

# Baseball Leads the Way

## Overview

Income tax day, April 15, 1947, Jackie Robinson took his place in baseball and American history by becoming the first African American to play major league baseball after the era of Jim Crow went into effect. In breaking that color barrier, Jackie picked up momentum that he carried with him in post-baseball years as a civil rights role player.

## Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Write a news article or Web page summary.
- Interpret quotations about Jackie Robinson's influence in America.
- Analyze factors that influenced Jackie Robinson's character.

## Essential Question

- How do sports shape society?

## Guiding Questions

- How can sports figures use their fame to improve our nation?
- What influences in Robinson's life led him to confront discrimination?
- How did Robinson influence the Civil Rights Movement?

## Arizona State Standards

### Social Studies—Grade 8

#### Strand 1: American History

*Concept 9: Postwar United States*

- PO 6. Describe the importance of the following civil rights issues and events:
  - a. Jim Crow Laws
  - b. nonviolent protests
  - c. desegregation

#### Strand 3: Civics/Government

*Concept 4: Rights, Responsibilities, and Roles of Citizenship*

- PO 5. Describe the impact that the following had on rights for individuals and groups:
  - a. Jim Crow Laws—literacy test, poll taxes, Grandfather Clause
  - b. Civil Rights Movement (i.e., Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks)
  - c. desegregation—military, schools, transportation, sports

### Reading—Grade 8

#### Strand 1: Reading Process

*Concept 6: Comprehension Strategies*

- PO 5. Connect information and events in text to experience and to related text and sources.

#### Strand 3: Comprehending Informational Text

*Concept 1: Expository Text*

- PO 2. Summarize the main idea (stated or implied) and critical details of expository text, maintaining chronological, sequential, or logical order.

### Writing—Grade 8

#### Strand 1: Writing Process

*Concept 1: Prewriting*

- PO 1. Generate ideas through a variety of activities (e.g., prior knowledge, discussion with others, printed material or other sources).
- PO 4. Establish a central idea appropriate to the type of writing.
- PO 5. Use organizational strategies (e.g., outlines, charts, tables, graphs, Venn Diagrams, webs, story map, plot pyramid) to plan writing.

#### Strand 2: Writing Components

*Concept 1: Ideas and Content*

- PO 1. Use clear, focused ideas and details to support the topic.
- PO 2. Provide content and selected details that are

well-suited to audience and purpose.

- PO 3. Develop a sufficient explanation or exploration of the topic.
- PO 4. Include ideas and details that show original perspective

### Strand 3: Writing Applications

*Concept 2: Expository*

- PO 1. Record information (e.g., observations, notes, lists, charts, map labels and legends) related to the topic.
- PO 2. Write a summary based on the information gathered that include(s):
  - a. a topic sentence
  - b. supporting details
  - c. relevant information

### Technology Education—Grade 8

#### Standard 5: Technology Research Tools

**5T-E2. Evaluate the accuracy, relevance, appropriateness, comprehensiveness and bias of electronic information sources**

- PO 4. Identify the components of a URL to determine the source of the information

### Health Education/Physical Activity—Grade 8

**Standard 2** Students comprehend basic physical activity principles and concepts that enable them to make decisions, solve problems and to become self-directed lifelong learners who are informed physical activity consumers.

**ESSENTIALS (Grades 6–8) 2PA-E1. Describe the relationship between a healthy lifestyle and feeling good**

- PO 1. Explain that success in physical activities leads to recognition
- PO 2. Explain the value of exercise in relieving stress

**Standard 6:** Students demonstrate understanding and respect for differences among people in physical activity settings.

**6PA-E1. Explain the role of sports, games and dance in modern culture**

### (Grades 6–8)

- PO 1. Explain the role of games, sports and dance in getting to know and understand others of like and different backgrounds
- PO 2. Demonstrate an understanding of the ways sport and dance influence American culture

### Materials

- Computer and digital projector and/or student computers with Internet access
- Cooperative Group Worksheet—Jackie Robinson
- Online readings about Jackie Robinson (See References for URL's)
- Stick Figure Charts: 8½ x 11 copies for rough draft and copies enlarged to poster size (either by hand sketching or via a Poster Maker) for final draft

### Background

Jackie Robinson became the first African American to play in the baseball major leagues. This happened soon after World War II. Robinson served in that war, and also challenged racial discrimination while in the Army. Branch Rickey, the Dodgers president who signed Jackie Robinson after an in-depth search for the best candidate to break the color barrier, called this action “the noble experiment.” The experiment became standard practice and soon after, baseball welcomed many African American players.

### Opening

- Write the phrase “Old Jim Crow has got to \_\_\_\_\_” and ask students to fill in the blank with a rhyming word. Most certainly “go” will be one of the responses.
- Inform class, “Today we’re going to learn how Jim



- Crow was thrown out of sports in the United States.”
- Students access the “Rise and Fall of Jim Crow” online and read the short overview piece entitled: “Unwritten rules . . . Unwritten legacy” [http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/tools\\_unwritten.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/tools_unwritten.html) (accessed September 4, 2009).
  - Continue with another Jim Crow article at the same site entitled: “Jackie Robinson Integrates Major League Baseball” [http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/stories\\_events\\_jackie.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/stories_events_jackie.html) (accessed September 4, 2009).
  - Ask students to pair up and “think-pair-share” the following question: “Based upon what we’ve just read, WHO is Jim Crow?”

### Activities—Day 1

- Divide the class into cooperative groups (Group #A, #B, #C, etc.), four students per group (Team Member #1, #2, #3, #4).
- Distribute copies of the “Cooperative Group Worksheet.” Go over the worksheet directions with students, assigning each group a specific Jackie Robinson Web-based article to read, or in the case of audio files, to listen to.
- Each cooperative group will work as a team to discuss, then write down, answers to the worksheet questions. Forewarn students that EACH team member should be prepared to verbally present information about the assigned Web site, as well as the group’s answers to the worksheet questions.
- After students have completed their worksheets, randomly select a number 1–4. The team member with that number from Group #A will present Web site information or share worksheet answers. Repeat this “Numbered Heads” procedure so that all or most students from each cooperative group verbally present information.

### Activities—Day 2

- Read the quotes by and about Jackie Robinson listed on the back of the “Cooperative Group Worksheet.”

- Direct students to the collection of Jackie Robinson quotes on The Baseball Almanac Web site at: <http://www.baseball-almanac.com/quotes/quojckr.shtml> (accessed September 4, 2009). Each student selects one quote and writes a short explanation regarding “how” the quote applies to Jackie Robinson.
- Distribute the 8½ x 11 copies of the Stick Figure Chart, a graphic organizer for assessing an individual’s contributions to history. Students may work with a partner, if desired. Explain that the stick figure can be used to briefly explain the main ideas, actions, strengths, and weaknesses of an individual as follows:
    1. Brain = ideas & philosophies
    2. Eyes = vision, goals, or hopes
    3. Mouth = words (could be quotes by or about this individual)
    4. Shoulder = strengths and positive attributes
    5. Left Hand = actions
    6. Right Hand = contributions to history or why the individual is remembered
    7. Heart = feelings (what the person loved or valued)
    8. Achilles Heel = weaknesses
    9. Road-Life Line = important events in the individual’s life in chronological order
    10. Roots = background (who or what influenced the individual, where this individual is from)
  - Allow students the rest of the period to work on their rough draft Stick Figure Chart of Jackie Robinson.

### Activities—Day 3

- Direct students to transfer their 8½ x 11 rough draft Stick Figure Charts to their final draft poster sized charts. Encourage students to illustrate, color, and embellish their final draft posters.
- When completed, final draft posters could be displayed around the classroom for a Gallery Walk.
- Posters will be assessed according to the Arizona Six Traits Writing Rubric for “Ideas and Content.” A score of 4 or higher will denote mastery level. (See “References”)

## Closing

- State the following: “During this section of our unit, you worked in teams. We “covered a lot more ground” that way. When Jackie Robinson joined the major leagues, he changed the baseball landscape, perceptions of African Americans began to change.
- Write “Sports in America is \$ports” on the whiteboard or displayed on a poster. Ask students to brainstorm how money is spent/earned via sports events. (*Stadium upkeep, refreshments, security, transportation, etc.*) When Jackie “opened the door” for minorities to play in sports, other doors began opening.

## Extensions

- Create an acrostic poem about Jackie Robinson.
- Investigate how other sports are presently being populated by athletes of diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- Visit Mr. Nussbaum.com’s site at <http://www.mrnussbaum.com/sportsbios.htm> (accessed September 4, 2009) which features a special section on Sports Biographies and Activities for grades 4 and up. Jackie Robinson student activities, including reading comprehension, math, and a crossword.

## References

- “AIMS Six Trait Analytic Writing Rubric – Official Scoring Guide, Ideas and Content.” *Arizona Department of Education*. <http://www.azed.gov/standards/6traits/IdeasContent.pdf> (accessed September 4, 2009).
- “Baseball, the Color Line, and Jackie Robinson.” *Library of Congress, American Memory*. <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/> (accessed September 8, 2009).
- Cooperative Learning: “Numbered Heads Together.” *Kennesaw State University, The Educational Technology Training Center, Georgia Department of Education*, <http://edtech.kennesaw.edu/intech/cooperativelearning.htm> (accessed September 3, 2009).
- “Jackie Robinson Breaks Baseball’s Color Barrier, 1945.” *EyeWitness to History*. 2005. <http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com> (accessed September 3, 2009).
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- Simon, Scott. “Jackie Robinson and the Integration of Baseball.” (a link to audio interviews). *NPR*. 2002. <http://www.npr.org/programs/morning/features/2002/oct/robinson/> (accessed September 3, 2009).
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- Volusia County Schools, Florida, Graphic Organizers Galore! Paraphrase Chart. <http://myvolusiaschools.org> (accessed September 3, 2009).