



Basket Ball: The Story of the All-American Game, written and illustrated by the great American painter and author Kadir Nelson, traces the history and evolution of one of the country's most beloved sports. Through powerful storytelling and art, Nelson highlights how the game reflects perseverance, creativity, and the changing landscape of American society, as well as profiling many exceptional players that revolutionized basketball.

ACTIVITY ONE

DISCUSS: Guide students in exploring why basketball is described as “the All-American Game.” Encourage them to consider how the evolution of the sport mirrors American history, culture, and shared values.

ACTIVITY TWO

EXPLORE: Throughout *Basket Ball: The Story of the All-American Game*, Nelson describes the challenges early African American players faced while traveling to games. On page 22, he writes: “In some towns, they had to go a hundred miles or so out of their way to find a place to sleep, ‘cause Black folks weren’t welcome everywhere.” Use the Smithsonian Institute website [Negro Motorist Green Book](#) to introduce students to the “bible of Black travel” that was written by Victor Hugo Green. Lead students in learning how African Americans located safe places to rest, eat, and lodge during the era of segregation and Jim Crow.

ACTIVITY THREE

DRAW: Using the timeline from *Basket Ball: The Story of the All-American Game*, guide students as they work together to create a comic strip illustrating key moments in the development of basketball.

ACTIVITY FOUR

RESEARCH: The “Overtime” chapter in *Basket Ball: The Story of the All-American Game* highlights the history of women in basketball and the development of professional women’s leagues. In the Author’s Note, Nelson writes that the “evolution of women’s basketball continues to be an ever-expanding and rapidly developing component of the sport’s story.” Invite students to research a current or former women’s basketball player and create a profile in the style of Kadir Nelson. Each profile should include an illustration

and a one-page written description modeled after those in *Basket Ball: The Story of the All-American Game*.

ACTIVITY FIVE

CONNECTING THE GAME WITH SCIENCE AND MATH: On page 15 of *Basket Ball: The Story of the All-American Game*, Nelson describes the Original Celtics as “basketball scientists, practicing all the time, constantly improving offensive tactics, and devising new methods of scoring.” Use this description to lead students in a discussion about the steps of the scientific method and how athletes use experimentation and refinement to improve performance. Explore why Nelson used the phrase “basketball scientists,” then invite students to suggest additional innovations to the game using the scientific method.

OR

Using diagrams of a basketball court and hoop, along with the rules of the game, guide students in exploring the mathematical concepts behind basketball. Discuss how geometry and physics make jump shots, leaps, and signature moves both possible and effective.

Just for Fun

Throughout *Basketball: The Story of the All-American Game*, readers learn that many players had memorable nicknames, including Kareem “Captain” Abdul-Jabbar, Earvin “Magic” Johnson, and Stephen “Chef” Curry. Invite students to share any sports nicknames they have or imagine what theirs might be.



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