

Lesson Plans: 04 SS LPQ4 099 Jackie Robinson and the Negro League

Title: 04 SS LPQ4 099 Jackie Robinson and the Negro League

Grade Level : Grade 4

Subject : Reading - Elementary, Social Studies - Elementary

Standards/Assessed

Benchmarks: Florida STATE FL Social Studies Standard (2008)

Grade 4

Florida Sunshine State Standards

American History

6: Industrialization and Emergence of Modern Florida

SS.4.A.6.2 Summarize contributions immigrant groups made to Florida.

SS.4.A.6.3 Describe the contributions of significant individuals to Florida.

8: Contemporary Florida into the 21st Century

SS.4.A.8.1 Identify Florida's role in the Civil Rights Movement.

**Description/Abstract
of Lesson:**

Students will: Explain the role that Jackie Robinson had in integrating American society. Identify the qualities of character that made Jackie Robinson an ideal candidate to be the first African American Major League baseball player. Analyze primary source documents to interpret history.

**Essential Question-
Scope & Sequence:**

Explain Florida's role in the Civil Rights Movement.

**Technology
Connections and
Teacher Materials:**

Discovery Education Streaming video on [Jackie Robinson](#) (6:33) Branch Rickey and Jackie Robinson: Interview Essay. (attached below) Jackie Robinson quotes from <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/jackie-robinson/quotes.html> A Picture Book of Jackie Robinson, by David Adler. Biography of Jackie Robinson (attached below) Jackie Robinson information from the [Major League Baseball Hall of Fame](#) *Leagues Apart: The Men and Times of the Negro Baseball Leagues* by Lawrence Ritter [Information about Jackie Robinson and the Civil Rights Movement from the Baseball Hall of Fame](#)

**Technology
Connections and
Student Materials:**

chart or butcher paper crayons or markers images of baseball players symbols of baseball and stadiums

Duration : 4 Days

Vocabulary:

Barnstorming – Traveling on a bus from town to town, looking for a game where they could find one, done by the Negro Leagues **Civil Rights Movement** – The twentieth century struggle by African Americans to gain the same rights as all other Americans **Hostility** – Extreme anger toward someone or something **Humiliation** – Treating someone with disrespect **Integration** – Allowing people of all races to use something equally **Intimidation** – Using threats to make one fearful or timid **Jim Crow** - name given to buildings, events, activities that were separated by race for African Americans only **Negro Leagues** – An organized group of African American baseball players formed in response to the Major Leagues, which only allowed white players **Prejudice** – A negative feeling about someone or something with no good reason **Segregation** – The act of keeping people of different races apart **Self-control** – To have control over one's impulses, actions, and emotions, especially in the face of adversity

**Steps to Deliver
Initial Instruction:**

- Ask students what they already know about Jackie Robinson, and list these facts on the board. Show students the Discovery Education Streaming video about [Jackie Robinson](#)
- Have students read *A Picture Book of Jackie Robinson*, by David Adler, and /or the teacher may read the *Biography of Jackie Robinson* (attached below).
 - After reading, check the facts on the board for accuracy and add any new facts they have learned. Introduce to students that Jackie Robinson reported to his first spring training at Daytona Beach, Florida in 1946. Even though Daytona beach welcomed Robinson, he and his wife still had to room and eat in only black establishments. In addition, many minor league games in Sanford, Jacksonville, and cities in Georgia were cancelled due to Robinson being in uniform. Today, you can visit Jackie Robinson Stadium in Daytona Beach.
 - Ask students why we would study a baseball player? Are we studying him because he was a Hall of Fame superstar or are we studying Jackie Robinson because of his courage to become a role model to help America end

segregation.

Guided Practice with Feedback:

- Pass out the Branch Rickey and Jackie Robinson: Interview Essay. Have students read the essay individually
 - Discuss Jackie Robinson's interview with Branch Rickey. Ask students why they think he chose Jackie Robinson to be the first African American major leaguer.
 - Brainstorm a list of qualities Branch Rickey was looking for. Next to each quality, identify prior events in Jackie Robinson's life that exhibit these qualities.
 - Divide students into pairs and have them answer the following questions:
 - Why does Branch Rickey think Jackie Robinson needs a girl? Do you agree or disagree?
 - Why do you think Abraham Lincoln's portrait hung in Branch Rickey's office? What does it represent?
 - What does "noble experiment" mean?
 - Why do you think Branch Rickey asks Jackie Robinson not to fight back for three years?
 - What does Jackie Robinson mean when he says, "I've got two cheeks?"
 - Describe the courage it took for both Jackie Robinson and Branch Rickey. Would you have had that courage?
 - Share students' answers with the whole class. Revisit the list of qualities and add to it as needed.
 - Have each pair of students write a script for Branch Rickey's interview of Jackie Robinson. Although the essay provides some of the words they used, the students will have to make up most of the dialogue themselves. Remind them that, although Branch Rickey may have used some foul language, they must keep it clean for the classroom. After the dialogue is written, have each pair practice and perform it for the class.

Independent Practice:

- Review what the students learned yesterday about Jackie Robinson. Review the chart of Jackie Robinson's qualities. Tell students today they are going look at some letters, telegrams, and quotes from Jackie Robinson. These are located at the National Archives. Quickly discuss the National Archives and their purpose.
- Prior to the lesson, copy each of [Jackie Robinson's quotes](#) onto a separate large sheet of paper.
 - Randomly distribute the quotes, then have one student at a time come to the front of the class and read the quote.
 - Discuss each quote and have students hypothesize what Jackie Robinson meant.
 - Try to think of examples in his life that demonstrate these quotes.
 - Hang the quotes in the front of the room.
- Introduce the concept of Primary Source Documents. On the website, <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/jackie-robinson/quotes.html>, there are links for 9 different primary source documents, including:
 - Telegram to the White House
 - Letter to President Eisenhower
 - Draft letter from Vice-President Nixon
 - Letter to President Kennedy
 - Telegram to President Kennedy
 - Photograph
 - Telegram to President Johnson
 - Letter to President Johnson
 - Letter to the White House
- Using a computer projector, show the primary sources one at a time. Discuss what each document is and its historical time frame. For each document, have students identify a quote that best reflects the document.

**Differentiated
Instruction/Small
Groups:**

- Jackie Robinson played in the Negro league for the Kansas City Monarchs before he was signed to play for the Brooklyn Dodgers. The Negro League was a **Jim Crow baseball league**. Since African American baseball players were not allowed to play in the Major Leagues, they had to create their own separate league.. Since the **desegregation** of baseball, Negro League players have been admitted to the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame. Introduce students to the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Using a computer projector, explore the website [Baseball Hall of Fame](#). Click on "the museum" to explore different exhibits. On the board, make a list of artifacts typically found in the museum displays. Note how captions are used to explain the exhibits.
- Discuss the Negro Leagues and compare them to Major League Baseball. Read aloud *Leagues Apart: The Men and Times of the Negro Baseball Leagues* by Lawrence Ritter.
 - Divide students into pairs or small groups. Have each group choose one Negro League player. Using the internet and other books, have them research their player. Information on the Negro Leagues can be found at the above website for the Baseball Hall of Fame. After researching, have each group create a display for the Hall of Fame, using some ideas generated during the prelesson.
 - After planning the display, give each group a bulletin board sized piece of paper and have them create a mock-display, using art supplies such as construction paper, markers, or paint.
 - When all groups are done, have each group share their display, explaining how and why they included each item.
 - Post the displays in the hallway or another common school area.

**ESE/ESOL
Accommodations &
ESE/ESOL
Strategies:**

ESOL Strategies: Use authentic materials Provide a language and literature rich environment Read aloud to students Introduce vocabulary through pictures Use chunks of language in meaningful and appropriate context Allow sufficient wait time Engage students in questioning techniques Ask open-ended questions ESE Strategies: Reduce quantity of work Provide opportunities to orally complete assignments Emphasize content rather than spelling in written communications Use small group/individual instruction Adapt reading levels Use highlighted or altered materials Allow sufficient wait time

**Lesson
Closure/Review:**

Have students write an extended response essay about Jackie Robinson. The essay should include at least one quote and one primary source document and should explain some of the ways in which Jackie Robinson helped shape American History.

Creator : Social Studies Content Team

File Attachments: Jackie Robinson biography and timeline.pdf

Jackie Robinson Interview Essay.pdf

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Jackie Robinson Cultural Concept/Information

Baseball player, civil rights activist. Born Jack Roosevelt Robinson on January 31, 1919, in Cairo, Georgia. Breaking the color barrier, Jackie Robinson became the first African American to play in baseball's major leagues. The youngest of five children, Robinson was raised in relative poverty by a single mother. He attended John Muir High School and Pasadena Junior College, where he was an excellent athlete and played four sports: football, basketball, track, and baseball. He was named the region's Most Valuable Player in baseball in 1938.

Robinson's older brother, Matthew Robinson, inspired Jackie to pursue his talent and love for athletics. Matthew won a silver medal in the 200 meters just behind Jesse Owens at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. Jackie continued his education at the University of California, Los Angeles, where he became the university's first student to win varsity letters in four sports. Despite his athletic success, Robinson was forced to leave UCLA just shy of graduation due to financial hardship in 1941. He moved to Honolulu, where he played football for the semi-professional Honolulu Bears. His season with the Bears was cut short with the onset of the United States' entry into World War II.

During World War II, Robinson served as a second lieutenant in the United States Army from 1942 to 1944. However, he never saw combat due to an altercation during boot camp in Texas. Robinson was arrested and court-martialed after refusing to move to the back of a segregated bus during training. He was later acquitted of the charges and received an honorable discharge. His courage and moral objection to segregation were a precursor to the impact Robinson would have in the major leagues.

After his discharge from the Army in 1944, Robinson played baseball professionally in the Negro Leagues. (At the time, the sport was segregated, and African Americans and whites played in separate leagues.) Robinson, however, was chosen by [Branch Rickey](#), a vice president with the Brooklyn Dodgers, to help integrate major league baseball. He joined the Montreal Royals, a farm team for the Brooklyn Dodgers, in 1945. He moved to Florida in 1946 to begin spring training with the Royals with his first game on March 17, 1946.

Rickey knew there would be difficult times ahead for the young athlete and made Robinson promise to not fight back when confronted with racism, but rather to remain cool and composed. From the beginning of his career with the Dodgers, Robinson's will was tested. Even some of his new teammates objected to having an African American on their team. People in the crowds sometimes jeered at Robinson, and he and his family received threats.

Despite the racial abuse, particularly at away games, Robinson had an outstanding start with the Royals, leading the International League with a .349 batting average and .985 fielding percentage. His excellent year led to a promotion to the Dodgers, with his debut game on April 15, 1947, marking the first time an African-American athlete played in the major leagues.

The harassment did not end, however, most notably by the Philadelphia Phyllis and their manager Ben Chapman. Many players on opposing teams threatened not to play against the Dodgers. Even his own teammates threatened to sit out. But Dodgers manager Leo Durocher

informed them that he would sooner trade them than Robinson, setting the tone for the rest of Robinson's career with the team.

Others defended Jackie Robinson's right to play in the major leagues, including League President Ford Frick, Baseball Commissioner Happy Chandler, Jewish baseball star Hank Greenberg and Dodgers shortstop and team captain Pee Wee Reese. In one incident, while fans harassed Robinson from the stands, Reese walked over and put his arm around his teammate, a gesture that has become legendary in baseball history.

Jackie Robinson succeeded in putting the prejudice and racial strife aside and showed everyone what a talented player he was. In his first year, he hit 12 home runs and helped the Dodgers win the National League pennant. That year, Robinson led the National League in stolen bases and was selected as Rookie of the Year. He continued to wow fans and critics alike with impressive feats, such as an outstanding .342 batting average during the 1949 season. He led in stolen bases that year and earned the National League's Most Valuable Player Award.

Robinson soon became something of a hero, even among former critics, and was the subject for the popular song, "Did You See Jackie Robinson Hit That Ball?" An exceptional base runner, Robinson stole home 19 times in his career setting a league record. He became the highest paid athlete in Dodgers history, and his success in the major leagues opened the door for other African American players, such as [Satchel Paige](#) , [Willie Mays](#) , and [Hank Aaron](#).

Jackie Robinson himself became a vocal champion for African American athletes, civil rights, and other social and political causes. In July 1949, he testified on discrimination before the House Un-American Activities Committee. In 1952, he publicly called out the Yankees as a racist organization for not having broken the color barrier five years after he began playing with the Dodgers.

In his decade-long career with the Dodgers, Robinson and his team won the National League pennant several times. Finally, in 1955, he helped them achieve the ultimate victory: the World Series. After failing before in four other World Series match-ups, the Dodgers beat the New York Yankees. He helped the team win one more National League pennant the following season, and was then traded to the New York Giants. Jackie Robinson retired shortly after the trade, on January 5, 1957, with an impressive career batting average of .311.

After baseball, Robinson became active in business and continued his work as an activist for social change. He worked as an executive for the Chock Full O' Nuts coffee company and restaurant chain and helped establish the Freedom National Bank. He served on the board of the NAACP until 1967 and was the first African American to be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1962. In 1972, the Dodgers retired his uniform number 42.

In his later years, Jackie Robinson continued to lobby for greater integration in sports. He died from heart problems and diabetes complications on October 24, 1972, in Stamford, Connecticut. He was survived by his wife, Rachel Isum, and their three children. After his death, his wife established the Jackie Robinson Foundation dedicated to honoring his life and work. The foundation helps young people in need by providing scholarships and mentoring programs.

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Timeline

- 1919 Jackie Robinson was born on January 31st near Cairo, Georgia.
- 1920 Jackie, his mother, and his four siblings moved to Pasadena, California.
- 1937 Enrolled at Pasadena Junior College.
- 1939 Attended UCLA and played football, baseball, basketball, and track, lettering in each . Jackie left before graduating in order to earn money to help his mother.
- 1942 Served in the United States Army. Was court marshaled because he refused to sit in the back of the bus; found not guilty and honorably discharged.
- 1945 Played professional baseball in the Negro Leagues for the Kansas City Monarchs. Met Branch Rickey; signed a contract with the Dodgers on October 23rd.
- 1946 Played in the minor leagues for the Montreal Royals; Married Rachel Isum.
- 1947 Played professional baseball for the Brooklyn Dodgers. Named Rookie of the Year. Son Jackie, Jr. is born.
- 1949 Named National League Most Valuable Player.
- 1955 Led the Dodgers to a World Series Title, defeating the Yankees four games to three.
- 1956 Awarded the Spingarm Medal from the NAACP.
- 1957 Retired from baseball; began working for Chock Full o' Nuts.
- 1962 Inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame.
- 1964 Helped establish the Freedom National Bank, a bank formed to help African Americans succeed in business.
- 1972 Died on October 24th in Stamford, Connecticut.
- 1973 Wife Rachel Robinson establishes the Jackie Robinson Foundation, providing educational and leadership opportunities for minority students.
- 1997 To celebrate the 50th anniversary of Jackie Robinson's entry into baseball, his uniform number 42 is retired at all Major League Teams.

Branch Rickey and Jackie Robinson: Interview Essay

By Jean West

In August, 1945, while playing for the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro League, Jackie met in Brooklyn with Dodgers owner-manager Branch Rickey. Rickey had scouted a hundred black players with the announced intention of forming another Negro League team, the Brown Dodgers. However, the first question Rickey asked was, "Do you have a girl?" Although he had been engaged, Jackie was surprised by the question and answered, "I'm not sure," before explaining because of his traveling and uncertain employment he wasn't sure if Rachel would still want to marry him.¹ When he told Rickey they were engaged (since 1941), Rickey smiled and responded, "You know you have a girl. When we get through today you may want to call her up because there are times when a man needs a woman by his side."²

Rickey then explained that he wasn't interviewing Jackie for a position on the Brown Dodgers, but to play for the Brooklyn Dodgers organization, starting with the Montreal Royals if he could make the team, and later on, if he made it, with the Brooklyn Dodgers professional baseball team. "I want to win the pennant and we need ball players! Do you think you can do it?" Scout Clyde Sukeforth remembered that Robinson "waited, and waited, and waited before answering.... We were all just looking at him." Then he said, "Yes."³

The simple answer was followed by an intense, emotional three-hour session in which Branch Rickey disclosed he'd had Robinson's background investigated for criminal problems, knew about his college grades and honorable discharge from military service, and even that Jackie regularly attended church and neither drank nor smoked. He knew Robinson and black boxer Joe Louis had challenged the military's rules against allowing black enlisted men to become officers, and Jackie had become a second lieutenant. Rickey also knew Robinson had been court-martialed and exonerated when he protested the seating of black soldiers in the rear of buses on army bases.

Then Rickey, a devout Methodist who wouldn't attend ballgames on Sunday and prohibited his players from using profanity, role-played a succession of foul-mouth bigots of the type he knew would try to provoke Robinson, including a spectator, headwaiter, hotel manager, sportswriter, and a succession of players who would try to spike him with their cleats or bean him with a ball or umpires who would make biased calls. Finally, Jackie demanded, "Mr. Rickey, do you want a ballplayer who's afraid to fight back?" Rickey shot back, "I want a ballplayer with guts enough not to fight back. You will symbolize a crucial cause. One incident, just one incident, can set it back 20 years."⁴

What Branch Rickey did not explain to Robinson was the reason why Lincoln's portrait hung in his office and why he personally viewed Jim Crow as unethical. While coaching for Ohio Wesleyan in 1910, a hotel in South Bend, Indiana a hotel manager had refused to provide a room for Rickey's black baseball player Charley Thomas. Finally, Rickey convinced the man to allow him to share his own room with Thomas. Rickey recalled Thomas rubbing at his hands, ashamed of the color of his skin and vowed, "Charley, the day will come when they won't have to be white."⁵

When Rickey became president of the Dodgers in 1943, he was resolved to proceed with what he called his "noble experiment," his plan to sign a black ballplayer to his major league team. Branch Rickey would not only be defying Jim Crow, he was preparing to defy organized baseball. Years earlier, in 1901, Baltimore Orioles manager John J. McGraw had tried to pass off Charlie Grant, a second baseman from the Negro Leagues who had high cheekbones and straight hair, as Charlie Tokohama, a Native American. White Sox president Charlie Comisky turned McGraw in and McGraw was banned from the white leagues. Kenesaw Mountain Landis, the Commissioner of Baseball, given absolute power by the owners in 1920 to clean up the sport following the "Black Sox" scandal, met in late 1943 with members of the Black Publishers' Association and activist-

entertainer Paul Robeson along with all sixteen team owners and both league presidents. Robeson told them, "Because baseball is a national game, it is up to baseball to see that discrimination does not become an American pattern."⁶ However, the meeting did not end segregated baseball. When Leo Durocher, the Brooklyn Dodgers manager, complained about the "unwritten law," that he would hire "colored players if they were not barred by the owners," Landis replied, "There is no rule, formal or informal, or any understanding -- unwritten, subterranean or sub-anything -- against the hiring of Negro players by the teams of organized baseball. Negroes are not barred from organized baseball -- never have been in the 21 years I have served."⁷

Landis died in November of 1944 and was succeeded as Commissioner of Baseball by Albert B. "Happy" Chandler, former governor of Kentucky. Chandler was supportive of Rickey's plan stating, "'If they can fight and die on Okinawa, Guadalcanal [and] in the South Pacific, they can play ball in America.'" ⁸ Branch Rickey had a recent law, the Quinn-Ives Act, passed by the New York State Legislature to prohibit discrimination in hiring, on his side as well as New York City mayor, Fiorello LaGuardia who had created an "End Jim Crow in Baseball" committee.⁹ Nonetheless, when Branch Rickey petitioned baseball to allow him to integrate the league, the owners voted 15-1 against his request. A few days later, Chandler overrode the vote.

In his autobiography, *I Never Had it Made*, Jackie remembers Rickey concluding the grueling interview by saying, "We can't fight our way through this, Robinson. We've got no army, there's virtually no one on our side. And I'm afraid that many fans will be hostile. We'll be in a tough position. We can win only if I convince the world that I'm doing this because you're a great ballplayer and a fine gentleman. If you're a good enough man, we can make this a start in the right direction. But let me tell you, it's going to take an awful lot of courage." He then offered Jackie an English translation of Giovanni Papini's *Life of Christ* and pointed at a passage quoting Jesus, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: But whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."¹⁰ Rickey then demanded, "Now, can you do it? I know you are naturally combative. But for three years -- three years -- you will have to do it the only way it can be done. Three years -- can you do it?" Putting a fist in Robinson's face, Rickey shouted, "What do you do?"

Jackie Robinson answered softly, "Mr. Rickey, I've got two cheeks. If you want to take this gamble, I'll promise you there will be no incidents."¹¹

Satisfied, Branch Rickey offered him a contract. Jackie Robinson signed the contract for a salary of \$600 per month and a \$3,500 signing bonus. (According to estimates, Jackie earned \$30,000-\$35,000 dollars by 1950.) Rickey's desire to place Robinson with Montreal was based on his belief that Jackie would face less racism in Canada than the United States. Hector Racine, president of the Montreal Royals, certainly was fair-minded. Racine declared, "Negroes fought alongside whites and shared the foxhole dangers, and they should get a fair trial at baseball."¹²

This lesson was written by Jean West, a teacher at RJ Longstreet Elementary in Florida.

¹ Arnold Rampersad. *Jackie Robinson, A Biography*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), p. 126.

² Rachel Robinson. *Jackie Robinson, An Intimate Portrait*. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 1996), p. 37.

³ Rampersad, p. 126.

⁴ Gordon Edes. "Opening a New Wide World: Robinson's Impact Felt Well Beyond the Chalk Line," *The Boston Globe*, 28 March 1997.

⁵ "Jackie Robinson, An American Hero," <http://www.dodgers2001.com/kids/classroom/jackie.htm>, accessed 2 May 2002.

⁶ Kenneth Pringle. "Landis, Robeson, & Robinson," APBnews.com, Article reposted at Sportsjones.com, 24 August 2001, p. 1

⁷ Pringle, p. 2.

⁸ Larry Schwartz, "Jackie changed face of sports," Espn.com, 2002.

⁹ Lamb, p. 178.

¹⁰ Rampersad, p. 126.

¹¹ Dave Kindred. "Jackie Robinson: One man, alone," *The Sporting News*, 1997.

¹² Chris Lamb. "'I Never Want to Take Another Trip Like This One': Jackie Robinson's Journey to Integrate Baseball," *Journal of Sport History* 24, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 182.