

Casey at the Bat

By Ernest Thayer

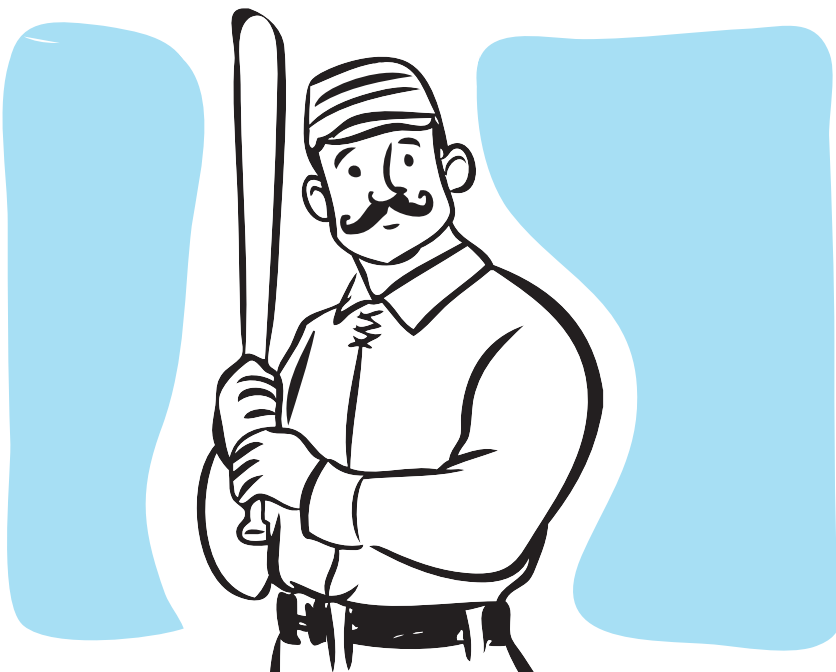
"Casey at the Bat" is a poem written by Ernest Thayer in 1888. Read the poem all the way through, then go back and answer the questions for each stanza.

The outlook wasn't brilliant for the Mudville nine that day:
The score stood four to two, with but one inning more to play.
And then when Cooney died at first, and Barrows did the same,
A sickly silence fell upon the patrons of the game.

A straggling few got up to go in deep despair. The rest
Clung to that hope which springs eternal in the human breast;
They thought, if only Casey could get but a whack at that -
We'd put up even money, now, with Casey at the bat.

But Flynn preceded Casey, as did also Jimmy Blake,
And the former was a lulu and the latter was a cake;
So upon that stricken multitude grim melancholy sat,
For there seemed but little chance of Casey's getting to the bat.

But Flynn let drive a single, to the wonderment of all,
And Blake, the much despis-ed, tore the cover off the ball;
And when the dust had lifted, and the men saw what had occurred,
There was Jimmy safe at second and Flynn a-hugging third.



1. What does the narrator mean when he says Cooney “died at first”?

- a. He died.
- b. He was tagged out.
- c. He walked off the field.

2. Why do you think the fans began to leave?

- a. They were hungry and went to the snack bar.
- b. The team was not playing well and they were sure they would lose.
- c. It was getting close to dinnertime and they all went home to eat.

3. What do you think *preceded* means?

- a. Went after.
- b. Went last.
- c. Went before.

4. What's a lulu?

- a. A great player.
- b. A snappy dresser.
- c. A word we don't use anymore.

5. To “drive a single” means:

- a. To make it to first base.
- b. To drive a car.
- c. To take one step.

6. What does the narrator mean when he says Blake “tore the cover off the ball”?

- a. He ripped the ball apart with his hands.
- b. He hit the ball so hard, the fabric tore.
- c. He missed the ball and when it fell, the fabric ripped.

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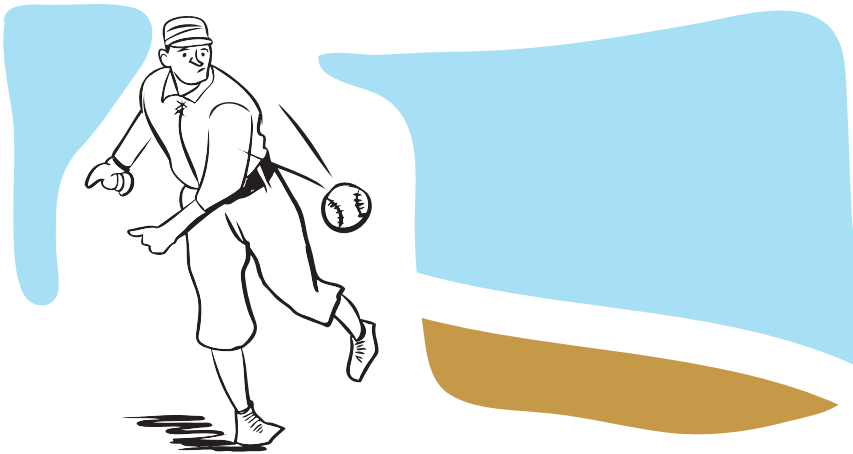
Then from 5,000 throats and more there rose a lusty yell;
It rumbled through the valley, it rattled in the dell;
It knocked upon the mountain and recoiled upon the flat,
For Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat.

There was ease in Casey's manner as he stepped into his place;
There was pride in Casey's bearing and a smile on Casey's face.
And when, responding to the cheers, he lightly doffed his hat,
No stranger in the crowd could doubt 'twas Casey at the bat.

Ten thousand eyes were on him as he rubbed his hands with dirt;
Five thousand tongues applauded when he wiped them on his shirt.
Then while the writhing pitcher ground the ball into his hip,
Defiance gleamed in Casey's eye, a sneer curled Casey's lip.

And now the leather-covered sphere came hurtling through the air,
And Casey stood a-watching it in haughty grandeur there.
Close by the sturdy batsman the ball unheeded sped-
"That ain't my style," said Casey. "Strike one," the umpire said.

From the benches, black with people, there went up a muffled roar,
Like the beating of the storm-waves on a stern and distant shore.
"Kill him! Kill the umpire!" shouted someone on the stand;
And it's likely they'd a-killed him had not Casey raised his hand.



7. The poem says the fans' cheers "rumbled through the valley" and "knocked upon the mountain." Why did he describe it this way?

- a. The fans were very loud.
- b. The sound really did hit a mountain.
- c. Their cheers were quiet.

8. "There was ease in Casey's manner as he stepped into his place." What does this tell you about Casey?

- a. He is a very shy person.
- b. He is about 30 years old.
- c. He is very proud and sure of himself.

9. How do you pronounce *writhing*?

- a. woo-ree-thing
- b. ry-thing
- c. ree-thing

10. What do you think defiance is?

- a. The act of wanting something.
- b. Defying, or going against, the rules.
- c. Asking for help.

11. What's "the leather-covered sphere"?

- a. The bat.
- b. The pitcher's mound.
- c. The ball.

12. Why is the crowd so angry?

- a. The stadium ran out of hot dogs.
- b. The umpire made a mistake.
- c. They can't believe Casey missed the ball and are blaming it on the umpire.

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With a smile of Christian charity great Casey's visage shone;
He stilled the rising tumult; he bade the game go on;
He signaled to the pitcher, and once more the spheroid flew;
But Casey still ignored it, and the umpire said, "Strike two."

"Fraud!" cried the maddened thousands, and echo answered fraud;
But one scornful look from Casey and the audience was awed.
They saw his face grow stern and cold, they saw his muscles strain,
And they knew that Casey wouldn't let that ball go by again.

The sneer is gone from Casey's lip, his teeth are clenched in hate;
He pounds with cruel violence his bat upon the plate.
And now the pitcher holds the ball, and now he lets it go,
And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey's blow.

Oh, somewhere in this favored land the sun is shining bright;
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light,
And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout;
But there is no joy in Mudville - mighty Casey has struck out.



13. Define *tumult*:

- a. A loud noise from a crowd.
- b. A wave.
- c. A kind of fog.

14. How do you pronounce *fraud*?

- a. Frowd.
- b. Frod.
- c. Flood.

15. Why does the narrator say the echo "answered" the crowd?

- a. Echoes sound like answers.
- b. Someone came in late.
- c. The crowd was asking a question.

16. What happened in the last sentence?

- a. Casey swung the bat.
- b. Casey hit the ball.
- c. Casey missed the ball.

17. Why is there a band playing and people laughing?

- a. Their team won.
- b. They were celebrating Mudville's loss.
- c. The game was held on the same day as a parade.

ANSWERS: 1. b 2. b 3. c 4. c 5. a 6. b 7. a 8. c 9. b 10. b 11. c 12. c 13. a 14. b 15. a 16. a 17. a