

Discover America

Course 15 - Teacher Guide



Jackie Robinson and the Integration of Baseball

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5th Grade

Teacher Guide



Key Themes

- Bravery
- Perseverance
- Breaking Barriers

Core Values

- Liberty
- Community
- Life

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe what life was like for Black Americans during the Reconstruction era
- Explain why Jackie Robinson is remembered in American History and the impact he had on Major League Baseball
- Compare and Contrast what life was like for Jackie Robinson during his childhood, during his career as an athlete, and during his retirement



Jackie Robinson - 5th Grade

Introduction

ASK Students

What characteristics do athletes need to have in order to become well known celebrities? (allow students to respond)

Some adjectives that come to mind probably include hard-working, determined, dedicated, talented, etc. The athlete we are learning about in this lesson was all those things and more. He was both famous for his incredible baseball talent and something else. He grew up during a time of segregation in America. After the Civil War, Jackie Robinson had to overcome a lot in order to play in Major League Baseball. At the time, Blacks were not allowed to play for the Major Leagues—they had their own separate baseball league. Jackie was given the opportunity to start the process of integrating baseball.

Let's learn more to find out what that means.

WATCH

Learn More with Liberty



Scan Me!

Jackie Robinson - 5th Grade

Key Terms

- 01 **Reconstruction** - the time period after the Civil War ended
- 02 **Integrate** - combine or unite together
- 03 **Discrimination** - making a decision for or against someone based on the group or class that person belongs to rather than the individual themselves
- 04 **Segregated** - separated
- 05 **Major League** - top tier baseball group of teams who play against each other
- 06 **Exclusion** - being left out or kept out on purpose
- 07 **Prejudice** - thinking another person is "less than" because of a certain quality or characteristic, such as skin color, religious beliefs, or gender
- 08 **Debut** - first public appearance
- 09 **Rookie** - an athlete who has never played on a professional sports team before
- 10 **Jackie Robinson** - the first African American to play in Major League Baseball in the modern era
- 11 **Inducted** - to be brought in as a member
- 12 **Sportscaster** - a person who provides sports news on TV or the radio
- 13 **Posthumously** - after someone's death

Jackie Robinson - 5th Grade

Lesson Guide

TELL Students

As we discussed in the last lesson, the Union's victory in the Civil War and the passage of the 13th Amendment freed Blacks in America from the bondage of slavery. However, throughout the Reconstruction-era, which was the period after the Civil War had ended, Americans were divided over how to integrate free Blacks into American society. Despite what the Constitution said, tragically, many white Americans, particularly those who supported the Confederacy in the southern United States, still thought that Blacks were second-class citizens – all because of the color of their skin.

Known collectively as the Jim Crow laws, these laws were designed to limit opportunities for Blacks and to keep them separate from white Americans. Beginning in the 1890s, and with the 1896 “separate but equal” ruling in the Plessy v. Ferguson case, these laws came to dominate daily life in the south.

Blacks were forced to ride in separate sections of buses and trains, use different water fountains and restrooms, reside in different neighborhoods, and attend different schools. Public places from pools and libraries, to theaters and restaurants, to hospitals and elderly homes were segregated. Marriage was also segregated as blacks and whites weren't allowed to marry each other or live together in many states in the south. Signs on walls, windows, and doors read “Whites Only” and “Colored” and constantly reminded people of these inhumane laws.

Jackie Robinson - 5th Grade

Lesson Guide

TELL Students

As Blacks in the South faced daily discrimination, life was not easy under the new laws. Even for Blacks who did not live in the southern states, where the laws were most brutal, life still was challenging. Imagine what it would have been like dealing with prejudice from your neighbors and peers, or seeing friends, family, or people like you suffering because of what they look like.

Jackie Robinson, the first African American to play in Major League Baseball in the modern era, was born during this dangerous time on January 31, 1919 in Cairo, Georgia. Shortly after Jackie was born, his father abandoned the family and his mother moved Jackie and his four older siblings to Pasadena, California, where she raised them on her own as a single mother.

Jackie and his family were poor, and as the only black family living on their block, faced prejudice and exclusion because of the color of their skin. Yet despite resistance, Jackie worked hard and became an exceptional athlete, playing on his high school's varsity baseball, basketball, football, and track teams. If you play sports, whether on a team or on the field at recess, you know that being an athlete requires dedication, courage, discipline, selflessness, and physical and mental toughness. Jackie developed all of these qualities throughout his life.

Jackie Robinson - 5th Grade

Lesson Guide

TELL Students

He later went to the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) where he continued to run track and play baseball, basketball, and football. Jackie was so amazingly gifted as an athlete that he became the first Bruin to earn varsity letters in four sports at the university. He even won the NCAA long jump championship in 1940 and was awarded a spot on the All-American football team in 1941.

After leaving college because of financial challenges, Jackie spent two years playing semi-professional football for integrated teams, and then served in the U.S. Army where he was promoted to second lieutenant. As we've learned from our earlier lessons about our American heroes, being a soldier also requires a lot of determination, bravery, strength, and sacrifice, qualities that Jackie exemplified.

During his time in the Army, Jackie continued to experience discrimination, as he was assigned to segregated units in Kansas and then Texas. In 1944, Jackie was honorably discharged from the Army after taking a stand against the Jim Crow laws of the south and refusing to sit in the back of a segregated bus at Fort Hood in Texas.

But for Jackie, this was just the beginning of his fight for equality.

Jackie Robinson - 5th Grade

Lesson Guide

TELL Students

While Jackie was playing baseball for the Kansas City Monarchs in the Negro League in 1945, Brooklyn Dodgers executive Branch Rickey was searching for a Black player with both talent and guts to join Major League Baseball, which at the time, unofficially banned Black players. There had not been a Black player in the major leagues since 1889.

Rickey was looking for a player to integrate the MLB who would “turn the other cheek” when facing taunts, abuse, and threats. While Rickey was interviewing Jackie for the job in August 1945, Robinson reportedly asked, “Are you looking for a Negro who is afraid to fight back?” Rickey is said to have replied that he was looking for someone “with guts enough not to fight back.”

Jackie got the job and played for the Dodgers’ farm team, the Royals, in 1946. He did so well that he was called up to the Dodgers the next season.

On April 15, 1947, Jackie made his National League debut as a first baseman for the Brooklyn Dodgers and broke the color barrier in Major League Baseball. Jackie was on the receiving end of taunts, slurs, death threats, and hate mail, and while traveling with the team, had to navigate segregation laws. But Jackie endured and earned the respect of supporters, friends, and teammates, such as Dodgers shortstop, Pee Wee Reese.

Jackie Robinson - 5th Grade Lesson Guide

TELL Students

And Jackie's talent spoke for itself. In his rookie season, Jackie hit 12 home runs, had a .297 batting average, led the league with 29 steals, and was named the National League Rookie of the Year. In 1949, he became the first Black player to win the National League Most Valuable Player Award, was an All-Star every year from 1949-1954, and led the Brooklyn Dodgers to victory in the 1955 World Series against the New York Yankees.

After winning the World Series, Jackie retired and was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1962. As Roger Craig, Jackie's former Dodger teammate said, "I think a lot of people think he got in the Hall of Fame because he was the first."

However, Jackie's induction was not a recognition of his skin color, but of his talent. As Craig confirmed, "He was a great, great ballplayer. He could've done anything he wanted to."

After Jackie retired, he worked as a sportscaster and the Vice President of Personnel for the Chock full O'Nuts coffee company, established the Jackie Robinson Construction Company to build low-income housing for families, and remained active in advancing equality for Blacks in America. "Jackie Robinson made my success possible," said Civil Rights leader Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

"Without him, I would never have been able to do what I did."

Jackie Robinson - 5th Grade

Lesson Guide

TELL Students

In 1972 at the age of 53, Jackie died from a heart attack and was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Reagan in 1984, and the Congressional Gold Medal in 2005.

To honor the barriers that Jackie broke down, in 1997, his number was retired by all big-league teams. Every April 15, the anniversary of Jackie's first game in the Major Leagues, is now known as Jackie Robinson Day and all players and personnel wear his number 42 on their jerseys

Jackie Robinson's courage changed the course of history and today, his legacy still lives on. Just like Jackie Robinson, with courage, determination, and hard work, you too can make positive change happen in your school, your neighborhood, and even throughout America.

Flash Cards



**JACKIE
ROBINSON**

the first African
American to play
in Major League
Baseball in the
modern era

SEGREGATED

separated

INDUCTED

to be brought in
as a member



DISCRIMINATION

making a decision for or against someone based on the group or class that person belongs to rather than the individual themselves

MAJOR LEAGUE

top tier baseball group of teams who play against each other

DEBUT

first public appearance

PREJUDICE

thinking another person is "less than" because of a certain quality or characteristic, such as skin color, religious beliefs, or gender



ROOKIE

an athlete who has never played on a professional sports team before

EXCLUSION

being left out or kept out on purpose

INTEGRATE

combine or unite together

RECONSTRUCTION

the time period after the Civil War ended



SPORTSCASTER

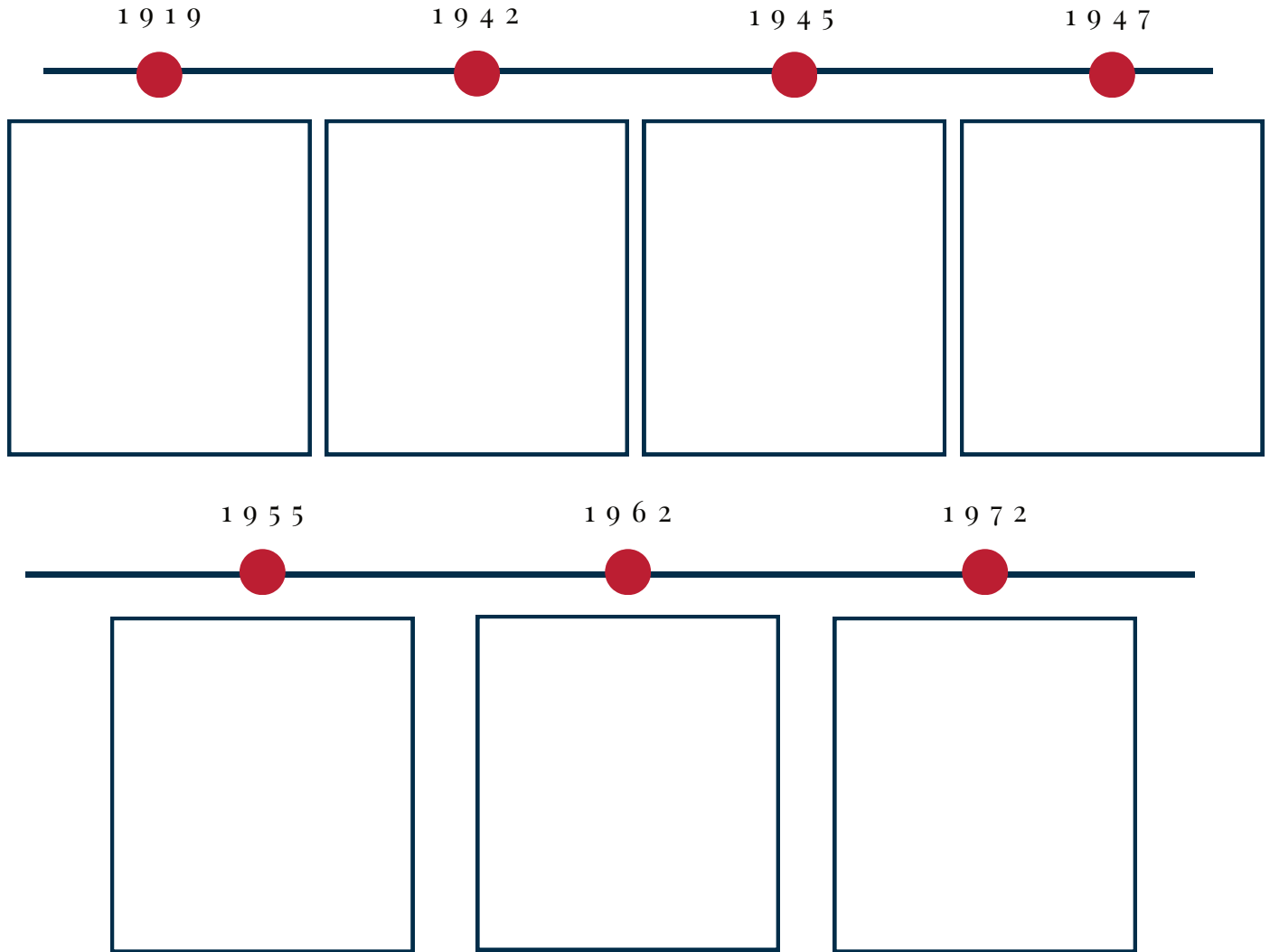
a person who provides sports news on TV or the radio

POSTHUMOUSLY

after someone's death

Jackie Robinson

Timeline

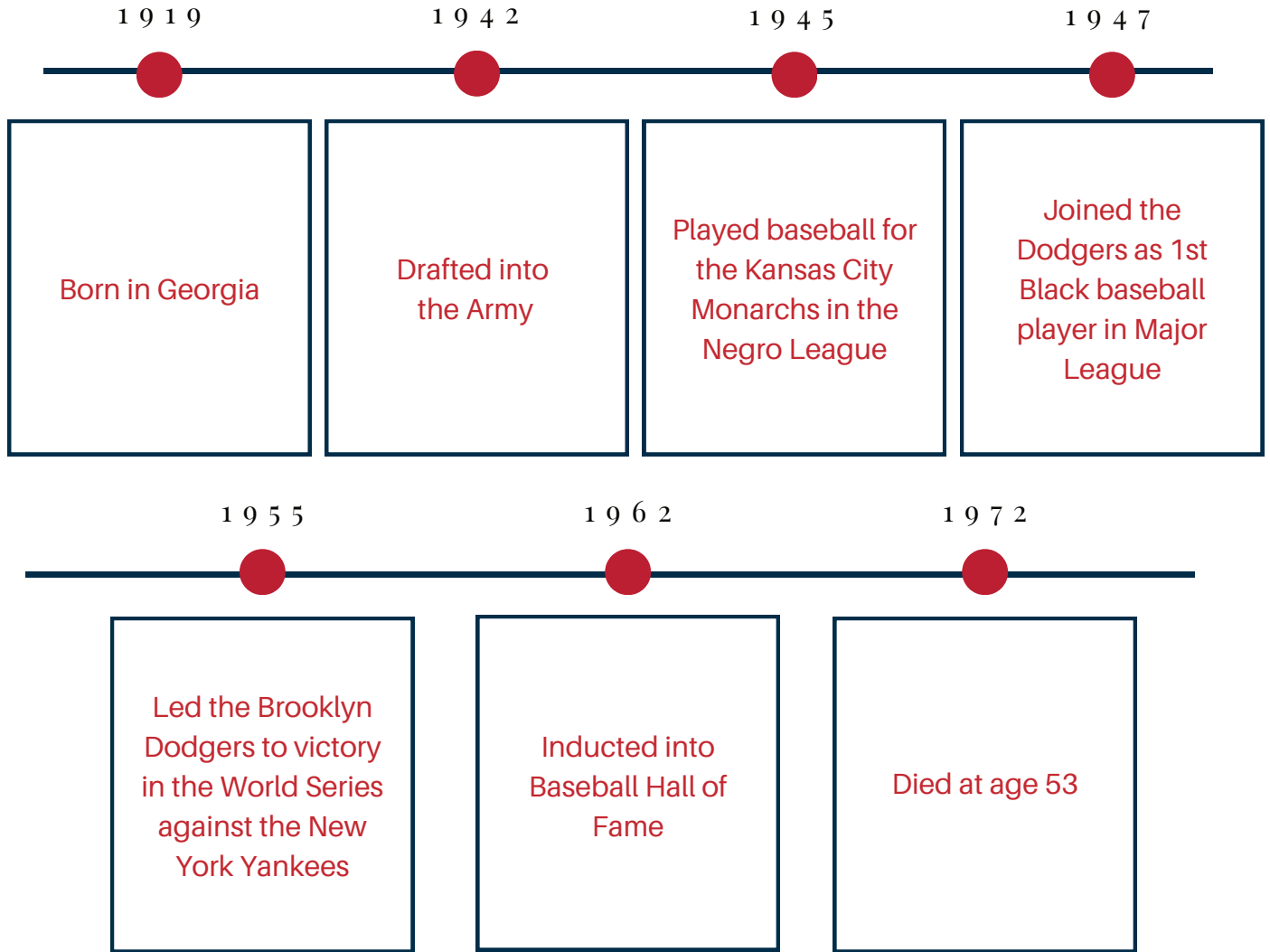


Using the blank timeline, fill in the following events in the order in which they occurred:

- Joined the Dodgers as 1st Black baseball player in Major League
- Died at the age of 53
- Led the Brooklyn Dodgers to victory in the World Series against the New York Yankees
- Drafted into the Army
- Inducted into Baseball Hall of Fame
- Born in Georgia
- Played baseball for the Kansas City Monarchs in the Negro League



Jackie Robinson Timeline



Using the blank timeline, fill in the following events in the order in which they occurred:

- Joined the Dodgers as 1st Black baseball player in Major League
- Died at the age of 53
- Led the Brooklyn Dodgers to victory in the World Series against the New York Yankees
- Drafted into the Army
- Inducted into Baseball Hall of Fame
- Born in Georgia
- Played baseball for the Kansas City Monarchs in the Negro League

Jackie Robinson - 4th Grade Assessment

Use the words from the word bank to complete the facts below.				
discrimination	integrate	Negro League	inducted	1962
Reconstruction	lieutenant	Kansas City Monarchs	April 15, 1947	Major League
Army	Jackie Robinson	Brooklyn Dodgers	January 31, 1919	New York Yankees

- Throughout the _____-era, which was the period after the Civil War had ended, Americans were divided over how to _____ free Blacks into American society.
- Blacks in the South faced daily _____; life was not easy under the new laws specifically designed to limit the opportunities given to Black Americans..
- On _____, Jackie made his National League debut as a first baseman for the _____ and broke the color barrier in Major League Baseball.
- _____ was the first African American to play in _____ Baseball in the modern era.
- Jackie played baseball for the _____ in the _____ in 1945.
- He was born on _____ in Cairo, Georgia and passed away at 53 from a heart attack..
- Jackie led the Brooklyn Dodgers to victory in the 1955 World Series against the _____.
- After winning the World Series, Jackie retired and was _____ into the Baseball Hall of Fame in _____.
- After leaving college because of financial challenges, Jackie spent two years playing semi-professional football for integrated teams, and then served in the U.S. _____ where he was promoted to second _____.

Jackie Robinson - 4th Grade Assessment

Use the words from the word bank to complete the facts below.				
discrimination	integrate	Negro League	inducted	1962
Reconstruction	lieutenant	Kansas City Monarchs	April 15, 1947	Major League
Army	Jackie Robinson	Brooklyn Dodgers	January 31, 1919	New York Yankees

1. Throughout the Reconstruction-era, which was the period after the Civil War had ended, Americans were divided over how to integrate free Blacks into American society.
2. Blacks in the South faced daily discrimination; life was not easy under the new laws specifically designed to limit the opportunities given to Black Americans..
3. On April 15, 1947, Jackie made his National League debut as a first baseman for the Brooklyn Dodgers and broke the color barrier in Major League Baseball.
4. Jackie Robinson was the first African American to play in Major League Baseball in the modern era.
5. Jackie played baseball for the Kansas City Monarchs in the Negro League in 1945.
6. He was born on January 31, 1919 in Cairo, Georgia and passed away at 53 from a heart attack..
7. Jackie led the Brooklyn Dodgers to victory in the 1955 World Series against the New York Yankees.
8. After winning the World Series, Jackie retired and was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1962.
9. After leaving college because of financial challenges, Jackie spent two years playing semi-professional football for integrated teams, and then served in the U.S. Army where he was promoted to second lieutenant.

Jackie Robinson Resource List

- 01 <https://jackierobinson.com/biography/>
- 02 <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/jackie-robinson>
- 03 <https://baseballhall.org/hall-of-famers/robinson-jackie>
- 04 <https://www.history.com/topics/early-20th-century-us/jim-crow-laws>
- 05 <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/freedom-riders-jim-crow-laws/>
- 06 <https://www.mlb.com/mlb-community/jackie-robinson-day>
- 07 <https://www.nydailynews.com/sports/baseball/robinson-jack-trades-article-1.1315884>
- 08 <https://baseballhall.org/civilrights>
- 09 <https://jackierobinson.com/achievements/>
- 10 <https://www.mlb.com/phillies/community/educational-programs/uya-negro-league/african-american-players-banned>

