

English II Honors  
Dr. Van Gunten  
**Study Q's for Malamud's**  
*The Natural*

01. How are **imagery**, **metaphor**, **symbol**, and **simile** used in the "Pre-Game" section of the novel to foreshadow Roy's downfall?

02. How is the novel's title both accurate and ironic at the same time?

03. Why does Roy's appetite for food increase as the season goes on? What sources of dissatisfaction (or "hunger") cause Roy to turn increasingly to food to find solace?

04. The water **motif** in *The Natural* seems to have two purposes: at times, it seems to show the abundant promise of Roy's gift, but at other times, it seems to show how Roy's life has fallen into decay. Can you find examples of both? How is water an appropriate metaphor for such a duality?

05. What attitude does Roy seem to have toward women, based on his feelings toward Harriet, Memo, and Iris? What is the source of these feelings?

06. During his first train ride to Chicago, Roy's train passes through a large forest. This forest returns several times in Roy's real and imaginative experiences. What might the forest **symbolize**? Why can't Roy seem to escape this forest?

07. Why are the names of characters Max Mercy and Judge Goodwill Banner examples of irony?

08. Olson and Cal Baker have two different opinions about Roy Hobbs--a difference that continues in discussions of modern athletes. Is Roy a team player, or is he only seeking to pursue his own accomplishments? Can you think of examples of modern-day athletes who have similar questions asked about them?

09. Often, a white rose is a symbol of purity. Based on its use in the descriptions of Harriet Bird and Iris Lemon, what might the white rose **symbolize** in *The Natural*?
10. In what ways is Bump Bailey's attitude similar to that of many modern athletes?
11. Critics of modern athletes often claim that in older times, athletes played more for the love of the game and certainly not for financial gain. Do you think *The Natural* supports or contradicts this argument?
12. In what ways does the description of the showdown between Roy and The Whammer indicate a change in the fates of both men? What is ironic about this showdown?
13. How does *The Natural* deal with the concept of superstition? What difference is there between free will and superstitious attention to "jinxes"?
14. In what ways are the temptations and possibilities of baseball similar to the temptations and possibilities of the capitalist system?
15. In what way(s) is learning from one's past shown to be a major theme in the novel? How does *The Natural* portray the blessings and curses of amazing talent and ability? Are there differences between the expectations placed on ordinary people and those placed on people with special gifts?

# *The Natural Vocabulary*

## **Pre-Game**

**amiable**--friendly; likely to join in a conversation  
**chamois**--soft leather from the hide of an animal, such as a deer  
**contorted**--twisted  
**droll**--silly or comical  
**ducks**--casual trousers  
**gabardine**--worsted cotton, wool, or rayon  
**greenhorn**--slur directed at someone new to a situation or one who is uninitiated  
**hayseed**--slur directed at someone from a rural area (a country person)  
**intone**--call or say aloud  
**rednose**--slur directed at someone with a drinking problem  
**splurge**--a sudden explosion  
**stereopticon**--a projector that produces two different views  
**suppressed**--held back or held within  
**valise**--small suitcase  
**wrested**--pulled, using a twisting motion

## **Batter Up! (Section 1)**

**brogue**--accent  
**conk**--slang term for head  
**shenanigan**--trick  
**third sacker**--third baseman

## **Batter Up! (Section 2)**

**bulbous**--swollen  
**fungos**--fly balls hit in practice  
**makeshift**--designed to fill a temporary need  
**perdition**--eternal judgment or hell  
**prodigious**--huge  
**putrid**--foul or disgusting  
**rhubarb**--slang for an argument  
**ructions**--arguments or fights  
**shyster**--swindler  
**southpaw**--a left hander  
**whammies**--curses of bad luck

## **Batter Up! (Section 3)**

**cathartics**--medicine  
**indigent**--poor; unable to support oneself financially  
**limelight**--public notice or fame  
**per diem**--per day  
**roundhouse**--a garage for locomotives  
**scurvy**--up to no good  
**shade**--spirit or ghost  
**strident**--loud or urgent

## **Batter Up! (Section 4)**

**forlorn**--let down, abandoned

**Batter Up! (Section 5)**

**goose-egged**--permitted no runs to score

**panhandling**--begging

**vile**--poisonous, almost evilly so

**Batter Up! (Section 6)**

**sentimentality**--tendency to succumb to the power of emotion

**two-pronged**--like a fork with two tines

**Batter Up! (Section 7)**

**baleful**--accusing

**bludgeon**--a blunt, brutal instrument; to hit with same

**brittle**--fragile

**dredge**--dig up, especially from a great depth or from under water

**hordes**--uncontrolled crowds

**ravenously**--without inhibition, fiercely hungrily

**quelch**--to stop

**stupendous**--marvelous or wonderful

**Batter Up! (Section 8)**

**accrue**--gathered to

**barnstorming**--traveling and playing in exhibition games

**compunctions**--moral impulses

**parricide**--murder of one's father

**philological**--relating to speech

**shimmying**--dancing

**solicitous**--considerate

**Batter Up! (Section 9)**

**carrion**--dead meat

**offal**--waste from a slaughter

**peppering**--cheering on

**ptomaine**--food poisoning

**welsher**--someone who backs out of a bet or a deal