

AoW 6 Directions:

1. Annotate (write your thoughts, questions, etc.) the text (10 points)
2. Identify (circle, underline, highlight, etc.) key words in 1-4. (10 points each question)
3. Circle the BEST answers for 1-4. (10 points each question)
4. Write a well-written paragraph summary of this text. Your summary must be 5-7 sentences. (10 points)

Once a top pro football draft pick, athlete turns artist

By Baltimore Sun, adapted by Newsela staff
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Artist Aaron Maybin paints at his home studio in Baltimore, Maryland. He was a first-round NFL draft pick but stopped playing pro football after four years in the league. Photo: Barbara Haddock Taylor/Baltimore Sun/TNS

Aaron Maybin played football for the National Football League (NFL). Then, at 27, he retired from the game and reinvented himself as an artist.

It was the summer of 2013, and Maybin had just been let go by the Cincinnati Bengals, his third NFL team. He was ready to go to Indianapolis, Indiana, to try out for a new team.

The player from Baltimore, Maryland, had once been the NFL's 11th overall draft pick. The NFL draft is an yearly event where NFL teams pick new players. It is an opportunity for teams to choose some of the best college players in the world. Now, he was unemployed. His NFL career had lasted four years.

At the last minute, Maybin changed his mind about football and chose art instead. "I couldn't even bring myself to pack my bags," he says.

He Paints People Who Inspired Him

Maybin says that the things he cared about had changed. He was more interested in being a father and provider for his family. "The community work I'm doing, the artwork and the messages I wanted to get out," became more important to him, he says.

The athlete-turned-artist tells his story from a leather couch in his studio. His paintings are on the walls around him. They show images of people who helped and inspired him, the struggles of race, and love, hope and disappointment.

Splashes of dry paint spatter the floor, and an incense stick burns near a set of barbells, releasing a pleasant smell into the air. A movie plays in the background with no sound. On the floor are jumbo boxes of diapers for his new baby, Aria, one of Maybin's three children.

There are news articles that called Maybin one of the biggest failures in recent draft history. One news article said, "It's quite possible that Maybin is the worst player in the NFL." Still, he looks back on his short NFL career without regret.

Football Eased Money Worries

Since he earned \$14 million playing football, now Maybin can spend time with his kids without worrying about money, and do his favorite kind of work. "As far as I'm concerned, I'm really living the true American dream," he says. The artist wants people to know that the NFL dream is not exactly what it seems. He especially wants to get the message to young African-Americans.

The artist grew up in Baltimore, Maryland, where his father, Mike, worked for the fire department. From an early age, Maybin expressed himself through art more easily than through words. He says that he inherited his artistic talent from his mother, Constance, who died in childbirth when Maybin was 6 years old. "I was at a pivotal moment. A lot of people would use losing your mother like that as an excuse," Maybin says.

His father remarried, and Maybin's stepmother, Violette Grant, understood the way he used art to process his emotions. Maybin had struggled to read as a young child, but she patiently sat with him as they worked their way through a "Lion King" book. Something clicked, and he became a willing reader.

"Goofy Kid" Grows Up Strong

Maybin also sang in the choir, played the saxophone and acted in school plays, activities that he says did not exactly throw him in with the cool kids. "Art is not the typical passion for an

African-American kid growing up in Baltimore, especially not for a boy. I was an awkward, outcast, goofy kid," he says.

Maybin says that as his athletic ability became known, his art suddenly became popular with the same people who used to pick on him. The unexpected change in people's opinions bothered him, because it seemed so wrong.

Maybin believes that young people are categorized too early and it limits their futures, a problem he ponders when he thinks about his 2-year-old son, Arian. Maybin says: "He's kind of told what he's going to be by everybody else. He's big, so it's 'Oh, he's going to play sports. You're going to be a football player and go to the NFL.' People tell my son that all the time, and I clap back at them like nah, he's going to do whatever he wants to do."

Maybin helps young people when he is not painting. He started a group called Project Mayhem, named for "Mayhem," his nickname during his football-playing days. Maybin began the group as a way to provide opportunities for students at Baltimore schools where art classes have been cut. He wants art to be a kind of therapy for kids to help them deal with hard times.

From the time he was young, Maybin said he would be an NFL player and a professional artist, and he has been true to his word.

1. Which sentence from the section "Goofy Kid Grows Up Strong" BEST supports the main idea of the article?
 - A. Maybin also sang in the choir, played the saxophone and acted in school plays, activities that he says did not exactly throw him in with the cool kids.
 - B. Maybin says that as his athletic ability became known, his art suddenly became popular with the same people who used to pick on him.
 - C. Maybin began the group as a way to provide opportunities for students at Baltimore schools where art classes have been cut.
 - D. From the time he was young, Maybin said he would be an NFL player and a professional artist, and he has been true to his word.
2. Which detail would be MOST important to include in a summary of the article?
 - A. Maybin's father worked for the fire department.
 - B. Maybin's stepmother encouraged him to read and become involved in the arts.
 - C. Maybin has a studio with dried paint on the floor and paintings of people who inspire him on the walls.
 - D. Maybin learned to play the saxophone, acted in school plays and sang in the choir as a child.

