

## Jackie Robinson Taught Us More Than Baseball

### Lesson Summary

After determining student knowledge about Jackie Robinson, the teacher/counselor reads *Teammates* by Peter Golenbock to fifth graders. The teacher/counselor then divides students into four groups to work cooperatively on questions. Groups select leaders and recorders and each group leader presents answers to the whole class.

### Introduction

Jack Roosevelt Robinson (1919-1972), the first black man to “officially” play in the big leagues in the 20th century, possessed enormous physical talent and fierce determination to succeed. In the course of a distinguished 10-year career beginning in 1947, Robinson led the Brooklyn Dodgers to six National League titles and one victorious World Series. Beyond his many and stellar baseball feats, Jackie Robinson went on to champion the cause of civil rights when he retired from the game.

### Materials

- Photo handout
- Teammates: How Two Men Changed the Face of Baseball*, by Peter Golenbock
- Discussion questions, each written on a separate piece of paper

### Procedures

1. Read the book to the entire class. As you encounter each of the following words, ask students to define them (the book contains many context clues):
  - Segregation
  - Prejudice
  - Self-control
  - Intimidate
  - Humiliation
  - Hostility
2. After reading the book to the students, divide students into four groups. Assign an area in the classroom for each group and ask each group to choose a leader (or co-leaders). The leader’s responsibility will be reporting to the class the group’s answer to one of the four questions. Each group will be assigned a question (or two) which are to be written on a separate piece of paper for each group. Another individual in the group is to write on the piece of paper a summary of the group’s discussion. Ask the person who records information to write group members’ names on the paper. Allow approximately ten

minutes for each group to meet and work on the answers to the questions. The teacher/counselor circulates while students are working. The questions are as follows:

- Group 1: Explain the statement, "I want a man with the courage not to fight back."
  - Group 2: What did it mean when PeeWee Reese put his arm around Jackie Robinson in front of the crowd? What did PeeWee Reese risk?
  - Group 3: Describe what Branch Rickey was like.
  - Group 4: Pretend you are Jackie Robinson when he played for the Brooklyn Dodgers. How did you feel? What might have been some of your thoughts?
3. While students are still in their groups, ask each group's leader to read the question and then report to the class the answers they discussed. In addition to historical events, opportunities may arise to discuss anger management, self-control, ethical/moral decision-making, and more.

## Related Resources

### [Jackie Robinson, Civil Rights Advocate](#)

The National Archives has collected a number of primary source documents related to Jackie Robinson's advocacy for civil rights. The collection includes teaching activities.

### [Baseball and Jackie Robinson](#)

A collection of documents from the Library of Congress' American Memory collection traces the history of baseball, including the history of the Negro Leagues from the 1860s through the 1970s.