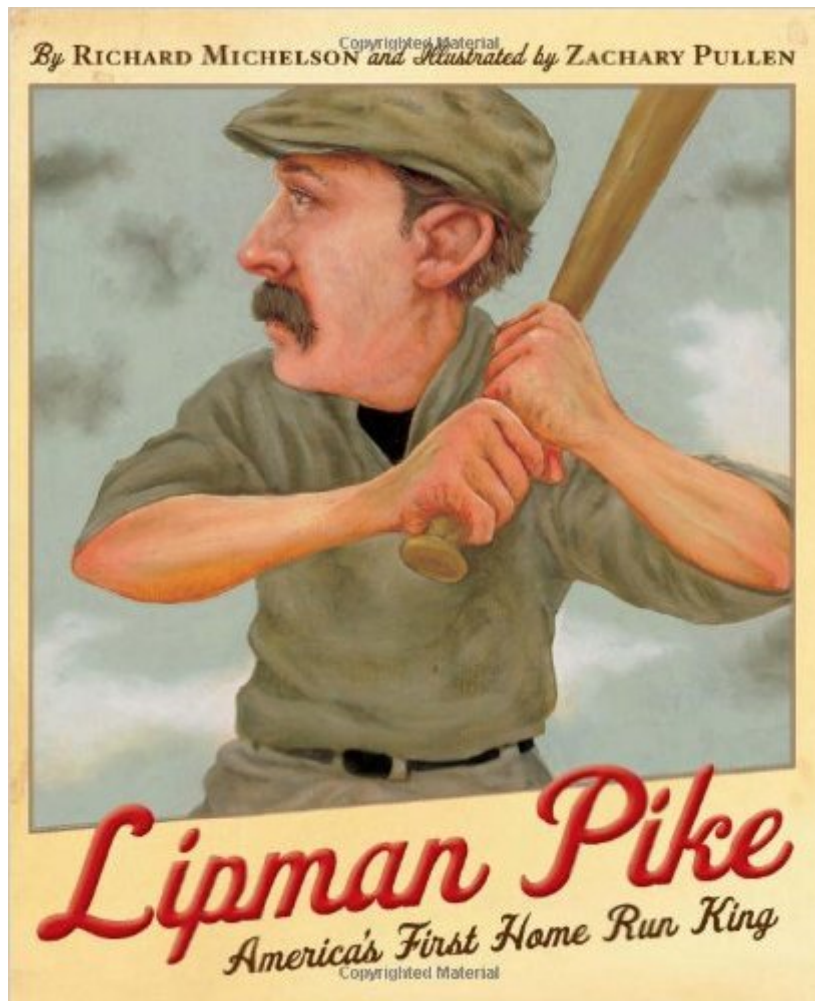


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# Lipman Pike: America's First Home Run King



## Synopsis

In the mid 1800s the sport of baseball was working its way across the United States. Amateur teams were springing up and in 1858 the National Association of Base Ball Players was formed. Young men were eager to show their prowess on the field and in the batter's box. Lipman Pike's father, a Dutch immigrant, runs a small haberdashery in Brooklyn, New York, though Lip is more interested in watching the ball players than working behind the counter. His mother doesn't approve -- Jewish boys should be paying attention to more sensible matters. But when Lip is barely a teenager, he's invited to join the Nationals Junior Club and play first base. When he hits his first pitch over the right fielder's head, Lip knows baseball is the sport for him. Award-winning author Richard Michelson chronicles the meteoric rise of one of baseball's earliest (and unsung) champions. Richard Michelson's poetry and children's books have been listed among the year's best books by The New Yorker, the New York Public Library, and the Jewish Book Council. His *A is for Abraham: A Jewish Alphabet* won the 2009 Sydney Taylor Award Silver Medal. He lives in Amherst, Massachusetts. Zachary Pullen's picture-book illustrations have won awards and garnered starred reviews. He has been honored several times with acceptance into the prestigious Society of Illustrators juried shows and Communication Arts Illustration Annual of the best in current illustration. Zak lives in Wyoming.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 900L (What's this?)

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Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (6 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #758,521 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #182 in [Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Social Activists](#) #427 in [Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Sports & Recreation](#) #651 in [Books > Children's Books > Sports & Outdoors > Baseball](#)

Age Range: 6 - 9 years

Grade Level: 1 - 4

## Customer Reviews

This review may seem a bit long to you. I wanted to consider the text and illustrations for a more complete sense of the book. (I left plenty out for you to discover when you buy your own copy.)

Thanks for taking the time to read this! If you count yourself as being one who finds it impossible to think of spring without thinking of baseball, then you'll enjoy reading *Lipman Pike - America's First Home Run King* (written by Richard Michelson and illustrated by Zachary Pullen). Lipman Pike's rise to early baseball fame is traced with an engaging and informative text along with colorful illustrations depicting baseball when it was simply called "base". Lip is the son of a Dutch immigrant, and readers meet him as a restless boy growing up in Brooklyn during the early 1800's. He learns how to play by watching the adults in the neighborhood enjoy the game. With the support of his brother (Boaz), and the eventual approval of his parents, Lip accepts an opportunity to play in his first official amateur match. During that contest, he hits the ball over the right fielder's head, and his love of the game grows. He later accepts an offer from a Pennsylvania team, The Athletics, to play for \$20/week - making him the first professional baseball player in America. As his career progressed, he earned a reputation as a home run king by frequently leading his league in runs. Lip lived for only 48 years. He died of heart disease in 1893. He was remembered by friends and associates for his astonishing athletic ability and for offering "good manners", honest prices", and "fast service", in matters of business. The chronology of Lip's baseball accomplishments, however, is not the only engaging aspect of this book. Some of the social challenges he faces as his career progresses are revealed as well. After joining the Athletics, for example, Lip helps the team win. Some club members, however, fear that because Lip is a Jew from Brooklyn, they can't trust him in a future game against Brooklyn. Some are also uncomfortable with rumors that Lip is being paid to play (while others are not), and he is voted off the team. Lip decides to keep his focus on opportunities to play. He eventually becomes (with the indirect help of a politician named Boss Tweed) the captain of a professional team called the Troy Haymakers. Once again, the experience of rejection arises when the people in Troy talk about mistrusting Lip because he is a Jew from Brooklyn. Lip pushes onward - and - for the second time in his life - he helps a hostile team win. These challenges don't discourage Lip, and his persistence allows his abilities as a genuine athlete to shine. Before he retired in 1881 to open a haberdashery in Brooklyn, he earned the nickname the "Iron Batter" when he hit one ball 360 feet with sufficient force to bend a metal rod atop a tall pagoda in the center field. Prior to that, he outran a trotting horse in a 100-yard sprint in Baltimore. (People even paid to watch him race against the horse). His story is complimented by colorful illustrations that help readers visualize the 1800's. Several pages have small drawings depicting items from daily life (e.g., a train, a paper newspaper, a leather baseball, wooden bats, and an early field). The artwork helps remind

all that there was a time when there were fewer than 20 clubs in America, and that the "field" was once little more than an area of rough-mown grass. In addition, interesting facts about early baseball are included in the author's note, and they help bring the humble beginnings of the game to light. Although the story of Lip's career and baseball's rise in popularity are important (and exciting) aspects of this book, Lipman's need to cope with resentment from other players is also noteworthy. By sharing his encounters with (and his reaction to) social difficulties - along with reports of his astonishing athletic ability - Michelson and Pullen help us remember the unique perspective of an amazing Jewish athlete who was the first professional baseball player in America. Lipman Pike - America's First Home Run King is an informative, important, and exciting read. I recommend it.

Lipmann Pike is a biography of the first Jewish professional baseball player. Lip, as he was called, was born in 1845 to parents who immigrated to America from Holland. His father owned a haberdashery store in Brooklyn. Lip and his brother Boaz loved to run around the store getting items for the customers as if they were running the bases in a game of baseball. They say Lip was so fast he could outrun a racehorse. The boys loved watching the men play "Base" as they called the game of baseball then. They would even practice batting and throwing the baseball when their parents weren't watching because Jewish boys didn't play baseball. It was considered childish, according to their mother. In 1858 after Lip's Bar Mitzvah, he was invited to join the junior base team and play his first amateur match. On his first up at bat, he hit a home run. When Lip turned 21 he moved to Philadelphia to play for the Athletics and got paid \$20 a week. Lip was the team's best player, but when the team learned that he was the only one paid and he was a Jew they voted him off the team. He then joined the New Jersey Irvingtons and then the New York Mutuals, when they formed professional teams, and eventually became captain of the Troy Haymakers. At the end of the story there is a section called: "The Rest Is History", which tells about the day in 1873, when Lip outran a racehorse in a hundred-yard sprint. He retired from baseball and opened up a haberdashery store like his father. He died in 1893 after playing baseball for about 40 years. The Author's Note tells about the beginning of baseball and a little of its history. The illustrations are large, appealing, sepia toned images with oversized heads that look like caricatures. They help to impart the look and feel of the historical era. Richard Michelson's research shows in the interesting details he has included of the time period. A child does not have to be a baseball fan to learn a lot from this enjoyable book. For ages 6 - 10. Barbara Silverman

By accepting twenty dollars a week to play third base for the Philadelphia Athletics in 1866, Lip Pike

became baseball's first professional player. But before that, Lip was just a boy who liked to run. He was the son of Dutch Jewish immigrants, whose father worked in a haberdashery, and whose mother wasn't sure playing ball is for her nice, Jewish boy. The book takes the reader through Lip's early obstacles all the way to his professional success when he became America's first home run king. Interwoven subtly through the story are the themes of assimilation (Lip's dad is OK with baseball because they live in America now) as well as the challenges of anti-semitism that Lip encounters from his fellow baseball players. Some great historical details are included, like a cameo from Boss Tweed of Tammany Hall and the fact that the game Lip played is called 'base', since it wasn't yet named baseball. The illustrations are beautifully painted in rich, warm tones and in a style that feels very appropriate to the period, yet still contemporary in some of its stylizations. The time and research the illustrator put in shows: every detail from the look of the haberdashery shop, the women's parasols and the stadium all feel very true and accurate. My one critique of the illustrations is that there are a couple of images that don't seem to match the text on the page. For example, when the text reads that 'five thousand fans show up, and thousands crowd the fence', the illustrator shows the fence...but only about six people are standing by it watching the game. I personally loved the story and history of the beginnings of baseball, but I am not sure all young children would. The nature of the book feels historical, important, and mature-not necessarily 'fun'. It is certainly for the more thoughtful child who can appreciate the beauty of the images, the history and the themes. Ann Koffsky Author/ Illustrator Noah's Swim-a-Thon

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