

Sneaker Nation

How athletic shoes became a cultural obsession

About the Story

Lexile: 930L

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective: to read an article and an interview about sneakers and draw from both to create a pitch

Key Skills: inference, key ideas and details, text features, interpreting text, synthesis, central ideas

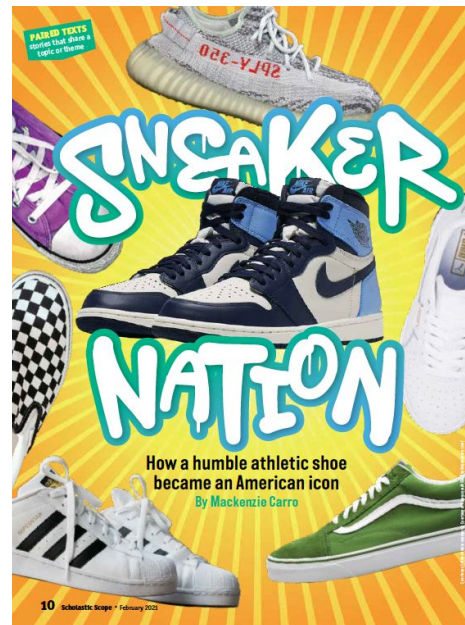
Essential Questions:

- What drives innovation?
- How does something acquire value?
- What does fashion reflect about culture?

Standards:

The article and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.6, R.7, R.9, W.2, SL.1, SL.2, L.4, L.5, L.6

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of support materials at scope.scholastic.com.

Audio:

- Read-aloud
- Vocabulary Slideshow
- Text-to-speech

Recommended pairings from the Scope archives:

- Debate/Scavenger Hunt: "Should Eddie Buy These Sneakers?"
- Short Read: "How This Inspired That"

Skill Building Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- Preparing to Write: Create a Sneaker
- **Core Skills Workout:** Central Ideas and Details*
- Choice Board
- Quiz*
- Contest Entry Form

*Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1. Preparing to Read

10 minutes

Do-Now: Solve a Riddle (5 minutes)

- Post this riddle in your classroom or virtual hangout: *My designs have been inspired by various items, from a lawnmower to a black panther. If you hold me up to a blacklight, a secret message might appear. I'm typically released on Saturdays so that kids don't skip school to buy me. A signed pair of me that was worn by my namesake recently sold at auction for \$560,000. What am I?* Then reveal the answer: Air Jordans.

Preview Vocabulary (5 minutes)

- Project the **Vocabulary Slideshow** on your whiteboard, or if you're remote, share it on your screen. Review the definitions and complete the activity as a class or in groups. Optionally, share the slideshow link directly to your LMS and have students preview the words and complete the activity independently. Highlighted words: *coveted, endorse, hordes, industry, lucrative, market*

2. Reading and Discussing

45 minutes

"Sneaker Nation"

- Have a volunteer read the **As You Read** box on page 11 of the magazine or at the top of the digital story page.
- Read the story once through as a class. Optionally, have students listen to the author read-aloud of the story while they follow along. The **audio read-aloud** is located in the Resources tab in Teacher View and at the bottom of the story page in Student View.
- Divide students into groups to read the story again and respond to the following close-reading questions. *Tip: If you're remote, you can have each group respond in a shared doc*

or discuss the questions in their own chat room; you can also use the questions as an asynchronous assignment.

Close-Reading Questions

(10 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **Why did Nike want Michael Jordan to endorse its sneaker line?** (inference) *Michael Jordan was a superstar athlete—everyone knew his name and couldn’t stop talking about his skills, even after just one year of his playing in the NBA. Nike must have believed that if Jordan wore Nike shoes, all the people who admired and looked up to Jordan would want to wear Nike shoes too.*
2. **Mackenzie Carro describes sneakers as a “cultural obsession.” What does she mean? How does she support this idea?** (key ideas and details) *Carro means that people around the world have come to share an intense passion for sneakers as an important part of their wardrobes and lives. She explains that what was once just a practical item for our feet has become an artform and a hobby, with enthusiasts camping out for sneaker releases and collecting sneakers because of their emotional and monetary value. She also gives examples of how this passion is reflected in various aspects of our culture, such as sports, fashion, and music.*
3. **How does the information in the timeline “Sneaker Stories” relate to the rest of the article?** (text features) *The timeline provides additional details to support a key idea of the article: Over time, sneakers transformed from humble and practical footwear to coveted fashion obsessions.*
4. **The title of Carro’s article is “Sneaker Nation.” What does this title mean? What factors contributed to the U.S. becoming a “sneaker nation”?** (interpreting text, key ideas and details) *Carro’s title refers to the power, influence, and status that sneakers have in the United States—in other words, Americans’ love of sneakers. Factors that contributed to Americans’ great love of sneakers include improvements in manufacturing, the development of new kinds of rubber, American workers’ growing time for recreation, new designs, and the sneaker industry’s marketing approach—namely, collaborations with high-profile artists and athletes, especially Michael Jordan.*

“Does He Have the Best Job Ever?”

- Break students into groups again to read and discuss the interview. Ask students to discuss anything in the interview they found interesting or surprising. Invite groups to share their reactions with the class.

- As a class, discuss the following close-reading and critical-thinking questions, some of which draw on both the article and the interview.

Close-Reading Question

(3 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

- 1. Why does Jonathan Guisbert love sneakers? How does this relate to Carro's article?**

(synthesis, central ideas) *As a kid, Guisbert was inspired by talented basketball players—those in his community and NBA players on TV like Kobe Bryant. Guisbert thought that maybe if he had sneakers like the ones worn by the players he admired, he might be able to play like them. A central idea of Carro's article is that basketball played a major role in the rise of the sneaker. Another thing Guisbert loves about sneakers is that in his work, he gets to use his imagination and explore completely new and different design ideas every season. Carro's article explains that sneaker brands are constantly dreaming up new, wide-ranging styles to feed our sneaker obsession.*

Critical-Thinking Questions

(5 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

- 1. Looking at older basketball players, Guisbert wondered, "If I had shoes like them, would I play better?" Do you think shoes can improve someone's performance? Answers will vary.** *Students might say that well-designed athletic shoes enhance performance. Students might also say that a shoe can boost your confidence, thereby improving your performance. Other students might say that the shoes you wear can't actually make you a better player and that too much emphasis—and money—is placed on footwear.*
- 2. What does what we wear reflect about us as individuals? About our culture? Answers will vary.** *Students may say that what we wear allows us to express our personalities and communicate ideas—and may project to others where we're from, how much money we have, and what our values and interests are.*

3. Skill Building and Writing

20 minutes

- Have students complete **Preparing to Write: Create a Sneaker**. This activity will help them organize their ideas in preparation for the prompt on page 13 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story article.
- Alternatively, have students choose a culminating task from the **Choice Board**, which includes a range of ideas and difficulty levels.

Recommended pairings from the Scope archives:

[Debate/Scavenger Hunt: "Should Eddie Buy These Sneakers?"](#) (March 2018)

[Short Read: "How This Inspired That"](#) (February 2019)