

Week 1

Overview:

The first unit this semester asks you to consider the concept of barriers. Particularly, you will explore how people have faced and overcome barriers in life by engaging in readings and discussions connected to the Civil Rights Movement. This week, it is baseball legend and trailblazer Jackie Robinson whose personal story shows us how to use values to break down barriers.

Assignments:

- 1. **What Are Barriers?**
- 2. Read "About My Father"
- 3. **Responding to the Reading**
- 4. **Values and Barriers**
 - Essay

SPORTS VOCABULARY

- **bunt** (buhnt) *verb* To tap a baseball lightly with a bat, so that the ball doesn't go very far.
- **farm team** (farm teem) *noun* A minor-league team that is owned by a major-league team (especially in baseball).
- **half-back** (haef-baek) *noun* In football, one of two offensive players lined up on either side of the fullback behind the line of scrimmage.
- **let-ter** (let-ur) *verb* To receive recognition for achievement in athletics, given in the form of an initial of a school.
- **line drive** (line drive) *noun* In baseball, a hard-hit ball that travels low, fast, and in a nearly straight line.
- **long jump** (lawng juhmp) *noun* In competitive track sports, a jump for horizontal distance with a running start.
- **Major Leagues** (may-jur leegs) *noun* A league of highest classification in United States professional baseball.
- **Negro Leagues** (nee-groh leegs) *noun* A group of baseball teams made up of people of the African-American race. The league operated from 1920 to the early 1960s.
- **scout** (skout) *noun* Someone who is sent to find out and bring back information.
- **short-stop** (short-stop) *noun* In baseball or softball, the player whose position is between second and third base.
- **statistics** (stuh-tiss-tiks) *noun* A fact or piece of information expressed as a number or percentage.
- **stolen base** (stohl-in bayss) *noun* To get to the next base in baseball without a hit or an error. *The runner stole second.*
- **team** (teem) *noun* A group of people who work together or play a sport together, as in a *team* of doctors or a *hockey team*.
- **varsity** (var-sih-ti) *noun, adjective* The main team of a college, school, or club in a particular sport.

About My Father

By Sharon Robinson
Author of *The Hero Two Doors Down* and *Promises to Keep*



Jackie Robinson
with daughter
Sharon

April 15 marks the anniversary of Jackie Robinson's breaking of the color barrier in Major League Baseball. A student once asked me: "What is the color barrier?" Baseball's "color barrier" signifies the time in American history when black- and brown-skinned ballplayers were kept out of the Majors. In 1947, my father, Jackie Robinson, broke through that barrier and opened the door for others to follow.

Fifty years later, *Breaking Barriers: In Sports, In Life* was created to help diverse students understand Jackie Robinson's legacy of change. By participating in this program, you'll come to understand the values that made my father successful on the field, and that also guided him as a parent. You'll likewise discover strengths in your own character to help you overcome barriers in your life. Let's get started!

American baseball became popular during the Civil War. Briefly in the late 1800s, two black players, Bud Fowler and Moses Fleetwood Walker, played alongside whites. But by 1890, Major League Baseball, like most of America, was "segregated." Until 1947, black- and brown-skinned players were in the Negro Leagues, while whites played in the Majors.

In 1945, Branch Rickey, president and general manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers™, stepped

forward to break baseball's color barrier. He studied the field, using scouts to explore the pool of players. There were many Negro League players who

“ Rickey was testing whether my father would have the strength of character to fight back with his bat rather than his fist.”

were well-known and proven professional baseball players. Players such as Satchel Paige and Josh Gibson certainly headed the list provided by Mr. Rickey's scouts, but they agreed on Jack Roosevelt Robinson.

The scouts told Mr. Rickey that during his season with the Negro League team the Kansas City Monarchs, Jackie Robinson played shortstop. He hit .387, perfected his skill at stealing bases, and was selected for the league's All-Star Game.

They presented my father's college statistics next. Rickey learned that while at UCLA, my dad was the leading basketball scorer in his conference, the national champion in the long jump, an All-American halfback in football, and a varsity baseball shortstop. In fact, he was the first athlete at UCLA to letter in four sports in a single year.

In a now-famous meeting, Branch

Rickey painted the stressful conditions my father would face in the Majors. Rickey role-played a racist fan shouting angry insults. A spiteful opponent might spike him with metal cleats. Rickey was testing whether my father would have the strength of character to fight back with his bat rather than his fist. My father agreed to this approach. Two months later, he signed with the Montreal Royals, the Dodgers™ minor league team.

As predicted, my dad played baseball against amazing odds. He fought back with perfectly timed bunts, hard line drives, and

stolen bases. On April 15, 1947, Jack Roosevelt Robinson stepped onto the grass of Ebbets Field™ as a member of the Brooklyn Dodgers™. He went on to play 10 seasons, earning such awards as Rookie of the Year and Most Valuable Player.

It took 13 long seasons before every Major League Baseball team had at least one African-American player on its roster. Today, Major League Baseball players come from around the world and continue to break barriers of culture, language, race, and religion. Like you, they face barriers and meet challenges with the same set of values that helped my father succeed on and off the field. ♦

Jackie
Robinson
sliding into
home, 1949



Responding to the Reading

Answer each question with a *minimum* of 2 complete sentences.

1. What is the main idea of the story?
2. How did the color barrier prevent black baseball players from playing in Major League Baseball after 1890?
3. Why were Jackie Robinson's college statistics at UCLA and how well he played for the Kansas City Monarchs important information for Branch Rickey?
4. What was the ultimate test Branch Rickey wanted Jackie Robinson to pass?
5. What evidence is there to suggest that Jackie Robinson was successful in breaking barriers in Major League Baseball?

Values and Barriers

1. Read and discuss Jackie Robinson's Nine Values on the following page.
2. Rank the values in order of importance in your own life in the chart below.
3. Think of a meaningful example of each value in confronting barriers that you have either directly experience or witnessed in others.

RANKING	VALUE	EXAMPLE
	COURAGE	
	DETERMINATION	
	TEAMWORK	
	PERSISTENCE	
	INTEGRITY	
	CITIZENSHIP	
	JUSTICE	
	COMMITMENT	
	EXCELLENCE	

4. Write a short paragraph in answer to questions #2 -3 under "Activities: Breaking Barriers."
5. Share your personal story by writing an essay for the Essay Contest. Write about a barrier that you have faced. How have you used one of more of Jackie Robinson's values to face your own barriers?

YOUR ESSAY SHOULD ADDRESS:

- What was the barrier you faced?
- Who was/is involved in the situation?
- When did you face this barrier?
- Where did it occur?
- Which of the values helped you (or continue to help you) to overcome the barrier?
- How was your barrier like barriers that Jackie Robinson faced? How was it different?

REMEMBER TO:

- Create an outline for your essay. Remember that each main idea needs details to support it.
- Have a clear introduction, body, and conclusion to your essay.
- Keep these narrative techniques in mind: orienting the reader by establishing context (to be clear), descriptive details (to be interesting), and a variety of transition words and phrases (to be smooth).
- The nature of this essay is reflective and personal.
- It is a real nationwide essay contest! You are encouraged to enter your essay in the contest. All entries are due by March 14, 2016. Details on submission



Jackie Robinson

Values and Barriers

In 1947, Jackie Robinson became the first African-American man to play in the *Major Leagues*™. Read "Jackie's Nine Values" below to find out what helped him break barriers in both sports and in life, and then complete the activities below to learn more.

- 1 COURAGE**—Doing what you know is the right thing even when it is hard.
- 2 DETERMINATION**—Staying focused on a plan even though the path to its end may be difficult.
- 3 TEAMWORK**—Working with other people toward a common goal.

- 4 PERSISTENCE**—Working toward a goal and continuing to move forward even though you face obstacles or barriers.
- 5 INTEGRITY**—Sticking to your values, regardless of what others think you should do.
- 6 CITIZENSHIP**—Making a contribution that improves the lives of others.
- 7 JUSTICE**—Treating all people fairly, no matter who they are.
- 8 COMMITMENT**—Making a promise and following through on it.
- 9 EXCELLENCE**—Doing the best that you possibly can.

ACTIVITIES

Breaking Barriers

Answer the following questions on separate paper.

- Write about a time in your life when you have used one or more of Jackie Robinson's values to face a problem or barrier. What was the barrier and how did you use the value(s)?
- Why do you think values are important to a person's life?
- Talk to family members about barriers they have faced. What values did they call upon to face their barriers?

ESSAY CONTEST:

Write About a Barrier You Have Faced

The **Breaking Barriers Essay Contest** is a chance for students in grades 4–8 to share their personal stories and how they use Jackie Robinson's values to face their own barriers.

For details and rules visit scholastic.com/breakingbarriers/kids or ask your teacher.

Prizes include a trip to the 2016 **MLB® All-Star Game®** for the Grand Prize winner and his/her parent/legal guardian, and a **laptop computer** for each of the nine national winners.

Contest Deadline: March 14, 2016

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. Void where prohibited. All students who are legal residents of, and currently reside in, the 50 United States (and the District of Columbia) and Canada (excluding Quebec) and who are currently enrolled in grades 4–8 are eligible to enter, except for those who have family members employed by Major League Baseball Properties, Inc., Scholastic Inc., and other related companies (see the Official Rules for a complete listing). Visit scholastic.com/breakingbarriers for complete Official Rules. Total AWP of all prizes: \$52,790.40. Sponsor: Scholastic Inc. Limit one entry per person. All prospective winners and their respective parents/legal guardians will be required to sign, notarize, and return an affidavit of eligibility/release of liability within ten (10) days of date of notification or an alternate winner may be selected.

Word Challenge!

- Create two teams and choose one umpire.
- Using Jackie Robinson's Nine Values above, the umpire first writes the definition **ONLY** of the word *courage* on a piece of paper. Then the umpire should draw seven blanks next to the definition where the word will go.
- Ask a volunteer to read the definition aloud. Instruct players to write the definition on a piece of paper.
- Have the first team guess a letter in the word. Fill in correct guesses. For each incorrect guess, the umpire gives the team a strike. After three strikes, the team is out and the second team has a chance to guess letters. The first team to complete the word wins.
- Repeat steps 2–4 using each of the nine values. Whichever team fills in the most words is the winner.

