

**Fact or Fiction?**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Below is a biography on Jackie Robinson. On the following page is a chart with ten statements. Indicate whether each statement is fact or fiction.

## **Exceptional Athlete**

Jackie Robinson was born on January 31, 1919 in Cairo, Georgia. Just a year after his birth, his mother moved him and his four siblings to Pasadena, California after Jackie's father deserted them. Jackie had a passion for sports at an early age and played football, baseball, basketball, and track for UCLA (The University of California at Los Angeles). He would become the first person in the history of UCLA to earn varsity letters in four different sports. He excelled in all four sports and led the Pacific Coast Conference (now the Pac-10) in scoring as a basketball player. Furthermore, he was a national champion long jumper.

## **Military Experience**

In 1941, however, Jackie left college because of financial difficulties and joined the U.S. Army. Robinson became first lieutenant of the 761st Tank Battalion, a group of Black soldiers. By federal law, Black soldiers were not allowed to fight alongside White soldiers. Robinson, however, never accompanied the battalion in combat. He was court-martialed for refusing an order from a bus driver to move to the back of the bus. He was eventually acquitted of the charges.

## **A Negro League Star Becomes a Big-Leaguer**

In 1944, Jackie joined the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro Baseball League. He was soon noticed by a baseball scout for the Brooklyn Dodgers. Although there was no law against signing Black baseball players in the Major Leagues, there was an "unwritten rule" against it. Attempts to sign players from the Negro Leagues had been rebuffed in the past. Nevertheless, the Dodgers owner, Branch Rickey, had begun a secret mission to sign the top players from the Negro Leagues. In 1946, Rickey signed Jackie Robinson to a Major League contract and designated him for assignment on the Dodgers minor league team in Montreal, Quebec (Canada).

While Robinson was welcomed in Canada, the situation in the United States was less than cordial. On April 15, 1947, amidst incredible fanfare and controversy, Jackie Robinson was called up to the Major Leagues. He became the first Black player in 57 years to play in a Major League baseball game.

## **Great Adversity and Great Success**

During Robinson's first year he endured racism, taunting, and intolerance. Some of his teammates even threatened to stop playing rather than have Jackie as a teammate. Nevertheless, Branch Rickey and several of the Dodgers players supported Jackie. Despite the obstacles that stood in his way, Jackie proved his integrity and strength as a person. He went on to have a stellar baseball career. He led the Major Leagues in stolen bases in 1947 and became the Major League Baseball Rookie of the Year. In 1949, he was named the National League's Most Valuable Player (MVP). That year, he had 203 hits and belted 16 home runs. He also knocked in 124 runs and stole 37 bases. He batted .342. After five more stellar years, Jackie Robinson led the Brooklyn Dodgers to their only World Series victory in 1955. They won the championship in seven games over the rival New York Yankees (although when the Brooklyn Dodgers moved to Los Angeles they won several more titles). In 1956, Jackie Robinson chose to end his baseball career after eight seasons at the age of 37. He ended his career with a .311 lifetime average. Furthermore, Jackie Robinson stole home 19 times. To this day, no other player since the World War II era has stolen home as many times. He was an all-star 6 times in his short career.

## **Powerful Legacy**

In 1962, Jackie Robinson was inducted into the Major League Baseball Hall-of-Fame. He died on October 24, 1972. On the 50th anniversary of his Major League debut (April 15, 1947), Major League Baseball retired his number, 42. It will never be worn again by any major league player on any team. April 15th was also named Jackie Robinson Day. To this day, Jackie Robinson remains a hero. He was a pioneer in breaking "The Color Barrier" in professional sports and paved the way for thousands of African-American athletes in dozens of sports. On October 29, 2003, United States Congress honored him (after his death) with the Congressional Gold Medal - the highest honor Congress can give.

	<b>FACT</b>	<b>FICTION</b>
Jackie Robinson is credited with breaking the color barrier		
In college, Jackie played Football, baseball, tennis, and hockey		
In college, Jackie was a champion high jumper		
Some players on the Brooklyn Dodgers elected to quit playing, rather than have Jackie as a teammate		
Jackie endured more racism in American than in Canada		
Jackie Robinson wore number 41		
Jackie's first major-league team was the Kansas City Monarchs		
Jackie was named MVP of the National League		
The Brooklyn Dodgers won their only World Series in 1955		
Jackie Robinson was inducted in the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame in 1957		
April 15th is considered Jackie Robinson Day		

**Answers:**

	<b>FACT</b>	<b>FICTION</b>
Jackie Robinson is credited with breaking the color barrier	<b>X</b>	
In college, Jackie played Football, baseball, tennis, and hockey		<b>X</b>
In college, Jackie was a champion high jumper		<b>X</b>
Some players on the Brooklyn Dodgers elected to quit playing, rather than have Jackie as a teammate	<b>X</b>	
Jackie endured more racism in American than in Canada	<b>X</b>	
Jackie Robinson wore number 41		<b>X</b>
Jackie's first major-league team was the Kansas City Monarchs		<b>X</b>
Jackie was named MVP of the National League	<b>X</b>	
The Brooklyn Dodgers won their only World Series in 1955	<b>X</b>	
Jackie Robinson was inducted in the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame in 1957		<b>X</b>
April 15th is considered Jackie Robinson Day	<b>X</b>	