

The Jackie Robinson Story

Activity 1 – Pre-Learn Vocabulary

league (n.) = a group of sports teams that compete against each other.

*Ex) My daughter plays in a very competitive volleyball **league**.*

roster (n.) = a list of names (often military officers or players on a team)

*Ex) The soccer team's **roster** for the World Cup was just announced.*

proWess (n.) = superior strength or ability

*Ex) Fred lost the wrestling match; he just could not compete against his opponent's **proWess**.*

derail (v.) = cause something to be deflected from its main direction/purpose (like a train going off the rails)

*Ex) Mark **derailed** an important discussion about gender equality by making offensive remarks about women.*

hectic (adj.) = describes activity that is very busy and chaotic

*Ex) I have six young children, so mornings at my house are always **hectic**!*

abruptly (adv.) = suddenly and unexpectedly

*Ex) She left the party **abruptly** after getting a call on her cell phone – it seems like it was an emergency.*

mediocre (adj.) = average; not especially good

*Ex) I wouldn't recommend that restaurant. The food was **mediocre**.*



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insinuate (v.) = communicate something in an indirect way

*Ex) Although he didn't promise anything, the director **insinuated** that there would be a sequel to the film.*

taunt (v.) = to ridicule and insult a person

*Ex) When I was in middle school, the other kids **taunted** me because of my funny-sounding last name.*

stellar (adj.) = excellent

*Ex) The author's first two books were not very good, but his third one was **stellar** – it sold millions of copies.*

deteriorate (v.) = become worse over time

*Ex) The roads in the countryside are **deteriorating** due to lack of maintenance.*

Extra Vocabulary

“there were **a handful of** black players”

This is an expression meaning “a few” (not many)

“There were still **hurdles** to overcome”

In this context, “hurdles” means obstacles or difficulties.

“black fans began **flocking** to the Dodgers' games”

If people “flock” to a place, it means they go there in large numbers

“**monumental** steps forward in the battle for civil rights”

“Monumental” means large and very significant.



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Full Text

Jackie Robinson was not the first African-American to play in the major leagues; there were a handful of black baseball players at the end of the **nineteenth** century. However, in 1884, a famous player named Cap Anson refused to play any team with a black player on its roster. The **pressure** from Anson and other white players influenced managers and team owners, and the end result was the effective **exclusion** of African-Americans from major league baseball for over sixty years. Separate “Negro Leagues” were created for them to play.

In college, Robinson had played football, basketball, track, and baseball, and one **newspaper** described his athletic prowess as “outstanding.” After graduating, he served in the army, where an incident of racism derailed his military **career**. After refusing a bus driver’s request to move to the back of the bus, Robinson was taken into custody by police and interrogated with racist questions. When he confronted the **officer** about this, he was charged with insubordination. Although he was acquitted, the trial prevented him from being deployed overseas – and he eventually left the military and **signed** on with a team in the Negro Leagues.

Robinson received a decent salary, but he became **frustrated** with the hectic travel schedule that prevented him from seeing his girlfriend, Rachel, who he would later marry. Robinson **attracted** the attention of the manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, who contracted him to play on a minor league team.

There were still hurdles to overcome - Robinson was not allowed to stay at the same **hotel** as his teammates, and several games in which he was scheduled to play were abruptly canceled by the local authorities. His season got off to a mediocre start, but improved greatly after he changed to a different **position** in the field.



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The following year, he was called up to the major leagues and made his debut with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947, thus becoming the first player since 1880 to openly **break** the color line in baseball.

Robinson received **mixed** reviews from the media, but was generally accepted by the public - and black fans began flocking to the Dodgers' games. However, some of his own teammates insinuated that they would rather sit out than play alongside him. He was also taunted by **members** of opposing teams, and became the target for some rough physical play. Despite the abuse, Robinson's stellar performance earned him the Rookie of the Year **Award** for the all-around best first-year player.

Robinson's career with the Dodgers lasted **ten** years, and he retired after his health began to deteriorate, later being diagnosed with diabetes. The Dodgers honored him by retiring his uniform number, meaning no other player on the team could ever use Jackie Robinson's famous 42 - and he became the first black player to be **elected** to the baseball Hall of Fame.

Later in life, Robinson served as a commentator and also became **involved** in politics and business. He worked to advance the cause of black people in sports, commerce, and industry, and also established a construction company to build **houses** for poor families. Both his breaking of the color barrier and his professional success were monumental steps forward in the **battle** for civil rights.

