

Society After World War II

BIOGRAPHY READING

Jackie Robinson

Jackie Robinson is best known for breaking the color barrier in professional baseball when he became the first African American to play in the major leagues. However, his contribution to the cause of racial equality goes much further. His entire life, both on the baseball field and off, was a series of actions that demonstrated real courage and dignity resulting in a legacy that remains apparent today.

Jack Roosevelt Robinson was born in 1919 near Cairo, Georgia. At the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), Jackie Robinson's outstanding performance in four sports—baseball, basketball, football, and track and field—made him the university's first “four-letter man.” During his third year of college, however, Robinson had to leave to help his mother support their family. In 1942, soon after leaving college, Robinson was drafted by the U.S. Army. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1943.

The unit that Robinson joined was still segregated. Robinson protested the discriminatory treatment of African Americans in his unit. Military police arrested Robinson in Fort Hood, Texas, when he refused to sit in the back of a bus, but he was acquitted in the ensuing court-martial. Robinson was honorably discharged in 1945, as a first lieutenant.

Robinson began his professional sports career as a football player in Hawaii. He soon signed with the Kansas City Monarchs, one of the Negro Leagues, as a professional baseball player. In 1945 Branch Rickey, president and manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, signed Robinson to play for a Dodger farm team, the Montreal Royals. Robinson led the batting average for the International League during the season he played for the Royals, and Rickey

signed him to the Dodgers in April 1947, making him the first African American to play major league baseball in the 1900s.

Some of his own teammates had tried to block Robinson's entry onto the team, but Rickey proceeded because Robinson had promised him that he would not react to the inevitable verbal abuse that would come from the stands. Robinson kept his promise, winning the respect of other baseball players and the general public. His dedication and courage were obvious when he walked out on the field for the first time to play for the Brooklyn Dodgers with the sounds of catcalls, racial slurs, and insults ringing in his ears. During his first two years in the major leagues, Robinson never fought back against the abuse, even though rival players spat on him, pitched balls at his head, and tried to use the spikes on their shoes to injure him.

Robinson survived the onslaught of attacks, insults, and death threats. While he was at it, he helped the Dodgers win the National League pennant in 1947 and was named Rookie of the Year. Robinson played 10 seasons for the Dodgers. During his tenure, the Dodgers won the pennant six times and the World Series once. His career batting average was .311, he stole home 19 times, and on six occasions he scored more than 100 runs. In 1962 Robinson became the first African American ever inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

Robinson was more than just a baseball player, however. He was a talented, proud, and competitive man who was deeply committed to civil rights. Through his work in this area, Robinson also began to change the attitudes of hundreds of people in the non-sporting world. In 1949 he began to speak out publicly against racial discrimination. He urged baseball leagues to integrate more

quickly and to use their influence to push for integration in the South.

Upon his retirement from baseball, Robinson continued his fight against racial discrimination in all areas of life. He established the Jackie Robinson Development Corporation to build housing for low- and moderate-income families. He also helped raise funds for the NAACP. New York's governor Nelson Rockefeller appointed Robinson his special

assistant for civil rights, and Robinson served in that position from 1964 to 1968. He also marched with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and others, using his position as a nationally known celebrity to further the cause of civil rights.

Jackie Robinson died of a heart attack October 24, 1972. Famed broadcaster Howard Cosell once said of Robinson, "You'll find Robinson [in history books] because of the bloodless social revolution he created."

■ UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU READ After you have finished reading the selection, answer the following questions in the space provided.

1. What was Jackie Robinson's notable achievement at UCLA?

2. For which achievement in professional sports is Robinson best known? Why do you think playing this sport professionally was important to Robinson?

3. How did Robinson win the respect of team members and the public during his years as a professional baseball player?

4. What were some of the other activities to promote racial equality in which Robinson was involved?

5. Why do you think Howard Cosell said Robinson created a "bloodless social revolution"?

ACTIVITY

Imagine that you are a sportswriter on April 15, 1947, and you are present the first time Robinson walks onto the field as a Brooklyn Dodger. Write a short news piece describing the situation and Robinson's reactions to it.

took him out of the limelight. He also believed rock 'n' roll was simply bad music.

5. Answers will vary; students may mention that Sinatra was a forceful, domineering father who exerted his will on his son. They may cite his breaking his son's record over his knee. They also may cite the fact that Sinatra was proud of his daughter, Nancy, and gave her career a boost by having her appear on his special.
6. Although he did not like rock 'n' roll and had no interest in Elvis, Sinatra was willing to pay him \$100,000 for a 10-minute appearance. He did so because he knew that Elvis had a huge number of fans who would watch the program.

ACTIVITY

Students' posters will vary; however, each should express some of the youthful exuberance of the rock 'n' roll movement. Encourage students to fill the poster with eye-catching graphics and slogans.

BIOGRAPHY

1. He was the first individual to be a "four-letter man" at UCLA. He excelled in four sports: football, baseball, track and field, and basketball.
2. He was the first African American to play professional major league baseball. Students' thoughts on why this was important will vary.
3. Despite intense provocation, Robinson maintained his dignity and played to the best of his ability. He exhibited courage that few others would have been able to match and carried his commitment with him when he left the baseball field.
4. creation of the Jackie Robinson Development Corporation, fundraising for the NAACP, civil rights marches
5. because Robinson fostered social change through his participation in sports and civil rights activities

ACTIVITY

Students' articles should demonstrate an understanding of the immense personal

sacrifice Robinson made in breaking the color barrier in professional baseball. He was a proud, educated individual who had to withstand incredible insults in order to further opportunities for himself and other African Americans. Articles should mention Robinson's courage as a human being as well as his prowess as an athlete.

CHAPTER 30

LITERATURE

1. Santinio keeps the picture because it marks his one moment of celebrity, serving dessert to an internationally known politician.
2. They were concerned with getting every detail of Khrushchev's five-course meal right. Because Khrushchev was a visitor to the United States, and because the Soviets and the Americans were involved in a Cold War, there were plenty of opportunities for things to go wrong. No one wanted to take the blame should the dinner not go as planned.
3. In Cuba, Santinio would not have been allowed to stand so close to a foreign dignitary, someone of great power. In Cuba, even serving Khrushchev's dessert would have been an honor befitting someone of higher social standing than Santinio.
4. Santinio puts the cherry on top of Khrushchev's ice cream sundae.
5. The excerpt describes him as fat and cheery, with "great big ears and a bright red nose." The overall impression is more like Santa Claus than a prominent leader of a communist nation.
6. He most likely said it out of kinship with Cuba, another communist nation.

ACTIVITY

Student essays will vary. They should include key emotional details and descriptions of the person they would like to meet. Their reasons for wanting to meet their chosen celebrity will vary, but they should cite at least a few cogent reasons for their choice.