

BEYOND BASEBALL with JACKIE ROBINSON

A Lesson Plan that can be adapted – 2nd to 8th graders

**Goal: To see Jackie as a whole man –
dedicated to civil rights and the community**

BACKGROUND

Discuss the meaning of the term: “color barrier” and Jim Crow. Explain how African American players were excluded from American baseball from the start of 1900s to the 1940s. Mention the Negro Leagues that sprang up as an alternative.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Read *Jackie’s Bat*, perhaps in parts to make it dramatic.

Discuss the qualities he exhibited in this story.

- Talk about the consequences of Jackie’s bravery, self-control, and athletic performance for American sports and American history.
- Talk about his wife and her similar attributes and accomplishments.

Read the “Afterword” and provide students with the list of Jackie’s achievements beyond baseball (see attached).

FOLLOW-UP CLASS ACTIVITY – PLAY FACT BASEBALL

Day 1—Split the class into two teams and have them choose their team name. Each team has to research facts on Jackie Robinson and Civil Rights and write up questions.

Day 2—Then each team has a turn to be in the “infield” and in the “outfield.” The infield team sends a player up to “bat.” The “outfield” team pitches a question to the person at the bat. If the person answers the question correctly, he or she progresses to first base. If not, it’s an out. As in baseball, each person at bat who gets a “hit” pushes the base runner forward. Four correct answers given at bat will propel the first runner to score a point for the team. Three “outs” sends the outfield in and the infield out. The class can play as many innings as time permits.

STUDENT FOLLOW-UP HOMEWORK OPTIONS

- Write a letter to Jackie Robinson, telling him the kinds of things you admire about him, and what questions you would like to ask him.
- (For older students) Write a cover letter to Jackie describing yourself and what you think of Jackie, and a business or community organization you would like to have funded by the Freedom State Bank – then attach a business proposal (without a budget) outlining the benefits this business or organization will provide for the community and why it should be funded.
- Write an ad describing the kind of person you are looking for in a business position, if you were describing Jackie Robinson after his baseball years or his wife Rachel.

- Write an imagined radio/tv interview with him, where you would introduce his achievements in life, especially the non-sports ones to the audience, and would ask him questions, writing his imagined answers. A similar thing could be done for Rachel Robinson, and how her perspectives might be the same and different from Jackie's.
- Create a kind of crest of symbols that represent Jackie Robinson's qualities and values.
- Write a memorial/obituary to Jackie Robinson the whole man.
- Make a collage of images that represent his character and achievements outside of baseball
- Imagine that you are one of the people who received a small business loan from his Freedom bank when no other bank would give you a loan or were a counter worker or janitor at Chock Full o Nuts and you got better wages and employee treatment because of Jackie, or you were someone who marched with him at a rally for civil rights. Describe your experience meeting Jackie in person one day and what you would say to him.
- Jackie's wife, Rachel, was as strong a person as he was, and as admirable. Pretend you are her and write of her experiences.

Biographical references:

- Bennett, William J. *The Children's Book of Heroes*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997.
- Denberg, Bruce. *Stealing Home: The Story of Jackie Robinson*. New York: Scholastic Paperbacks, 1990.
- Lorbiecki, Marybeth. *Jackie's Bat*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006.
- *Rampersad, Arnold. *Jackie Robinson: A Biography*.
- Robinson, Jackie. *I Never Had It Made: An Autobiography of Jackie Robinson*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2003.
- *Robinson, Rachel with Daniels, Lee. *Jackie Robinson: An Intimate Portrait*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996.
- Robinson, Sharon. *Jackie's Nine: Jackie Robinson's Values to Live By*. New York: Scholastic, 2002.
- Robinson, Sharon. *Promises to Keep: How Jackie Robinson Changed America*. New York, Scholastic, 2004.
- Robinson, Sharon. *Stealing Home: An Intimate Family Portrait by the Daughter of Jackie Robinson*. New York: HarperCollins, 1997

- Represents adult resources

For local history, to bring the lesson home more, see the adult book:

Hoffbeck, Steven R., ed. *Swinging for the Fences: Black Baseball in Minnesota*, St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 2005

Lesson plan @ Marybeth Lorbiecki and Back to Books bookstore in Hudson, Wisconsin

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JACKIE ROBINSON

Achievements Beyond Baseball

- Opened men's clothing store in Harlem (1952-58)
- First African American to hold executive post with major radio or tv station—he was director of Community Activities for WNBC and WNBT in New York, influencing programming, public relations, and merchandising
- Ran radio show for children on WMCA, where he interviewed famous people
- Was executive of Chock Full O'Nuts stores, vice president of personnel 1957, worked for improvement of workers' lives: extensive training, promotions, better pay for service employees
- Wrote a syndicated newspaper column
- Wrote a children's book on baseball and his autobiography
- Served as active board member of the NAACP, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
- Served as chairman of the million dollar drive for the NAACP's civil rights Freedom Fund Drive
- Received honorary degrees from University of Maryland, Franklin Pierce College, Sacred Heart University, Pace University and Howard University
- Was given the NAACP's Spingarn Medal and the PUSH (People United to Serve Humanity) Humanitarian Award. After death, was awarded National Medal of Freedom from President Regan and National Medal of Honor from President George W. Bush
- Became one of six national directors of Governor Nelson Rockefeller's run for president
- Picketed and marched in Civil Rights protests; participated in war on drugs events
- Organized "Afternoon of Jazz" events with his wife at their home to raise money for bail for imprisoned Civil Rights workers
- Helped found and served as chairman of the board of the Freedom National Bank in Harlem and to spur economic activity among African Americans; created branches in Brooklyn, Bedford-Stuyvesant, and Flatbush.
- Established the Jackie Robinson Construction Company to build housing for families with low to moderate incomes. After his death, this became the Jackie Robinson Development Corporation.
- Worked for peace among all people, and against racism, anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance and disrespect

Personal Qualities:

- Believed in using his talents and time in service to others
- Goal oriented
- Didn't drink, smoke, or do drugs
- Strong and humble, and man of deep faith in God
- Careful with money
- Disciplined in training
- Honest, sincere, dedicated
- Believed in democracy and equal opportunities

- Brave and determined
- Stubborn
- Warm, loving, and protective
- Athletic, coordinated, pigeon-toed
- Articulate in person and on paper
- Good sense of humor

JACKIE'S NINE VALUES TO LIVE BY:

- COURAGE
- DETERMINATION
- TEAMWORK
- PERSISTENCE
- INTEGRITY
- CITIZENSHIP
- JUSTICE
- COMMITMENT
- EXCELLENCE

“Jackie Robinson, Howard University has invited you here today in order to express to you her esteem and affection for you as a sportsman and a man, It was your remarkable ability as a sportsman and your remarkable self control as a man which made possible the effective beginning of a major revolution in American baseball --a revolution which has popularized and strengthened beyond measure our deepest American faith: our faith in the open door of equal opportunity for every human being, whatever his race or color, religion, or national origin.” —Citation from Howard University

JACKIE ROBINSON

No. 42 on the Brooklyn Dodgers

- BORN:** Jan. 31, 1919 in Cairo, Georgia, grandson of slaves
- DIED:** Oct. 24, 1972 of heart attack in his home at Stamford, Connecticut
- MAJOR LEAGUE DEBUT:** April 15, 1947 with Brooklyn Dodgers
- POSITION:** Started for the Brooklyn Dodgers at 1st Base but later returned to 2nd, his primary spot. He threw right and batted right, and stole like crazy (29 bases alone his first season!).
- HITTING:** Won the National League batting title in 1949 with .342 average; lifetime average .311
- SPORTS AWARDS:** Rookie of the Year, 1947; All Star, six times (1949-54); National League MVP 1949; Inducted into Hall of Fame 1962
- U.S. NATIONAL AWARDS:** Presidential Medal of Freedom awarded posthumously to him by President Ronald Regan 1984, see <http://www.medaloffreedom.com/JackieRobinson.htm>
Congressional Gold Medal awarded posthumously to him by President George W. Bush 2006