

JACKIE ROBINSON Reading Comprehension

Jackie Robinson was born on January 31, 1919, in Cairo, Georgia. Just a year after his birth, his mother moved him and his four siblings to Pasadena, California, after Jackie's father deserted them. Jackie had a passion for sports at an early age and played football, baseball, basketball, and track for UCLA (the University of California at Los Angeles). He would become the first person in the history of UCLA to earn varsity letters in four different sports. He excelled in all four sports and led the Pacific Coast Conference (now the Pac-12) in scoring as a basketball player. Furthermore, he was a national champion long jumper.

In 1941, however, Jackie left college because of financial difficulties and joined the U.S. Army. Robinson became first lieutenant of the 761st Tank Battalion, a group of black soldiers. By federal law, black soldiers were not allowed to fight alongside white soldiers. Robinson, however, never accompanied the battalion in combat. He was court-martialed for refusing an order from a bus driver to move to the back of the bus. He was eventually acquitted of the charges.

In 1944, Jackie joined the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro Baseball League. He was soon noticed by a baseball scout for the Brooklyn Dodgers. Although there was no law against signing black baseball players in the Major Leagues, there was an "unwritten rule" against it. Attempts to sign players from the Negro Leagues had been rebuffed in the past. Nevertheless, the Dodgers owner, Branch Rickey, had begun a secret mission to sign the top players from the Negro Leagues. In 1946, Rickey signed Jackie Robinson to a Major League contract and designated him for assignment on the Dodgers minor league team in Montreal, Quebec (Canada). While Robinson was welcomed in Canada, the situation in the United States was less than cordial. On April 15, 1947, amidst incredible fanfare and controversy, Jackie Robinson was called up to the Major Leagues. He became the first black player in 57 years to play in a Major League baseball game.

During Robinson's first year he endured racism, taunting, and intolerance. Some of his teammates even threatened to stop playing rather than have Jackie as a teammate. Nevertheless, Branch Rickey and several of the Dodgers players supported Jackie. Despite the obstacles that stood in his way, Jackie proved his integrity and strength as a person. He went on to have a stellar baseball career. He led the Major Leagues in stolen bases in 1947 and became the Major League Baseball Rookie of the Year. In 1949, he was named the National League's Most Valuable Player (MVP). That year, he had 203 hits and belted 16 home runs. He also knocked in 124 runs and stole 37 bases. He batted .342. After five more stellar years, Jackie Robinson led the Brooklyn Dodgers to their only World Series victory in 1955. They won the championship in seven games over the rival New York Yankees (although when the Brooklyn Dodgers moved to Los Angeles they won several more titles). In 1956, Jackie Robinson chose to end his baseball career after eight seasons at the age of 37. He ended his career with a .311 lifetime average. Furthermore, Jackie Robinson stole home 19 times. To this day, no other player since the World War II era has stolen home as many times. He was an all-star 6 times in his short career.

In 1962, Jackie Robinson was inducted into the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame. He died on October 24, 1972. On the 50th anniversary of his Major League debut (April 15, 1947), Major League Baseball retired his number, 42. It will never be worn again by any major league player on any team. April 15 was also named Jackie Robinson Day. To this day, Jackie Robinson remains a hero. He was a pioneer in breaking the "Color Barrier" in professional sports and paved the way for thousands of African-American athletes in dozens of sports. On October 29, 2003, United States Congress honored him (after his death) with the Congressional Gold Medal—the highest honor Congress can give.

1.) How many children were in the Robinson family?

- a.) 4
- b.) 2
- c.) 3
- d.) 5

2.) Which of the following did Jackie Robinson NOT play at UCLA?

- a.) basketball
- b.) football
- c.) baseball
- d.) soccer

3.) Which of the following best describes the phrase "unwritten rule"?

- a.) An official rule
- b.) A rule that can be broken
- c.) A rule that is not written down
- d.) A rule that is understood but not official

4.) In which of the following places did Jackie Robinson play for the Dodgers minor league team?

- a.) Montreal
- b.) UCLA
- c.) Kansas City
- d.) Brooklyn

5.) What does the word "endured" mean as it written in this passage:

During Robinson's first year he endured racism, taunting, and intolerance.

- a.) understood
- b.) claimed
- c.) experienced
- d.) tried

6.) Which of the following happened first?

- a.) Jackie became the first black baseball player to play in the Major Leagues in 57 years.
- b.) Jackie played for the Dodgers' minor league team in Montreal.
- c.) April 16, 1947
- d.) Jackie played for the Kansas City Monarchs.

7.) Which of the following did Jackie Robinson likely not experience very much during his first year in the Major Leagues?

- a.) taunting
- b.) racism
- c.) intolerance
- d.) respect

8.) Which of the following is false?

- a.) Jackie Robinson stole home more than any other player since the World War II era.
- b.) Jackie Robinson was born in California.
- c.) Jackie Robinson stole home 19 times.
- d.) Jackie Robinson retired at age 37.

9.) Select all that are true.

- a.) Jackie Robinson's number was retired by all Major League baseball teams in 1947.
- b.) Jackie Robinson played in 6 all-star games.
- c.) Jackie led the New York Yankees to the World Series in 1955.
- d.) Jackie Robinson became a Hall-of-Fame member before his baseball career was over.

10.) Which of the following BEST explains why Jackie Robinson was so important

- a.) He had a Hall-of-Fame baseball career.
- b.) He paved the way for black athletes to compete in professional sports.
- c.) He showed dignity and strength as a person.
- d.) His number was retired by Major League baseball.