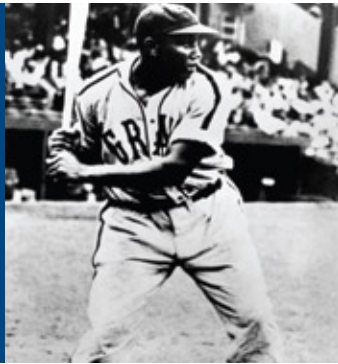


ABOUT THE NEGRO LEAGUES



Josh Gibson, Homestead Grays, 1929

STUDENT REPRODUCIBLE 5

Before Jackie Robinson joined the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947, breaking baseball's "color barrier," he had played for the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro Leagues. Since the 19th century, black- and brown-skinned ballplayers were banned from Major League Baseball. A few players, such as Moses "Fleetwood" Walker and John W. "Bud" Fowler had played on white teams in the 1880s, but they were the exception.

By 1890, racism and "Jim Crow" laws promoted segregation between African-Americans and whites. Baseball team owners made a "gentleman's agreement" not to hire any African-Americans. Many black players formed their own teams. The teams would travel around the country playing "pickup" games with any team that would play with them. By the 1900s, African-Americans had formed their own baseball leagues.

In 1910, Andrew "Rube" Foster, a former player and manager, became owner of the all-black Chicago American Giants. In 1920, he helped organize the

Negro National League. Determined to be successful, he controlled all the operations from equipment to scheduling to selling tickets. Soon other rival leagues formed across the country, and many became the pride of black communities. Another team, the Newark Eagles, was managed by Effa Manley, wife of owner Abe Manley. Tough-minded and shrewd, she was committed to her players and kept the team operating from 1936 to 1948. Effa Manley was the first woman inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 2006.

Life in the Negro Leagues was not easy. Teams struggled to make a profit. Players had to travel long distances, often in broken-down buses. They were paid very little, sometimes only \$100 a month. White ballplayers made three to four times more in the Major Leagues. Black players were not allowed to go to restaurants or hotels that served white customers. Gas stations closed their restrooms to them. But the players did not let these challenges stop them. They played for the love of the game and were determined to do their best.

Negro League players showed great teamwork and worked hard to impress the crowds. They developed an exciting style of play that was fast and daring. Players often stole bases and made opposing



The 1935 Pittsburgh Crawfords of the Negro Leagues pose for a photo in front of their team bus.

pitchers nervous with intimidating talk. Before games they warmed up with an exercise called shadow ball. Players would throw and hit an imaginary ball, making close plays and diving catches. To many spectators, it looked like they were using a real ball.

There were many excellent players in the Negro Leagues. Leroy Satchel Paige was a natural athlete who was primarily a pitcher. During his career he had 300 shutouts and played 2,500 games. Josh Gibson was



Satchel Paige (left) and Buck O'Neil (above), both of the Kansas City Monarchs.

a great hitter with 900 career home runs. He could hit a ball more than 575 feet. Both Paige and Gibson were later inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Buck O'Neil had a great career with the Kansas City Monarchs. He later became the first African-American to coach a Major League team, the Chicago Cubs. After he retired from baseball, he helped

found the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum in Kansas City, Missouri.

The Negro League teams survived through the Great Depression and World War II. After Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier by joining the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947, Major League Baseball began to allow black players to join their teams. Many Negro League teams lost their star players and went out of business. But their legacy lives on—there are 35 players who played in the Negro Leagues inducted in the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

FIND OUT MORE:

Use the resource links below to research one of the Negro League teams. Put together a brief report on your findings and share it with your classmates.

STARTING YOUR RESEARCH:

Begin by locating a Negro League team for your report. Record the team's name, and research the following for your report:

- a brief history of the team, including how it began and ended
- the team's owner
- the team's best record, including the year
- the team's playoff history
- a list of two or three of the team's best players, the years they played, and their positions
- a brief description of any of the teams' players inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame

RESOURCES:

Negro League Museum: www.coe.ksu.edu/nlbemuseum/history/teams.html

Negro League Baseball.com: www.negroleaguebaseball.com/teams/teams_index.html

National Baseball Hall of Fame: <http://baseballhall.org/hall-famers>