

TEACHER READING GUIDE

*Casey at the Bat*

written by Ernest Lawrence Thayer

**Essential Question:** How do literary elements and character development contribute to the plot of a poem?

**BOOK SNAPSHOT**

Selected from Florida's ELA B.E.S.T. Standards Sample Text List

**Text Type:** Poetry

**Genre:** Ballad, Narrative, Humor, Mock Heroic

**Themes/Topics:** Arrogance (overconfidence), Pride, Hope

**Lexile:** No published Lexile level

**SKILLS ALIGNED WITH FLORIDA'S ELA B.E.S.T. STANDARDS**

**Word Work**

**ELA.4.F.1.3**

Use syllabication patterns to decode multisyllabic words.

**Vocabulary**

**ELA.4.V.1.1**

Use grade-level academic vocabulary. (Tier 2)

**Comprehension**

**ELA.4.R.1.1**

Use literary elements to understand the plot of a text.

**BUILDING BACKGROUND**

"Casey at the Bat" is a comedic poem written in 1888 by Ernest Lawrence Thayer. Use the following prompts to engage students in a discussion about the significance of baseball in America.

- **Baseball:**
  - Known as America's Favorite Pastime
  - Recognized as a sport symbolic of community
  - Played a significant role in uniting Americans throughout wars, segregation, and other key moments in history

**STUDENT LEARNING TARGETS**

**Today I am:**  
explaining literary elements.

**So that I can:**  
understand the plot of a poem

## WORD WORK – DECODE USING SYLLABLE PATTERNS

Students will identify **syllable patterns** to decode multisyllabic words.

**Syllable patterns** provide clues about vowel sounds. There are six common syllable patterns: *closed*, *open*, *vowel-consonant-silent e*, *vowel team*, *r-controlled*, and *final stable*.

- Write *eternal* (underline *ter*) on the board or chart paper. Point to *ter*. Say:
- "This syllable is an *r*-controlled syllable. It is pronounced /tər/."
- "The whole word is *eternal*."

For each of the following words, ask students to identify the syllable pattern of the underlined syllable, decode the syllable, and read the word.

<u>brilliant</u> (line 1) [closed]	<u>recoiled</u> (line 19) [vowel team]
<u>patrons</u> (line 4) [open]	<u>hurtling</u> (line 29) [r-controlled]
<u>despised</u> (line 14) [vowel-consonant-silent e]	<u>muffled</u> (line 33) [final stable]

**ELA.4.F.1.3: Use knowledge of grade-appropriate phonics and word-analysis skills to decode words.**

**a. Apply knowledge of all letter-sound correspondences, syllabication patterns, and morphology to read and write unfamiliar single-syllable and multisyllabic words in and out of context.**

## TALK ABOUT NEW AND INTERESTING WORDS

Tier 2 vocabulary words, paired with student-friendly definitions, can be used for explicit vocabulary instruction. It is important to provide background information and learning opportunities to help students make connections to the words. Examples of Tier 2 vocabulary words for this text are:

**ELA.4.V.1.1: Use grade-level academic vocabulary appropriately in speaking and writing.**



**despair** (line 5): **Despair** describes the feeling that everything is wrong and nothing will improve. A few fans left the baseball game in deep **despair**.



**despise** (line 14): **Despise** describes disliking something or someone and having a very low opinion of them. In the poem, the much-**despised** Blake tore the cover off the ball.



**advancing** (line 20): If something or someone is **advancing**, they are moving forward. The crowd yelled when Casey **advanced** to the bat.



**sturdy** (line 31): When something or someone is **sturdy**, they are strong and unlikely to be easily injured or damaged. Casey is described as a **sturdy** batsman.

### Vocabulary Extension Activity

Vocabulary Extension Activity:

- Make connections with the target words to reinforce students' understanding of the vocabulary. Model how to make a connection using the target vocabulary word.
  - For example, "The author describes **sturdy** as *strong and not easily damaged*. What is something you consider to be **sturdy**?"

## READ FOR MEANING – EXPLAIN HOW LITERARY ELEMENTS CONTRIBUTE TO PLOT

ELA.4.R.1.4: Explain how rhyme and structure create meaning in a poem.

ELA.4.R.1.1: Explain how setting, events, conflict, and character development contribute to the plot in a literary text.



### Before:

The purpose of the first read is to explain how rhyme and structure create meaning in “Casey at the Bat.”

The purpose of the second read is to explain how the setting, events, conflict, and characters in a poem contribute to students’ understanding of the plot.



### During:

#### First Read:

- Provide a copy of the poem to each student.
- Prepare to read:
  - A **stanza** is a section of a poem that consists of a line or groups of lines.
    - Number the stanzas in the poem “Casey at the Bat.”
    - There are four lines in each stanza.
    - Each stanza has rhyming word pairs.
- Circle the rhyming words in the poem’s first stanza.
  - *day/play*
  - *same/game*
- Identify the rhyme scheme. Discuss with students how rhyme creates rhythm and flow in a poem.
- Read the poem aloud, modeling automaticity and prosody. Discuss with students:
  - How does rhyme create meaning in the poem?
  - How does structure create meaning in the poem?

#### Second Read:

**Model:** Ask comprehension questions before, during, and after reading. Model thinking aloud to support children’s understanding of the text.



### Before:

- Who is the main character?
- What sport does Casey play?
- What is the problem in “Casey at the Bat”?



### During

#### Stanzas 1-2:

- The Mudville nine are losing four to two. The first two batters “died at first.” What is the meaning of *died at first*? How do you know?
- Why have the patrons, or fans, fallen silent?
- Why are the Mudville fans in despair?
- In Stanza 2, who is the fans’ only hope for winning the game?

## Guided: Stanzas 3–4

- What does the crowd think of Flynn and Blake?
  - Do the fans have confidence in Flynn’s or Blake’s ability? How do you know?
- In Stanza 4, Blake “tore the cover off the ball.”
  - What does *tore the cover off the ball* mean?
  - Why does the author use this phrase instead of writing, “He hit the ball”?
- How do Flynn and Blake surprise the fans?

## Stanzas 5–7

- How do the fans show their excitement as Casey advances to the bat?
- In Stanza 6, what message is the author trying to show with the line, “There was ease in Casey’s manner as he stepped into his place”?
- How does Casey feel about his own ability? How do you know?
- In Stanza 7, the word *defiance* describes making light of a challenge or opposition. The author says, “Defiance gleamed in Casey’s eye.”
  - What do you think Casey is thinking as he stands at the plate? Why?

## Stanzas 8–9

- What is the “leather-covered sphere”?
- How does Casey respond to the challenge of the first pitch?
  - When Casey says, “That ain’t my style,” what does this reveal about him?
- When the umpire says, “Strike one,” what is the emotion of the crowd before Casey raises his hand to them?
  - How does the crowd respond after Casey raises his hand?

## Stanzas 10–11

- How does Casey respond to the challenge of the second pitch?
- Why does Casey let two pitches go by without swinging at them?
- How do you know that Casey’s mood changes after the second strike?
- In Stanza 11, what makes the crowd calm down again?
  - What does the crowd expect from Casey on the third pitch?

## Stanza 12

- How does Casey respond to the challenge of the third pitch?
  - How is Casey’s response different from pitches one and two?

## Stanza 13

- Casey is confident early in the poem. How do you think he is feeling after he strikes out?
- How do you think the fans are feeling toward Casey after he strikes out?
  - Why?



## After:

- Did your opinion of Casey change while reading the poem? Why or why not?
- Did you expect “Casey at the Bat” to end the way it did? Why or why not?

## Independent Writing:

Ask students to write a paragraph with a different ending to the poem—one in which Casey hits the ball. The paragraph should include how the ending may or may not impact the outcome of the game and the fans’ reactions to the outcome.