

Jackie Robinson

The First Black Player in Modern Major League Baseball

He became a national hero to both black and white Americans because of skill, bravery and restraint.



Jackie Robinson grew up in a family of five children in Pasadena, California, near L.A. His father had left. His mother did not earn much money, so Jackie Robinson learned to make his own way in life. It was in California that Jackie Robinson first learned the ugliness of racial hatred. White families who did not want to live near them repeatedly tried to force them to move away.

Jackie Robinson established himself early as an athlete. He was a star player while attending the University of California at Los Angeles. Jackie won honors in baseball, basketball, football and track. He was named to the All-American football team. He was considered the best athlete on America's west coast.

Jackie Robinson left college early because of financial problems. He joined the United States Army in 1941, during the Second World War. He became a lieutenant. However, after three years, Robinson was dismissed from the army because he objected to a racial order. He refused to move to the back of a bus. In 1945, there were not many jobs open to a black man, even someone who had attended college. Robinson wanted to play professional baseball. Blacks, however, were not permitted to play in the major leagues. So, he decided to play with the Negro Baseball League. The Negro League teams were started in the nineteen twenties to give black people a place to play baseball. Many of the best baseball players in the United States played in the Negro Leagues before white professional teams began accepting black players. The skills and records of black ball players were as good as major league white players. It was a hard life for Negro League players. They took long trips by bus. They changed clothes in farmhouses and shared bath water with teammates. Many eating places did not serve food to blacks. They had to eat outside or on the road. And they were not permitted to sleep at hotels for whites. Many players slept on the bus. In 1945 Jackie Robinson signed a contract to play with the Dodgers and shortly after he married Rachel Isum. It pleased the president of the team as he thought it would lessen the fears of white men that white women would find Robinson desirable. In 1947, Jackie Robinson became the first black to play modern major league baseball. He played for the Dodger's major league team, New York's Brooklyn Dodgers. In doing so, the pressure increased. He received death threats on and off the field. During games, pitchers threw the ball at his head. Several teams threatened not to play against the Dodgers. And, some of his own team members tried to have him banned from the team. It was not easy for Robinson on road trips, either. He was never permitted to stay at the same hotels or eat in the same places as his white team members. Jackie Robinson helped show that blacks and whites could live, work and play together.

Read the text and correct the following statements.

- a) Jackie grew up in a family of six kids.
- b) His mother left and his father only made little money.
- c) Jackie wanted to play professional basketball.
- d) Jackie was permitted to stay at the same hotels as his white team mates.
- e) During games, pitchers threw balls at his body.
- f) Jackie refused to move to the back of the bus.

In the text, find a synonym for the following words:

couch - _____ allow - _____

skill - _____ go to - _____

36 months - _____ tough - _____

new - _____ got - _____

restaurant - _____

cash - _____ number one - _____

Answer the questions:

Where is Jackie Robinson from? _____

What's the name of the racial hatred period he lived in?

Describe his career.

What type of racial hatred did he go through? Give examples from the text.

How did he fight it?

What is he a symbol of?
