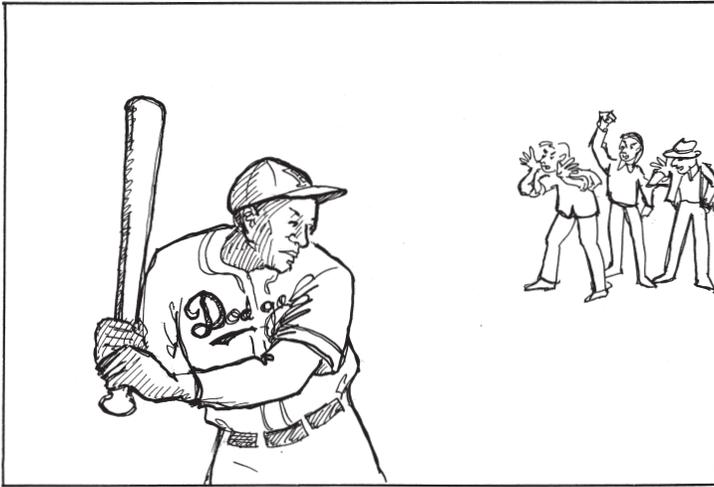


The Bravest Man in Baseball



Jackie Robinson

1919–1972

In 1947, Jackie Robinson became the first black player to play on an all-white professional baseball team, the Brooklyn Dodgers. Discrimination was very strong at that time. He was hated and booed by many fans and many of the players. Jackie proved himself to be not only an excellent baseball player, but a gentleman as well.

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Jackie Robinson

The Bravest Man in Baseball

Cast: Narrator
Jackie Robinson, baseball player
Branch Rickey, general manager of the Brooklyn
Dodgers
Assistant
Pee Wee Reese, a white baseball player
Chorus

Narrator: Jackie Robinson was a black man born to a very poor family in Georgia on January 31, 1919. He was a very talented baseball player. But in the 1940s there was a big problem. There was total discrimination against blacks. Even black baseball players could not play with white players. They had to play in a different league. But Jackie Robinson was a special person. Here is his story.

CHORUS: *How sad! How sad!
To think that a man
Could be judged
By the color,
The color of his skin.
How very, very sad!*

Narrator: But everybody didn't think that way. Some believed that talent, not skin color, was the most important thing.

Branch Rickey: We have a good team right now. The Dodgers are very good, but we need to make them better. We want to win a championship. Let's take a look at the Negro League. They have some excellent players.

Assistant: They do, but if you get a black man, people may not come to the games. They'll boo him. The white players won't want to play with him, either. You're asking for a lot of trouble.

Branch: I don't care. If he's an outstanding player, it won't matter. But it's true, he will have to be a special man. He's going to be taking a lot of heat from the fans. They're going to say terrible things to him. What I need is a man of courage, someone who is strong. Think you can find someone like that?

Assistant: I don't know. I'll try. It'll be tough, but I'll try.

CHORUS: *Look for talent.
Character, too.
Jackie Robinson's
The man for you.
He's got talent
And character, too.
Jackie Robinson's
The man for you!*

Narrator: And so Jackie Robinson came to Brooklyn to speak with the general manager about playing on the team.

Branch: Jackie, we like the way you play. You can hit, catch, run — everything! We need good players like you. But I need something much more. I need a man of courage. You will be the first black man to play in the major leagues. Many people won't like that. They're going to make life miserable for you.

Jackie: What do you want me to do? Fight back? I can fight back! I'm a fighter!

Branch: No! No! I don't want you to fight back. I need a man who can be calm, who can take the heat. I need someone who can concentrate when there is shouting and name-calling. Think you can do it?

Jackie: I think so, sir. I'll do my best. My mother taught me that a good man does not fight fire with fire. My mother taught me that the best way to fight is to show how good you are.

Branch: That's exactly right. Show them how good you are. Just play the game and show the fans how good you are! It won't be easy, but I think you can do it.

Jackie: Thank you, sir. I love this game, and I want to play and win more than anything. And I want my family to be proud of me.

Branch: Good luck, Jackie, and welcome to the team.

Jackie: Thank you, sir, and thank you for this opportunity.

Narrator: And at the first game, it was just as expected. Fans booed; they called Jackie terrible names. Even his own teammates avoided him.

Jackie: This is terrible! Why do they hate me so much? I'm so nervous. I hope I don't mess up.

CHORUS: *Be calm, be calm,
Be very, very calm.
Just play the game.
Just play the game.
Don't talk back.
Don't say a word.
Just play the game.
Don't say a word!*

Jackie: Yes, that's it. Concentrate. Block it out. Don't let them get to you. Just play the game. Hit the ball! Catch the ball! Throw the ball! Concentrate!

CHORUS: *Good work, Jackie!*
Good, indeed!
You kept your head.
You kept your word.
You played well.
You played like a winner.

Jackie: Yes, but that was just the first game. Really, I never thought people could be so mean. People even called me to say they wanted to kill me. And would you believe it — I can't stay in the same hotels, or eat in the same restaurants as the other players. I can't believe it!

CHORUS: *Life's not easy;*
Life's not fair!
Life takes courage.
Don't despair!
Don't fight back;
Concentrate.
Play the game;
You're doing great!

Narrator: The booing continued. One game was especially bad. But something unusual happened.

Jackie: The noise is terrible! The booing is awful! Hey, look! Over there! There's Pee Wee. He's coming toward me. I wonder what he wants.

Pee Wee: Hi, buddy, how's it going? Pretty rough out here, isn't it?

Jackie: I can't believe it. They really want me out of here. Even the guys on the team want me out. I can't believe it!

Pee Wee: Listen, Jackie. I don't want you out. Don't even think about it! We're a team. Who cares about the stupid fans who say stupid things? Let's play and win! Let's show them!

Jackie: Thanks, Pee Wee. Thanks a lot. You're a good friend!

Narrator: Then Pee Wee put his arm around Jackie in friendship.

CHORUS: *He put his arm
Around his friend.
He shook his hand
And smiled again.
The crowd was silent.
What was this?
An act of friendship
On the field.
An act of friendship,
Black and white!*

Narrator: And slowly Jackie Robinson was accepted by the public and his teammates. The Brooklyn Dodgers won the league championship that year, and Jackie was named the best new player of the year. He became the first black player to be elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame.