow

Pop Fisher

Bump

Memo Paris

Max Mercy

Judge Goodwill (aka Goodie) Banner

Gus Sands

Iris Lemon

67. For what does Roy hunger? / What does he tell Harriet and Iris that he wants?

What else does Roy want, which gets in the way of what he says he wants?

68. What would you say is the theme of this book?

69. What lesson or moral do you get from this book?

70. Compare and contrast the three women in Roy's life:

Harriet

Memo

Iris.

71. Is Roy a hero? Explain your answer.

Do you like Roy? Do you feel sympathetic towards him?

How do you feel about him at the very end of the book?



72. Malamud repeats the line “You’ll get yours” several times. Did Roy “get” what was coming to him?
73. Be prepared to discuss the conversation between Roy and Iris on pages 148 to 153.

High-light the lines you notice as being particularly significant or prophetic.

Which lines speak to you personally?

Be prepared for a scantron test on the book the first week of class when we start school in August.

Then be prepared to discuss the novel and to write a couple of papers on the book.

And, yes, I’ll show you the movie, but – trust me – the movie is different from the book....