

**BASEBALL**  

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**THE TENTH INNING**  

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**A FILM BY KEN BURNS & LYNN NOVICK**

**Crossing the Line: Jackie Robinson**

**Grade Level:** 7–12

**Related Academic Subjects:** U.S. history, language arts

**Lesson Overview:**

Of all the lessons baseball can teach us, none is more important than the one taught by Jackie Robinson, the ballplayer who broke the “gentleman’s agreement” that no black player would be allowed to play in major league baseball. Promoted by a daring league executive and former player, Branch Rickey, Robinson broke the game’s color barrier by entering the majors in 1947. He definitely had the skills and determination to make it, but the question was, could he endure the abuse and racial attacks that would come his way?

In this activity, students explore Jackie Robinson’s character and his impact on baseball and American civil rights. They will construct character sketches of Robinson and various people who played a significant role during his entry and first years in major league baseball. They will then build historical role-play skits or interviews on key events in Jackie Robinson’s first few years in the major leagues.

**Lesson Objectives: (The student will...)**

- Research key events during Jackie Robinson’s integration of baseball
- Assess the impact of Jackie Robinson’s character on baseball and society in general
- Formulate character sketches of key people in Jackie Robinson’s integration into major league baseball
- Formulate historical role-play skits or interviews on key events in Jackie Robinson’s integration into major league baseball

**Estimated Time for the Lesson:** Two to three class periods

**Video Segments:**

*Baseball: The Sixth Inning, The National Pastime*

Chapter 10: “The Race Man”

Chapter 12: “Big League Material”

Chapter 13: “He’s Coming”

Chapter 14: “April 15, 1947”

Chapter 15: “Up in the Race”

*Baseball: The Seventh Inning: The Capital of Baseball*  
Chapter 3: “Ol’ Perfesser”  
Chapter 7: “Child of God”

**Materials Needed:**

- Individual computers connected to the Internet and/or computer projector
- Student handouts:
  - Video Clip Reviewing Questions
  - Character Sketch Handout
  - Skit/Interview Scenario Handout

**Lesson Procedure:**

**Activity 1. Jackie Robinson**

Tell students that in this activity they will be exploring Jackie Robinson’s character and his contributions to baseball and to advancing civil rights.

1. Divide the class into groups of four students.
2. Distribute the Video Clip Reviewing Questions handout to all students. Review the directions with the class.
3. Assign or have the group members assign one video grouping for each member of each group.
4. Watch the clips, “Crossing the Line”. After each student has completed the notes for their section, have them meet in their small groups to discuss the post-viewing questions.

**Activity 2. Character Sketches**

Tell students that they will now take a closer look at Jackie Robinson and many of the people surrounding him during his life, especially when he joined the Brooklyn Dodgers and his first few years in the majors. From the list below, students will develop character sketches of Robinson and people who played a significant role during his entry and first years in major league baseball.

1. Distribute the Character Sketch Handout to all students and review the directions.
2. Assign or have students choose which person they want to characterize. The numbers in parentheses are suggestions for how many students will need to portray the individual characters involved in the scenarios in Activity 3.
3. Provide time for students to develop their character sketches. (This can be done as homework.)
4. After students have developed their sketches, briefly review their work with the following questions:
  - What was the character’s position on Robinson’s integration into baseball?
  - What life influences led to this position?
  - What surprised students about their character?
  - Did their character change his or her attitude on Robinson’s integration into baseball?

**The Characters**

- Jackie Robinson (7)
- His mother, Mallie Robinson (1)

- His wife, Rachel Robinson (5)
- Branch Rickey, general manager, Brooklyn Dodgers
- Red Barber, sportscaster (6)
- Clay Hopper, manager, Montreal Royals (1)
- Leo Durocher, manager, Brooklyn Dodgers (1)
- Ben Chapman, manager, Philadelphia Phillies (5)
- Various Dodger players: Dixie Walker, Eddie Stanky, Bobby Bragan and Pee Wee Reese (6)

### **Activity 3. Historical Role-Play**

In this activity, students will integrate their character sketches into historical role-play scenarios. They will use information from their notes on the video clips as well as additional research from online and library sources. You can assign or your students can decide which scenarios they want to portray from the list below and whether they will develop skits or interviews. Students who do the interviews should work in pairs and do two interviews, one for each student's character. Students who do the skits will need to join other students whose characters are an integral part of the situation. You may "produce" as many scenarios as you wish. You may also have students work in pairs to conduct interviews or in small groups to conduct a press conference with several key people and the class acting as reporters. Students can also include props and costumes as desired. If time and resources are available, you may also consider having students produce small video productions or podcasts for publication on the school or class Web site.

1. Divide students into the scenario groups based on the character sketches they produced in Activity 3.
2. Distribute the Skit/Interview Scenario Handout and review the directions with students.
3. Provide time for them to develop their skit/interview and some time for rehearsal.
4. Arrange for students to produce their skits or interviews for class or a wider audience in podcasts or video clips on the school or class Web site.

### **Historical Role-Play Skit/Interview Topics**

- Robinson's early life before his entry into baseball (Jackie Robinson, Mallie Robinson, brothers, sister).
- Robinson's meeting with Branch Rickey, August 28, 1945 (Robinson, Branch Rickey). Rickey's reasons for picking Robinson. Robinson's thinking on Rickey's proposition.
- Reaction after the exhibition game between the Brooklyn Dodgers and the Montreal Royals, and Robinson's first encounter with his future teammates, April 18, 1946 (fans, various Dodger players, Clay Hopper, Robinson, Red Barber, Rachel Robinson).
- Dodger practice during the weeks before Jackie Robinson joined the team on April 15, 1947 (Leo Durocher, various Dodger players: Dixie Walker, Eddie Stanky, Bobby Bragan, Pee Wee Reese).
- The day after the game against the Philadelphia Phillies, April 22, 1947 (Robinson, Ben Chapman, various Dodger players, Leo Durocher, Rachel Robinson, Branch Rickey, Red Barber).
- The award ceremony for the 1947 Rookie of the Year Award (Branch Rickey, Robinson, various players, Rachel Robinson, Leo Durocher, Red Barber).
- Dodgers winning the pennant in 1949 (Robinson, Branch Rickey, various players, Rachel Robinson, Leo Durocher, Red Barber).

- Dodgers winning the World Series in 1955 (Robinson, Branch Rickey, Leo Durocher, various players, Rachel Robinson, Red Barber).
- Robinson in his later years outside baseball, as a corporate vice president and spokesperson for civil rights (Robinson, Rachel Robinson).

**Extension Activities:**

- Research and debate the motives of Branch Rickey, who was integral in breaking baseball’s color barrier. There are conflicting points of view regarding his motives. Was he strictly interested in the economic aspect, or was he a supporter of integration because it was the right thing to do?
- Research the fact that while Robinson was a celebrated hero of the African American community, his success meant the end of black baseball and with it the end of an important source of cultural identity for the black community. Discuss how this loss was balanced by the benefits of integration, in baseball and elsewhere in our society.

**Assessment:**

Once students have completed the lesson, the following rubrics may be used to evaluate student work. Teachers may also develop their own assessment tools.

**Rubric for Skit Production**

Category	4	3	2	1
Historical Accuracy	All historical information was accurate and in chronological order.	Almost all historical information was accurate and in chronological order.	Some of the historical information was accurate and in chronological order.	Very little of the historical information was accurate and in chronological order.
Required Elements	Skit accurately depicted the setting and time period, identified the characters and the situation.	Skit accurately depicted all but one of the required elements.	Skit depicted with some accuracy most of the required elements.	Skit showed little accuracy in any of the required elements.
Character Interpretation	Clearly explained the different ways the character(s) perceived the event.	Clearly explained some of the ways the characters perceived the event.	Clearly explained only a few characters’ perceptions of the event.	Did not explain how the characters perceived the event.
Interaction Among Characters	Points of view, arguments and solutions proposed were consistently in character.	Points of view, arguments and solutions proposed were often in character.	Points of view, arguments and solutions proposed were sometimes in character.	Points of view, arguments and solutions proposed were rarely in character.

Costumes/Props	Used several props/costumes that accurately fit the period, show considerable work/creativity.	Used one or two props/costumes that accurately fit the period.	Used one or two props/costumes that resembled the period.	Used no props/costumes that fit the period.
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### Rubric for Interviews

Category	4	3	2	1
Historical Accuracy	All historical information was accurate and in chronological order.	Almost all historical information was accurate and in chronological order.	Some of the historical information was accurate and in chronological order.	Very little of the historical information was accurate and in chronological order.
Role	Point of view, arguments and solutions proposed were consistently in character.	Point of view, arguments and solutions proposed were often in character.	Point of view, arguments and solutions proposed were sometimes in character.	Point of view, arguments and solutions proposed were rarely in character.
Introducing the Interview	Student introduced him/herself and the interviewee, explained in detail the reason for the interview (the scenario).	Student introduced him/herself and the interviewee but didn't explain the reason for the interview (the scenario).	Student explained the reason for the interview (the scenario) but didn't introduce him/herself.	Student neither introduced him/herself nor explained the reason for the interview.
Conducting the Interview	Student asked/answered many in-depth and factual questions.	Student asked/answered some in-depth and factual questions.	Student asked/answered a few in-depth and factual questions.	Student asked/answered only one or two in-depth and factual questions.
Follow-up Questions (for either the interviewer or the interviewee)	Student listened carefully to the other person and asked/gave several relevant follow-up questions/answers based on what the person said.	Student listened carefully to the other person and asked/gave a couple of relevant follow-up questions/answers based on what the person said.	Student asked/gave a couple of relevant follow-up questions/answers based on what the person said.	Student didn't ask/give any follow-up questions/answers
Costumes/Props	Used several props/costumes that accurately fit	Used one or two props/costumes that accurately fit	Used one or two props/ costumes that resembled	Used no props/costumes that fit the

	the period, show considerable work/creativity.	the period.	the period.	period.
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Resources:

(NOTE: While the following resources provide a good overview of the history of African American baseball in the United States, the teacher should also encourage students to conduct research using traditional resources such as books, magazines and encyclopedias.)

- Baseball Web site (<http://www.pbs.org/kenburns/baseball>)
- Baseball: The Tenth Inning (<http://www.pbs.org/kenburns/tenthinning>)
- Baseball Almanac ([http://www.baseball-almanac.com/quotes/pee\\_wee\\_reese\\_quotes.shtml](http://www.baseball-almanac.com/quotes/pee_wee_reese_quotes.shtml))
- Baseball Historian (<http://www.baseballhistorian.com/index.cfm>)
- Baseball Reference.com (<http://www.baseball-reference.com>)
- Major League Baseball.com (<http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/players>)
- The Jackie Robinson Foundation (primarily philanthropic but offers some links about Jackie) (<http://www.jackierobinson.org>)
- Negro Leagues Legacy (from the Major League Baseball Web site) ([http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/history/mlb\\_negro\\_leagues.jsp](http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/history/mlb_negro_leagues.jsp))
- Negro Leagues Legacy Profile page on Jackie Robinson ([http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/history/mlb\\_negro\\_leagues\\_profile.jsp?player=robinson\\_jackie](http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/history/mlb_negro_leagues_profile.jsp?player=robinson_jackie))
- National Archives “Teaching With Documents” page, “Beyond the Playing Field, Jackie Robinson, Civil Rights Advocate” (<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/jackie-robinson>)
- New York Times on the Web, Jackie Robinson: A Baseball Celebration (<http://www.nytimes.com/specials/baseball/robinson-index.html>)
- Sporting News: Jackie Robinson: Soul of the Game (<http://www.sportingnews.com/archives/jackie>)

### Academic Standards:

This lesson fits the following standards as set by the Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) (<http://www.mcrel.org>)

### *U.S. History*

**Standard 26.** Understands the economic boom and social transformation of post-World War II United States

**Level III (Grades 6–8)** understands how American society changed after World War II

**Standard 29.** Understands the struggle for racial and gender equality and for the extension of civil liberties

**Level III (Grades 6–8)** understands individual and institutional influences on the civil rights movement

**Level IV (Grades 9–12)** understands social, religious, cultural and economic changes at the onset of the Cold War era

**Standard 31.** Understands economic, social and cultural developments in the contemporary United States

**Level III (Grades 6–8)** understands various influences on American culture

**Level IV (Grades 9–12)** understands the influence of social change and the entertainment industry in shaping views on art, gender and culture

### ***Language Arts, Writing***

**Standard 4.** Gathers and uses information for research purposes

#### **Level III (Grades 6–8)**

- Uses a variety of resource materials to gather information for research topics (e.g., magazines, newspapers, dictionaries, schedules, journals, surveys, globes, atlases, almanacs, Web sites, databases, podcasts)
- Organizes information and ideas from multiple sources in systematic ways (e.g., time lines, outlines, notes, graphic representations)

#### **Level IV (Grades 9–12)**

- Uses a variety of print and electronic sources to gather information for research topics (e.g., news sources such as magazines, radio, television, and newspapers; government publications and microfiche; databases; field studies; speeches; technical documents; periodicals; Internet sources, such as Web sites, podcasts, blogs and electronic bulletin boards)
- Uses a variety of primary sources to gather information for research topics
- Synthesizes information from multiple research studies to draw conclusions that go beyond those found in any of the individual studies

### ***Reading***

**Standard 7.** Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts

#### **Level III (Grades 6–8)**

- Uses reading skills and strategies to understand a variety of informational texts (e.g., electronic texts; textbooks; biographical sketches; directions; essays; primary source historical documents, including letters and diaries; print media, including editorials,

- news stories, periodicals and magazines; consumer, workplace and public documents, including catalogs, technical directions, procedures and bus routes)
- Summarizes and paraphrases information in texts (e.g., arranges information in chronological or sequential order; conveys main ideas, critical details and underlying meaning; uses own words or quoted materials; preserves author’s perspective and voice)
  - Uses new information to adjust and extend personal knowledge base

**Level IV (Grades 9–12)**

- Uses reading skills and strategies to understand a variety of informational texts (e.g., textbooks, biographical sketches, letters, diaries, directions, procedures, magazines, essays, primary source historical documents, editorials, news stories, periodicals, catalogs, job-related materials, schedules, speeches, memoranda, public documents, maps)
- Summarizes and paraphrases complex, implicit hierarchic structures in informational texts, including the relationships among the concepts and details in those structures

***Listening and Speaking***

**Standard 8.** Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes

**Level IV (Grades 9–12)**

- Understands how literary forms can be represented in visual narratives (e.g., allegory, parable, analogy, satire, narrative style, characterization, irony)

**About the Authors**

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## **Video Clip Viewing Questions**

### **(Student Handout)**

#### **Background:**

For decades, baseball excluded African Americans from participation. There were a few attempts to integrate the game in the late 1800s and early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but they were met with stiff resistance by league owners and officials. After World War II, the hypocrisy of fighting racism abroad while ignoring it at home grew obvious. Pickets appeared at Yankee Stadium with signs reading, “If we are able to stop bullets, why not balls?” Soon several pioneers, most notably Branch Rickey, president and general manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, began to put plans in place to reverse baseball’s racial discrimination policy forever.

#### **Directions:**

1. Each member of your group will take notes on one of the four video clip groups listed below.
2. After group members have completed their research, meet back as a group and discuss the post-viewing debriefing questions.
3. Be prepared to discuss your group’s findings with the class.

#### **Video Clip Group 1:**

*Jackie Robinson’s early life, career in college sports and entry into baseball.*

- Describe some early incidents in young Jackie Robinson’s life when he faced racial prejudice and reacted to it. How would you describe how he felt about his race?
- Describe Robinson’s college career in sports. How do you think his views on his race affected his efforts in sports?
- Explain how Robinson showed humility as well as racial pride during his time with the Kansas City Monarchs.
- Why do you think Branch Rickey was so careful when he was choosing an African American ballplayer to break into the major leagues? Describe why the answer Robinson gave Rickey convinced him that he had found the person he was looking for, and how this solidified their partnership in this endeavor.

#### **Video Clip Group 2:**

*Jackie Robinson’s minor league baseball experience*

*Robinson’s entry into major league baseball on April 15, 1947*

- Describe Jackie Robinson’s optimism, expressed during his first days with the Montreal Royals. How did Robinson back up this enthusiasm on the playing field in his first game?
- Why do you think Branch Rickey’s strategy of displaying Jackie Robinson’s skills in a seven-game series between the Brooklyn Dodgers and the Montreal Royals backfired?
- How did team manager Leo Durocher and Branch Rickey show courage when some players circulated a petition against Robinson joining the team?

- Why do you think Jackie Robinson is held in such high esteem and his entry into major league baseball is considered such a seminal point in American history?

**Video Clip Group 3:**

*Racial prejudice and abuse endured by Robinson*

Robinson changes his strategy toward discrimination

- Describe the abuse Jackie Robinson had to endure during his first three years with the Brooklyn Dodgers. Provide several examples of Robinson's sportsmanlike conduct in the face of the abuse he was getting from fans and opposing team members.
- Describe how the Philadelphia game seemed to be a turning point for Robinson and his teammates.
- Describe how Jackie Robinson put his own feelings aside and honored Branch Rickey's request not to retaliate in favor of a higher goal.
- How did Robinson's attitude change after his three-year promise was over, and how did his overall goal change?

**Video Clip Group 4:**

*Robinson's accomplishments in civil rights*

*Robinson's accomplishments in baseball*

- How did Jackie Robinson's style of play and behavior change the minds of many who held negative racial attitudes? Provide some examples.
- How might Robinson's character on and off the field have paved the way for other African American leaders, such as Martin Luther King Jr.?
- How was Robinson's success in major league baseball a bittersweet event for Negro League baseball?
- Why didn't Robinson's success and acceptance in baseball make it easier for the next group of African American ballplayers who entered the league?

## Post-viewing Debriefing Questions

- How did encounters with racism in Jackie Robinson's early life contribute to his character as an adult?
- Why do you think Robinson agreed to work with Branch Rickey to integrate major league baseball? Consider Robinson's own ambition and why he trusted Rickey.
- Describe the range of emotions going through the minds of the various players on the Brooklyn Dodgers when they discovered that Jackie Robinson was going to join the team.
- Briefly review the incidents of abuse Jackie Robinson endured during his first three years in the majors. How did other people help support Robinson during this time? Describe how Robinson "fought" for respect and stuck to his promise to not retaliate. What can be learned from this experience?

How did Robinson's actions and character on the field change many people's minds at the time about African Americans and enable others to integrate into mainstream society? Do you think this was the right thing to do, or should Robinson have demanded that he be treated equally and with respect? Explain.

## Character Sketch Handout (Student Handout)

### Directions:

In this activity, you will research details of some of the major people during Jackie Robinson's entry into major league baseball. This research will help you build a character sketch that will later be incorporated into a historical role-play skit or interview. Use this organizer to record your information on the person's characteristics from several different sources.

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Description</b>
Name	
Place of birth and age at the time of the event	
Occupation	
Major highlights in career (up to the time of the event)	
Major influences on this person's life up to and including the event	
Personality description	
The person's emotional state in the time period you are presenting	
How the person saw his or her place in society	
Values (career, family, country, money, fame)	

## **Skit/Interview Scenario Handout**

### **(Student Handout)**

#### **Background:**

Using character sketches is a great way to experience history. It provides a connection with the past and helps explain the personal feelings and experiences of people and events that came before us. This activity gives you an opportunity to bring your character sketch “alive” either in a historical role-play skit or an interview.

#### **Directions:**

After developing your character sketch, decide with other members of the class whether you want to do an historical role-play skit or an interview. Look at the list of historical role-play topics below to select the scenario you want to portray. Identify other students who have character interpretations that will likely be in your skit or interview (see suggested groupings below).

#### **Historical Role-Play Skit/Interview Topics**

- Robinson’s early life before entry into baseball (Jackie Robinson, Mallie Robinson, brothers, sister)
- Robinson’s meeting with Branch Rickey, August 28, 1945 (Robinson, Branch Rickey, later Red Barber)
- Reaction after the exhibition game between the Brooklyn Dodgers and the Montreal Royals and Robinson’s first encounter with his future teammates, April 18, 1946 (fans, various Dodger players, Clay Hopper, Robinson, Red Barber, Rachel Robinson)
- Dodger practice during the weeks prior to Jackie Robinson joining the team on April 15, 1947. (Leo Durocher, various Dodger players: Dixie Walker, Eddie Stanky, Bobby Bragan, Pee Wee Reese)
- The day after the game against the Philadelphia Phillies, April 22, 1947 (Robinson, Ben Chapman, various Dodger players, Leo Durocher, Rachel Robinson, Branch Rickey, Red Barber)
- The award ceremony for the 1947 Rookie of the Year Award (Branch Rickey, Robinson, various players, Rachel Robinson, Leo Durocher, Red Barber)
- Dodgers winning the Pennant in 1949 (Robinson, Branch Rickey, various players, Rachel Robinson, Leo Durocher, Red Barber)
- Dodgers winning the World Series 1955 (Robinson, Branch Rickey, Leo Durocher, various players, Rachel Robinson, Red Barber)

Do some more research on the time period and/or specific scenario you’ve chosen. Identify the specific time, date and year; any relevant economic, social or political issues related to or surrounding the people and the scenario; any previous events that brought the characters collectively or individually to this point.

Look for information that you can incorporate into your skit or interview that describes the incident, the tension, disagreement or controversy facing your characters and how they feel about it and the actions they want to take. Provide some sense of the historical importance of the scenario, either short or long term. Describe the impact of the incident on the characters and why their actions were important.

Organize your research from the character sketch and the research you did above into a script or an outline. Try to make the skit or interview more than just a retelling of the events. Build a story of the time period, the incident and its conflict, and how your characters participated in its unfolding and conclusion. (Was the incident resolved? If not, what happened?)

Spend a little time rehearsing the skit or interview to make sure it runs smoothly. Be prepared to present your skit or interview to the class or develop it as a podcast or video production.