Objective: Students will be able to:

- Recognize challenges and obstacles faced by foreign-born players as they adjust to life in another country.
- Identify important aspects of the culture of their own community.
- Create guide books to help someone new become acclimated to the community.

Time Required: 1-2 class periods

Advance Preparation:
- Select a variety of local newspapers or magazines that have information about your city or town (or request such sources from a school librarian).
- Schedule a session for your class in your school library or media center.

Materials Needed:
- Copies of the "The Changeup: Playing Ball 6,000 Miles from Home" for each student (included)
- Internet access for student research
- A variety of newspapers and magazines (see above)
- Note paper and pencils for research
- Card stock and art supplies - such as markers, colored pencils, glue sticks, etc.
  OR
- Computer software with design capabilities

Vocabulary:
Acculturation - To adapt to another culture without giving up one's native culture completely
Acclimate - To adapt to a new climate, environment, or situation
Assimilation - To make similar; to absorb into the culture of a population or group
Diversity - The condition of having or being composed of differing elements, especially the inclusion of different types of people in a group or organization
Applicable Common Core State Standards:

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.1, SL.7.1, SL.8.1** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade-appropriate topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.4, W.7.4, W.8.4** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.6** Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of three pages in a single sitting.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.7** Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.8** Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources; assess the credibility of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and providing basic bibliographic information for sources.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.9, W.7.9, W.8.9** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.6** Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and link to and cite sources as well as to interact and collaborate with others, including linking to and citing sources.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.7** Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.8** Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.6** Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.
Applicable Common Core State Standards (Continued):
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.7 Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.6.1, RI.7.1, RI.8.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.6.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

Additional Relevant National Learning Standards:
(Based on Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning)

Civics. Standard 11. Level III [Grade: 6-8]. Understands the role of diversity in American life and the importance of shared values, political beliefs, and civic beliefs in an increasingly diverse American society

Geography. Standard 6. Level III [Grade: 6-8]. Understands that culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions

Geography. Standard 10. Level III [Grade: 6-8]. Understands the nature and complexity of Earth’s cultural mosaics
1. Begin the lesson by asking students if they have ever moved to a new place. If no students have moved, ask them to imagine how a move to a new place might affect their lives.

2. Engage students in a discussion about how they would make themselves feel comfortable in a new cultural environment. Discuss the following:
   - What would you have to learn?
   - What would you have to give up?
   - To whom would you relate?

3. Introduce definitions for assimilation and acculturation.

4. Discuss what assimilation and acculturation mean for different immigrant groups. Ask students to brainstorm some examples of each.

5. Engage students in a discussion about how cultural changes and adaptations would make them feel in a new place, and how they might balance their cultural origins with their new experiences.

6. What are some examples of ways that people might acclimate to life in a new place?

7. Discuss that throughout the history of baseball, the game has attracted immigrants and members of diverse ethnic groups. Today, roughly 30% of major league baseball players come from other countries.

8. Sometimes, unfamiliar language, food, and social customs add to the challenges foreign-born players face as they adjust to life in the United States. Some teams have professional counselors to help their ballplayers adjust to life here. The same is often true for American players who play outside the U.S. For example, players who play in Japan must also acclimate to a new language, food, and social customs.
9. Explain that today you will read an article by major league baseball player Brian Sweeney, who spent part of his professional career in Japan. There, he learned to live and work in a culture very different from the one he was familiar with. (You can learn more about Brian Sweeney’s baseball career here: http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/s/sweenbr01.shtml)

10. Hand out copies of the "The Changeup: Playing Ball 6,000 Miles from Home" (included). Give students 5 to 10 minutes to read the article.

11. Discuss the article. Where can students see assimilation and acculturation in this true story? What were some ways that Brian Sweeney acclimated to life in Japan?
1. Ask students to pretend that there are several baseball players who will be moving to your city or town from outside the United States.

2. Explain that students will be working in groups to create guides to help these players become acclimated to your city or town. The guides, titled *Player Handbook for <Insert Town or City Name>*, must contain the following 4 sections:
   - Local History: How has your city or town changed?
   - Events Calendar: What holidays or festivals are highlights of each year?
   - Food: Where are the best places to eat?
   - Entertainment: What are the most fun things to do?

3. Divide the class into four small groups. Have each group start by spending about 5 to 10 minutes brainstorming answers to the following questions:
   - What is special about where you live?
   - What do you like to do in your community?

4. Go to the school library or media center during your scheduled time slot. Have students research their city or town using newspapers or magazines, as well as websites for local events or organizations (i.e. the Chamber of Commerce). Students may search for images to use in their guides as well.

5. Tell students that each group must produce a list of sources referenced for this project, properly cited.

6. *Optional* Have students interview family members and include their recommendations in the guide books.

**Conclusion:**

To complete this lesson and check for understanding, have students use the images and information they have collected to complete their guides. They may create their guides using cardstock and art supplies, or they may design their guides using computer software. Once groups have completed their guides, have them present their work to the rest of the class.
Growing up in New York, I was a Yankee fan and I always pictured myself as the next great shortstop for the Yankees. Little did I know, I would become a pitcher and during my baseball journey I would play for five different major league organizations and five other professional teams on three different continents.

One part of my journey took me to Japan. It is a fascinating country with great food, incredible scenery and people who go bananas for baseball! I played for the Nippon Ham Fighters on the northern island of Hokkaido in the city of Sapporo. The climate is similar to New York with its four seasons but that is where the similarities stop. There were many challenges that I had to deal with on a daily basis like ordering food, speaking, reading and communicating, adjusting to different social customs and most importantly, doing my job on the baseball diamond. With each challenge I had a decision to make: I could accept the challenge and use it as a learning experience that will help make my stay in Japan more fulfilling, or I could let each challenge overcome me, which in turn would make my stay in Japan a short and unfulfilling waste of time.

The Japanese language is fascinating but it is nothing like English. Even translated sentences can sound backwards to us. For example, if I said, “I want to go to the store”. Translated to Japanese it would sound something like this: “To the store I want to go”. I was very fortunate to have an interpreter with me at the field so understanding baseball-related things was a little bit easier, but once I went home I was basically on my own. I learned how to speak Japanese at a slow pace but with each year I was in Japan, communicating became a little easier. I was there for 3 seasons so I like to tell people I can speak like a three year old!
Reading and writing in Japan was tough. Some cities use our alphabet on signs and other things but most of the time you have to read Japanese characters. And they have three kinds of them! Katakana, which consists of 48 characters, Hiragana, that has 48 characters, and Kanji. Kanji is probably the one you are most used to seeing because each character looks like a picture. I was told there are over 30,000 Kanji!

Reading and communicating was quite important when I went into restaurants. Ordering food was always a treat because sometimes I would have no idea what I ordered. If the menu was in Japanese with no English or pictures, I would just point at something and hope it was what I liked. Most of the food was incredibly delicious but some things like raw horse, raw chicken, intestines and fermented soybeans were foods I tried but usually passed on.

Every prefecture in Japan is known for some type of delicacy. In my home city of Sapporo, the seafood is the freshest in the world and their ramen (not the 10 cent stuff you buy in the supermarkets) was delicious. I was truly amazed at how great the chefs would cook Italian and Mexican food too!

Each country in the world has their own way of doing things and Japan is no exception. It took some time to adjust to certain customs but I had to remember I was a visitor in their world. Here are a few examples of different customs in Japan.

- They like to bow to each other instead of shaking hands.
- In our country we like to hug and kiss our friends and family sometimes. You rarely ever see this in Japan. One of my favorite things to do was hug my teammates just to see how uncomfortable they would get!
- In the eastern part of Japan, you would stand on the right side of the escalator and let people pass on the left. In the western part of Japan it was the opposite. I always messed that one up.
- When you are standing in line for something, the person behind you would be right on top of you invading your personal space.
• You must cram as many people as you can into an elevator or subway train. Even if there is no space, somebody will try to squeeze in. I was not a huge fan of that.
• If you are out to dinner, the younger person at the table always pours the drink for the older person next to him.
• You say good morning in Japanese the first time you see someone during the day no matter what time it is.
• If you would like the waiter or waitress’s attention in a restaurant, you would yell, “Excuse me” in Japanese fairly loudly and they will come running over. Try doing that in the United States and see what happens!
• They drive on the left side of the street. I was happy I did not have a car there!
• In the bottom of the 5th inning of every game there is a 10-minute break. I did not know that in my first outing and found myself on the field with cheerleaders doing the YMCA.
• If there is a controversial call on the field, the umpire will get on a microphone and explain to the crowd what had happened. I found this very amusing but smart because I believe it raises awareness and helps people understand the game.

These are just a few examples but there are many others. They all become second nature over time.

Like I said before, I was lucky enough to have an interpreter when I was with my team. He really helped bridge the gap when there were baseball and cultural questions that needed to be answered. My most important jobs were to help my teammates create a winning atmosphere and give my team a chance to win every time I stepped on the pitchers mound. With the support of many fans, we made it to the playoffs all three years I was there, and made it to the Japan Series twice. It really shows that baseball is truly an international language. You can bring in people from all over the world and put them on a baseball diamond and they know exactly what to do.
I have found that I have a greater respect for the many foreign players that play baseball in our great country. They have to adjust to our customs and language the same way I had to in Japan and most of them do it without an interpreter! My experience in Japan has helped me grow as a baseball player but more importantly as a person. I am grateful for my time there and hope all of you will get a chance to visit the Far East and go to a baseball game.