

The Baseball Card



I have to keep my hand from shaking, thought Mark as he picked up the baseball card. Suddenly, the air in the swap meet seemed too warm. He stared at the early twentieth-century image and then slowly turned the card over.

"That's one of my favorites," said the elderly man. "My dad got that in a pack of gum when he was a boy."

"How...how much?" asked Mark. He cleared his voice.

The man thought for a minute. "Fifty dollars," he said. Then he bit his lip. Maybe it was too much to ask, especially from a boy.

Mark felt his head swimming. The baseball card was in perfect condition. It showed the open, friendly face of Honus Wagner, a player from the Pittsburgh Pirates. Wagner had played with the Pirates until the outbreak of World War I. Nearly 20 years later, he had been one of the first players inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. Mark looked at the old man and knew he did not realize what a treasure he had.

The man watched Mark as he studied the card. I sure could use that \$50, the man thought. He would settle for \$40, but he wanted to see what the boy would say first.

Mark looked at the man's face and the frayed collar of his shirt. *I've never seen him at one of these swap meets before,* thought Mark. *I bet he is here because he needs some money, not because he knows a lot about baseball cards.* Mark closed his eyes for a moment. *What do I do?* he asked himself. *If I made this trade, it would be the biggest thing that ever happened to me. But I would have to remember that I robbed this man for the rest of my life.*

The man looked at the boy hopefully, and then his heart sank as Mark shook his head and handed back the card. *How will I pay for that prescription?* he wondered.

Mark hesitated for a minute, and then he leaned forward. "Look," he said. "I know a lot about baseball cards. You should not be selling this card here. You need to take it to an antiques dealer." The man's eyes widened as Mark added, "That card is worth a lot more than \$50. The last time a Honus Wagner card was sold, it made more than half a million dollars." Then the boy turned on his heel and walked away, before the old man could see the tears in Mark's eyes. Walking away was the hardest thing Mark had ever done in his life.



The Baseball Card (cont.)

Directions: Circle or write the correct answer.

1. From what point of view is *The Baseball Card* written?

- A. first person
- B. second person
- C. third person

2. Is this point of view omniscient or limited? Give an example to support your answer.

3. What is the first clue in the story that the baseball card is valuable?

- A. Mark recognizes that the card is of Honus Wagner.
- B. Mark tells himself that he has to keep his hand from shaking.
- C. Mark cannot look the old man in the eyes.

4. What is the old man's worry about Mark?

- A. Mark might not have enough money to pay for the card.
- B. Mark looks dishonest.
- C. Mark doesn't like the baseball card.

5. Describe Mark as a character. What are his main characteristics?

6. Describe the old man as a character. What are his main characteristics?

7. How would this story be different if you were unable to read the thoughts of the characters? What information would be missing?
