

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** read the text carefully, number each paragraph, mark it up for ideas it says about athletes and values. Then be prepared to discuss the text in a Socratic Seminar class setting.

## **What Do Athletes Salaries Say About American Values?**

Posted on March 8, 2011 in [Articles](#)

Remember your first job? Probably at a fast food joint, or maybe working retail somewhere. If you're like me, you thought \$5.65 an hour was a fortune. I mean, working part time could bring in a paycheck upwards of

\$200! Now imagine you're LeBron James. Your first paycheck from your first job clocked in a cool \$12.96 million for three years. That's \$4.32 million a year, \$52,682 a game, or nearly \$1,100 per minute. Suddenly, \$5.65 an hour doesn't sound all that great in comparison to athletes' salaries, does it?



This is one very small example of the ridiculousness surrounding athletes and their paychecks. In a society where jobs are disappearing, people are cutting back left and right, and families are losing their houses, athletes are signing record-breaking contracts worth tens of millions of dollars, while their fans just look on adoringly.

In 2009, the average salary for basketball player was \$5.84 million; an average baseball player made \$3.26 million; a hockey player, \$2.4 million; and, football players made an average of \$770,000, a relatively small chunk of change, but still over the top.

## **Athletes Salaries in Perspective**

Let's put this in perspective. The average brain surgeon makes \$450,000 a year. A social worker makes around \$46,000. A teacher, even in Connecticut, the highest paying state, only makes an average of \$63,000. So, a person who saves lives, a person who protects and serves struggling families, and a person who shapes and molds young minds make a mere fraction of what sports stars make.

Look at Kobe Bryant. In 2010, Kobe pulled in \$23 million from playing basketball alone. Like other athletes salaries, that doesn't even include the tens of millions he earned through endorsement deals.



Matthew Stafford, the rookie quarterback of the Detroit Lions, inked a \$26.6 million contract for his first season. Despite putting up a record 5 touchdown passes in one game in November, he was unable to stay healthy and didn't even play out the season. In other words, he got most of his paycheck by sitting on the bench.



And how about Alex Rodriguez? A-Rod's latest contract brought him \$33 million dollars last season. **THIRTY THREE MILLION DOLLARS.** To swing a bat and field ground balls six months out of the year. For argument's sake, pretend he played every regular season game (162) and every possible playoff game (17) for a total of 189. (He didn't, just so you know.) If that were true, it would mean he earned \$184,357 per game, or \$20,484 per inning. With approximately 4 at bats per game, that's \$46,064 every time he stepped up to the plate. Is it just me, or does your wallet feel painfully light right now?

Not only do these athletes get paid tens of millions of dollars to run, jump, and catch, they're treated as demigods in the process. Their morals and decisions seem to be above reproach or judgment. How many athletes, regardless of their sport, have been involved in scandals . . . , only to be forgiven by both the judicial system and the public at large? . . .

## How to Change Athletes Salaries

So many things about the system need to change. But it starts with the fans. Players certainly aren't going to turn down their mega-contracts. Would YOU say no to \$30 million? And teams aren't going to stop paying their stars. Huge contracts equal happy stars, happy stars equal exciting games, and exciting games equal lots of fans. More fans leads to more revenue.

Fans need to take a stand. We need to stop paying \$80 to sit in the top row of some gargantuan sport arena to squint at ant-sized players. We need to stop paying \$75 for a jersey that will be out of date in two years anyway because the team will update the logo. And most of all, we need to stop forgiving sports stars so readily just because they can sink a tough off-balance shot.

Would you forgive your husband if he dragged your name through the media in a highly publicized inappropriate scandal and then admitted to the world that he had [done so]? Would you want your daughter watching a man on TV who had [an inappropriate relationship] with a 17 year old girl? And, so on . . .

Of course not, but because these men have above average athletic skills, it's easier and more entertaining to forgive them and enjoy watching them play. Now, I know that this doesn't apply to all athletes, or even most. Many of them are upstanding citizens who don't get involved in criminal activity. But regardless of their behavior, they're still making tens or even hundreds of times more money than most of us. Us, the ones who are supplying their paychecks.



Wake up, people. Take a stand. Not only against athletes' astronomical salaries, but against their behavior. Maybe earning \$60,000 in a year instead of \$15 million will help them realize that while having extreme athletic skill is pretty awesome, it's not nearly as cool as making a real difference in someone's life

From: <http://www.prosebeforehos.com/sports-editor/03/08/what-do-athletes-salaries-say-about-american-values/>

accessed on November 20, 2013