Unit 2

Title: “The Noble Experiment” an excerpt from *I Never Had It Made*

Suggested Time: 5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RI.7.1, RI.7.2, RI.7.3, RI.7.4; W.7.1, W.7.4, W.7.9; SL.7.1; L.7.1, L.7.2, L.7.4

Teacher Instructions

**Preparing for Teaching (note that the text in in the Interactive Reader)**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis. Please do **not** read this to the students. This is a description for teachers about the big ideas and key understanding that students should take away **after** completing this task.

Big Ideas and Key Understandings

Social change comes through non-violence and personal courage in the face of adversity.

Synopsis

This excerpt from Jackie Robinson’s autobiography, *I Never Had It Made*, begins with the history behind Branch Rickey’s plan to integrate major league baseball. During his stint as a college baseball coach, Mr. Rickey witnessed first-hand discrimination against a black baseball player who was not allowed to stay at the same hotel as his teammates. The events had devastating effects on the player and made a lasting impact on Branch Rickey. The remainder of the excerpt describes Branch Rickey’s hunt for the right player to integrate major league baseball and the initial discussion between Jackie Robinson and Branch Rickey as the plan is described.

1. Read the entire selection, keeping in mind the Big Ideas and Key Understandings.
2. Re-read the text while noting the stopping points for the Text Dependent Questions and teaching Tier II/academic vocabulary.

**During Teaching**

1. Students read the entire selection independently.
2. Teacher reads the text aloud while students follow along or students take turns reading aloud to each other. Depending on the text length and student need, the teacher may choose to read the full text or a passage aloud. For a particularly complex text, the teacher may choose to reverse the order of steps 1 and 2.
3. Students and teacher re-read the text while stopping to respond to and discuss the questions, continually returning to the text. A variety of methods can be used to structure the reading and discussion (i.e., whole class discussion, think-pair-share, independent written response, group work, etc.)

Text Dependent Questions

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| **Text-dependent Questions** | **Evidence-based Answers** |
| Branch Rickey recalls a memory of a black athlete named Charlie who was refused the same accommodations as his teammates. What was the significance of this memory to branch Rickey? What was the author’s purpose in including this memory at the beginning of the text? | This memory had such a profound impact on Branch Rickey that he continued to fight, “those in power” to end racial segregation in baseball even though he would lose this huge battle. The reason why the author would put this memory at the beginning of the text is to show the reader the reason for Branch Rickey’s passion, where it came from, and how devoted and committed he was to changing racial segregation. Rickey was so committed and passionate that he had this memory on his mind thirty-five years later, “lying awake at night, trying to make up his mind about a new experiment.” |
| What is “Rickey’s noble experiment”? Why would the plan Branch Rickey created be considered “noble”? Use evidence from the text that describes Rickey’s noble experiment as well as why it is considered noble. | The noble experiment is Branch Rickey’s plan to bring blacks into major league baseball by finding the ideal player that will help open the doors for other players. The text says, “Rickey knew he was morally right and the time had come for equality in baseball.” Noble is defined as something or someone with high honor or quality, excellent. This experiment was noble because what was happening with blacks was unfair, but the experiment was going to right that wrong. It was an experiment that, if all went as planned, would give black people back their integrity and their human right to live like everyone else, without judgment or prejudice. |
| The text states, “…stand up in the face of merciless persecution and not retaliate”. Why would the ideal candidate for this project need to be able to demonstrate these characteristics? | Branch Rickey knew that whoever he chose would face resentment, rejection, and possibly violence by players, fans, and sportswriters. The candidate would have to be able to stand up to all this and gain acceptance because he was a great ball player and not a bitter racial activist. A violent man would have confirmed the fears of those opposed to integration. |
| What does Robinson mean when he says of African Americans, “We go through life walking a tightrope to prevent too much disillusionment”? Use textual evidence to prove your answer. | The African Americans had experienced many people acting as hypocrites when they would say one thing and then never following through with what they promised, as the text states, “Most people assumed that when he spoke of some distant goal of integration, Mr. Rickey was being a hypocrite on this issue as so many of baseball’s leaders had been.” They needed to be able to balance being cynical about opportunities presented to them with not becoming so discouraged they give up trying, “Blacks have had to learn to protect themselves by being cynical but not cynical enough to slam the door on potential opportunities.” |
| “Here we go again, I thought. Another time wasting experience.” How might you characterize Jackie Robinson based on this quote? What previous events had led Jackie Robinson to respond in this way? | Based on the quote it can be inferred that he is a cynical, distrusting man. He has already experienced so much hypocrisy playing baseball, “Black players were familiar with this kind of hypocrisy.” Robinson tells of a time when he and two other players from the Negro league had been asked to try out for the Boston Red Sox because a council member threatened to ban baseball on Sundays if they didn’t. Even though they had the tryouts, Robinson was, “fairly certain they wouldn’t call us, and we had no intention of calling them,” making Robinson and other black players, “as cynical as we were.” The events alluded that he was a distrusting man and cynical. |
| Jackie describes his reactions to Branch Rickey’s offer as, “some kind of weird mixture churning in a blender.” Why was he experiencing this internal conflict? State specific evidence from the text that helps you to infer this. | At first, Jackie Robinson does not know if the offer from Branch Rickey is legitimate or if he’s just being another white hypocrite. He is not sure he should leave to go talk to Branch Rickey believing he may be fired if he goes. Once he talks to Branch Rickey and realizes that it is a major league position, he is very excited, but still not sure how to think about all of this. He compares his feelings to a blender because the text states he was feeling “thrilled, scared, and excited.” When one thinks of a blender, they often place many different things into it and mix it together and that is what Robinson is describing, many different feelings all mixed together. |
| What evidence from the text supports the inference that Jackie Robinson was offended by Branch Rickey when he said, “What I want to know is whether you have the guts.” Why does Branch Rickey ask Jackie Robinson this question? | The text states “that virtually amounted to him asking me if I was a coward” which helps the reader infer that Jackie felt Branch Rickey was calling him a coward. Jackie became furious and the texted demonstrated this by stating, “I felt heat coming up into my cheeks”. Branch Rickey may have asked Jackie the question to see if he would react in a way that would show he could not restrain himself when someone insults him. If he did show he couldn’t restrain himself, Mr. Rickey would know that Jackie would not be the best one for the job. |
| What was Branch Rickey’s purpose in thoroughly investigating Jackie Robinson? Cite textual evidence to prove your answer. | Mr. Rickey wasn’t just looking for any old ball player. They were “playing for big stakes”. They were looking to end segregation, and he knew there would be “merciless persecution” so he needed someone who would not “retaliate” nor be an “Uncle Tom”. Rickey went way back to Robinson’s past to investigate Robinson’s “life,” “habits,” “reputation,” and “character” to make sure there were no incidents that showed he had the type of character that would make this experiment fail. |
| What conclusions did Branch Rickey come to about Jackie being called a “racial agitator?” How did the color of Jackie’s skin impact that belief? | Branch Rickey concluded that if Robinson, “had been white, people would have said, “Here’s a guy who’s a contender, a competitor.” Because Robinson was black, he was, instead, labeled as a ‘racial agitator’. Rickey did not accept those “criticisms on face value, he had demanded and received more information. |
| The author writes, “There’s virtually nobody on our side.” Why would Branch Rickey move forward with a plan when there is so much social opposition? Cite textual evidence to prove your answer. | Branch Rickey moved forward with a plan that had “virtually nobody” on his side because he was in such strong disagreement about what he had seen in regards to how segregation had affected another human being. The text says that what he saw Charlie go through early in Branch Rickey’s career always stayed with him. Also, he knew it had to change, and he *knew* he wasdoing the right thing because the text says he believed he was morally right. |
| Branch Rickey explained the many challenges that Robinson would face from players and fans. Using evidence from the text, explain how Jackie Robinson describes Branch Rickey describing those challenges. What does this passage reveal to you about Branch Rickey’s character? State explicit evidence from the text or evidence that helps you to make this inference. | Robinson described him as sincere and having a passion for that which he was fighting, “I could feel his sincerity,” Robinson said, “and I began to get a sense of how much this major step meant to him.” Rickey’s character is also strong, “he was speaking from a deep, quiet strength. He is a man dedicated to accomplishing his dreams about a brighter future for major league baseball and mankind. “He had never forgotten the agony of that black athlete,” and that it was “thirty-five years later,” before he was able to do something about is evidence of his dedication to that dream. |
| Why does Jackie refer to personal dignity as, “the most luxurious possession”? Give textual evidence to support your reason. | Jackie refers to personal dignity as, “the most luxurious possession” because it is something he has always had to fight to keep, “…all my life-back to the age of eight when a little neighbor girl called me a nigger-I had believed in payback, retaliation.” The reason why Jackie was so upset was that he thought that Branch Rickey was asking him to give up his personal dignity by not fighting back when others treated him badly, asking Branch Rickey, “are you looking for a Negro who is afraid to fight back?” He was looking at Branch Rickey as “the enemy – a white man.” Jackie wanted to make sure that he wasn’t being asked to give up his personal dignity, his “birthright….the richest treasure anybody has” for this cause. |
| Steadfastly means, dutifully, unwavering, immovable. Mr. Rickey insists that Jackie Robinson stay, “steadfastly loyal to our ultimate aim”. What was the ultimate aim and why was it crucial that Robinson stay loyal? | The ultimate aim was to stop segregation in Major League Baseball. If Robinson didn’t stay loyal to it, it would prove to the nation of ‘whites’ that blacks were not able to play in the majors. |
| Branch Rickey asked Jackie Robinson, “Have you got the guts to play the game no matter what happens?” What did Jackie have to consider before he committed fully to the plan? State evidence from the text to support your answer. | He had to consider how his decision could put himself and loved ones in danger. Mr. Rickey made him aware of all the things that could happen, “I would be called the kind of names that would hurt and infuriate me. I would be physically attacked. Beanballs would be thrown at me.” He had to ask himself if he could endure the “unendurable…they’ll do anything to make you react,” and play ball without retaliating against those who would hurt him or his family; a “ballplayer with guts enough not to fight back.” |
| What can be inferred from the statement, “I had already begun to feel I had to do it for Branch Rickey”? | Robinson was already beginning to believe in Branch Rickey and his ultimate good for blacks. He saw how Branch Rickey believed in the cause and didn’t want to disappoint him. |

Tier II/Academic Vocabulary

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|  | **These words require less time to learn**  (They are concrete or describe an object/event/  process/characteristic that is familiar to students) | **These words require more time to learn**  (They are abstract, have multiple meanings, are a part  of a word family, or are likely to appear again in future texts) |
| **Meaning can be learned from context** | indignant  retaliate  conceal  integrate  insinuation  speculate  taunt | opposing *and* opposition  shrewdly  eloquence  cynical  stakes  unendurable |
| **Meaning needs to be provided** | bluff  segregate  incredulous  infuriate | (and title) - noble  hypocrite *and* hypocrisy  sincerity  transfixed  democratic  dignity |

Culminating Writing Task

Prompt

*Both Branch Rickey and Jackie Robinson showed tremendous personal courage in the face of opposition that led to the success of the “Noble Experiment”. Using evidence from the text, identify how either Branch Rickey or Jackie Robinson showed personal courage throughout this selection. Write an essay which states your argument and prove, using textual evidence, which one showed more personal courage.*

Teacher Instructions

1. Students identify their writing task from the prompt provided.
2. Students complete an evidence chart as a pre-writing activity. Teachers should remind students to use any relevant notes they compiled while reading and answering the text-dependent questions.

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| ***Evidence***  ***Quote or paraphrase*** | ***Elaboration / explanation of how this evidence supports ideas or argument*** |
| **(RICKEY)** “There would be deep resentment, determined opposition, and perhaps even racial violence. He was convinced he was morally right.” | Branch Rickey knew this was going to be a very difficult fight and that many would be against his idea. However, because he knew it was the right thing to do, he was willing to fight until baseball was fully integrated. |
| **(RICKEY)** Branch Rickey tried to fight the Jim Crow seating when he worked in St. Louis, but lost the fight. Even though he was not successful here, he never gave up the belief he had to keep fighting. When he became the owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers, he decided he would not lose this time no matter what. | When he lost the fight in St. Louis he didn’t give up. He chose to wait until he had more power to make the changes. As the boss of the Dodgers and the backing of the board, he was allowed to go ahead with the project. He showed courage in not giving up, but being shrewd in his execution. |
| **(Robinson)** Describing the ideal candidate for the experiment, “He had to stand up in the face of merciless persecution and not retaliate. On the other hand, he had to be a contradiction in human terms; he still had to have spirit. He could not be an ‘Uncle Tom’.” | The ideal candidate for this experiment could not be just anyone. He had to demonstrate tremendous personal courage to stand up to horrible treatment and not lose sight of the reason he was enduring the abuse. Jackie Robinson was exactly the type of person who would be willing to do this. |
| **(RICKEY)** Branch Rickey sent his scouts on an international manhunt for the ideal player for his experiment. If the news of their real purpose got out, it could have destroyed the entire project. “The manhunt had to be camouflaged. If it became known he was looking for a black recruit for the Dodgers, all hell would have broken loose.” | Branch Rickey had to show courage in trusting these scouts to keep their real mission a secret. He also showed the level of belief he had in this project by taking it world-wide to find the right player. |
| **(RICKEY)** When Rickey announced they were forming an all Black baseball league. “This, of course, made blacks and pro-integration whites indignant. He was accused of trying to uphold existing segregation and, at the same time, capitalize on black players.” | It showed courage for Mr. Rickey to not react to the misconception people had about who he was and what he was doing. He could have let his reputation be dragged through the mud only because he knew what he was really doing was so important that his reputation didn’t matter right then. |
| **(Robinson)** Jackie describes a few times when they were offered try-outs, even though the teams had no intention of hiring a black player. ItWhen Branch Rickey’s scout, Clyde Sukeforth, came with the offer of a try-out, Jackie didn’t walk away, even when he was concerned he might lose his position with the Monarchs. | It took courage on Jackie’s part to decide to go with Clyde Sukeforth. Considering the other times there was never a possibility of a real position, he could have decided it was not worth wasting his time. Jackie stood to lose everything if this wasn’t a real offer. He could also have lost his current team position by leaving to go meet with Branch Rickey, but he decided it was worth the risk. |
| **(Robinson & Rickey)** “We can’t fight our way out of this, Robinson. We’ve got no army. There’s virtually nobody on our side….We can win only if we can convince the world that I’m doing this because you’re a great ballplayer and a fine gentleman.” | For both Robinson and Rickey it took courage to take on a fight that was not supported by very many. Winning would not be easy. |
| **(Robinson & Rickey)**  Branch Rickey, “If you’re a good enough man, we can make this a start in the right direction. But let me tell you, it’s going to take an awful lot of courage.” | Branch Rickey was very clear with Jackie Robinson that this would not be easy. Even with a lot of courage, they were not going to change things quickly or completely. Success was “moving in the right direction”. |
| **(Robinson)** As Jackie reflects, “Could I take all of this and control my temper, remain steadfastly loyal to our ultimate aim?” | Branch Rickey tells Jackie Robinson in detail the types of abuse he could expect to endure. After hearing the hard facts about what he would have to face, he could have just decided it wasn’t worth it. Instead, knowing how bad is could and probably would be, and the importance of their mission, he courageously accepted Branch Rickey’s offer. |
| **(Robinson)** “Mr. Rickey,’ I asked, ‘are you looking for a Negro who is afraid to fight back?’ ‘Robinson,’ he said, ‘I’m looking for a ballplayer with guts enough not to fight back.’ | Jackie Robinson would have to show tremendous courage by NOT fighting back. The difference between being afraid to fight back and having the courage not to fight back was very important. The difference was whether he was acting out of fear or determination. Motivated by the determination to make social change would be a courageous act. |

1. Once students have completed the evidence chart, they should look back at the writing prompt in order to remind themselves what kind of response they are writing (i.e. expository, analytical, argumentative) and think about the evidence they found. (Depending on the grade level, teachers may want to review students’ evidence charts in some way to ensure accuracy.) From here, students should develop a specific thesis statement. This could be done independently, with a partner, small group, or the entire class. Consider directing students to the following sites to learn more about thesis statements: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/ OR http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/ thesis\_statement.shtml.
2. Students compose a rough draft. With regard to grade level and student ability, teachers should decide how much scaffolding they will provide during this process (i.e. modeling, showing example pieces, sharing work as students go).
3. Students complete final draft.

* Sample Answer

In the selection, “The Nobel Experiment”, an excerpt fro*m I Never Had It Made*, Jackie Robinson describes Branch Rickey’s plan to integrate major league baseball. After gaining approval from the directors of the Brooklyn Dodgers, he began a worldwide search for the player that would be able to stand up to incredible persecution, discrimination, and rejection; but would be committed to a response of non-violence. The perfect candidate would need to be able to endure these very difficult circumstances with the end goal in mind. Branch Rickey decided that Jackie Robinson was that man. To be successful in the experiment, both men would need to be very courageous. While both men showed tremendous courage, it was Jackie Robinson who showed the greatest personal courage in this experiment.

Jackie Robinson showed courage by taking a risk when Branch Rickey’s scout offered him an interview. The text described offers in the past where a team of all white players held tryouts because of political pressure with no intention of ever hiring a black player. When Branch Rickey’s scout, Clyde Sukeforth, came and offered a tryout to Jackie, he suspected this might be the same as it always had been. There was also a good chance he might be fired from his current team if he left with the scout. If the offer wasn’t real, he would lose everything. Even though he was concerned he might lose his job with the Monarchs by going to meet with Branch Rickey and the offer might not be legitimate, Jackie courageously decided to take a risk and go with him.

It took courage for Jackie Robinson to make the commitment to participate in Branch Rickey’s plan. Jackie did not make this decision easily. When Jackie Robinson met with Branch Rickey that first time, Mr. Rickey explained the plan he created to integrate major league baseball. He was very honest with Jackie about the abuse he would take from both players and fans. No matter what happened he could not fight back. Jackie got angry in the past at people trying to use him, even seeing white men as “the enemy”. At one point when Jackie asked Mr. Rickey, “…are you looking for a Negro who is afraid to fight back?” Mr. Rickey responded, “…I’m looking for a ballplayer with guts enough not to fight back.” He had to decide if the risk would be worth it in the end. Would non-violence work? Could he do it? He asked himself, “Could I take all of this and control my temper; remain steadfastly loyal to our ultimate aim?” He could have decided that Branch Rickey was like the other white men that had cheated him in the past, or that he could not control his temper, but he took the risk and committed to the experiment.

In the end, Jackie Robinson courageously decided to join Branch Rickey and change major league baseball. Both men knew that to make a change of this size would take time, but it was the right thing to do. Branch Rickey prepared him for the challenge when he told Jackie, “If you’re a good enough man, we can make this a start in the right direction. But let me tell you, it’s going to take an awful lot of courage.” Jackie Robinson could have lost everything if the experiment had gone wrong, but he decided the risk would be worth the cost and he changed the game forever.

Additional Tasks

* Students read the 2 articles below, *Jackie Robinson*, and *Jackie Robinson’s Accomplishment Reached Beyond the Seats*. The first article describes the experiences of Jackie Robinson where the anthology piece leaves off. It begins with his baseball career and moves into his activity in the Civil Rights Movement. The second article discusses Jackie Robinson’s legacy to Civil Rights and ends with a call to action (see quote in bullet below).

The text-dependent questions below each article can be used for discussion of the major ideas of these articles. Based on the readings, choose one or more activities:

* + Journal Prompt: Using the questions and information from the articles, write about at least two new things you learned about Jackie Robinson.
  + Journal Prompt: Robinson's favorite saying was "A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives." How has Jackie Robinson’s life inspired you? Use textual evidence from the articles we have read to fully explain what impacted you.
  + Small Groups Discussion: In what ways can a middle school student have an impact in the lives of others?
  + Whole Class: “The Jackie Robinson Project”. The class plans and executes a community project based on the idea of the importance of being involved and making an impact.

**JACKIE ROBINSON**

(From…Jackie Robinson Foundation Website)

From the beginning of his career with the Dodgers, Robinson's will was tested. Even some of his new teammates objected to having an African–American on their team. People in the crowds sometimes jeered at Robinson, and he and his family received threats.

Despite the racial abuse, particularly at away games, Robinson had an outstanding start with the Royals, leading the International League with a .349 batting average and .985 fielding percentage. His excellent year led to his promotion to the Dodgers. His debut game on April 15, 1947, marked the first time an African–American athlete played in the major leagues.  
  
The harassment continued, however, most notably by the Philadelphia Phillies and their manager Ben Chapman. During one infamous game, Chapman and his team shouted derogatory terms at Robinson from their dugout. Many players on opposing teams threatened not to play against the Dodgers. Even his own teammates threatened to sit out. But Dodgers manager Leo Durocher informed them that he would sooner trade them than Robinson. His loyalty to the player set the tone for the rest of Robinson's career with the team.

Others defended Jackie Robinson's right to play in the major leagues, including League President Ford Frick, Baseball Commissioner Happy Chandler, Jewish baseball star Hank Greenberg and Dodgers shortstop and team captain Pee Wee Reese. In one incident, while fans harassed Robinson from the stands, Reese walked over and put his arm around his teammate, a gesture that has become legendary in baseball history.

Jackie Robinson succeeded in putting the prejudice and racial strife aside, and showed everyone what a talented player he was. In his first year, he hit 12 home runs and helped the Dodgers win the National League pennant. That year, Robinson led the National League in stolen bases and was selected as Rookie of the Year. He continued to wow fans and critics alike with impressive feats, such as an outstanding .342 batting average during the 1949 season. He led in stolen bases that year and earned the National League's Most Valuable Player Award.

Robinson soon became a hero of the sport, even among former critics, and was the subject for the popular song, "Did You See Jackie Robinson Hit That Ball?" An exceptional base runner, Robinson stole home 19 times in his career, setting a league record. He also became the highest–paid athlete in Dodgers history, and his success in the major leagues opened the door for other African–American players, such as Satchel Paige, Willie Mays, and Hank Aaron.

Robinson also became a vocal champion for African–American athletes, civil rights, and other social and political causes. In July 1949, he testified on discrimination before the House Un–American Activities Committee. In 1952, he publicly called out the Yankees as a racist organization for not having broken the color barrier five years after he began playing with the Dodgers.  
  
In his decade–long career with the Dodgers, Robinson and his team won the National League pennant several times. Finally, in 1955, he helped them achieve the ultimate victory: the World Series. After failing before in four other series match–ups, the Dodgers beat the New York Yankees. He helped the team win one more National League pennant the following season, and was then traded to the New York Giants. Jackie Robinson retired shortly after the trade, on January 5, 1957, with an impressive career batting average of .311.

After baseball, Robinson became active in business and continued his work as an activist for social change. He worked as an executive for the Chock Full O' Nuts coffee company and restaurant chain and helped establish the Freedom National Bank. He served on the board of the NAACP until 1967 and was the first African–American to be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1962. In 1972, the Dodgers retired his uniform number of 42.

In his later years, Robinson continued to lobby for greater integration in sports. He died from heart problems and diabetes complications on October 24, 1972, in Stamford, Connecticut. He was survived by his wife, Rachel Isum, and two children. After his death, his wife established the Jackie Robinson Foundation dedicated to honoring his life and work. The foundation helps young people in need by providing scholarships and mentoring programs.

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http://www.jackierobinson.org/about/jackie.php

Text Dependent Questionsfor “Jackie Robinson”(From…Jackie Robinson Foundation Website)

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| **Text-dependent Questions** | **Evidence-based Answers** |
| In, *The Noble Experiment*, Branch Rickey predicted the reaction of players, fans, and writers to a black national league player. According to the article from the Jackie Robinson Foundation website, what were some examples of abuse that Jackie endured on the field? | In *The Noble Experiment,* Branch Rickey predicted that Jackie would be called all kinds of names, he could be physically attacked, fans would be hostile, resentful and they could say terrible things about his family. When Jackie actually got on the field, he was called terrible names, opposing teams threated not to play against the Dodgers and some of his own teammates threatened to sit out. |
| What does the text say and show that proves that Jackie Robinson was successful in, “putting the prejudice and racial strife aside” in his first year? How did this impact the public’s view of Jackie Robinson? | We know that Jackie Robinson was successful because he did not let the poor treatment he experienced affect his successful first year statistics. According to the text, he helped the team win the National League pennant and was named Rookie of the Year. By having a great first season, he also became a hero of the sport and changed the mind of his critics. The text said, “He continued to wow the fans and critics with impressive feats”. He went on to become a baseball hero because of his outstanding talent. |
| How did Jackie use his influence as a public figure outside of baseball? State specific examples from the text. | He testified on discrimination, publicly called out the Yankees a as racist organization, helped establish the Freedom National Bank and served on the board of the NAACP. |

**Jackie Robinson’s accomplishment reached beyond the seats by Michael Kinsman**

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| |  |  | | --- | --- | |  |  | |  |  |   What Robinson accomplished wasn't so much a baseball feat as it was a crucial civil rights breakthrough for all Americans. He was a great baseball player, yet none of his accomplishments on the diamond can compare with what he did for society.   Robinson showed us in definitive terms that blacks were the equal of whites in every aspect. He showed exemplary character and courage as a knockout punch to racism. It seems rather miraculous today that our society would have even questioned that six decades ago. But it clearly did.   What Robinson did took courage, compassion, vision, confidence and perseverance to prove a point that should have already been accepted by everyone.   |  | | --- | |  | |  | |  | |  | |  | |  |   And, probably no one could have done this the way Robinson did.   A black player who wanted to play in the all-white national pastime put his every move on display. Everyone was a witness to this history.   Robinson could have had the same character attributes, but had he been a plumber, a teacher, an insurance salesman or a Wall Street broker, the impact he made would have been obscured.   Instead, he was a baseball player, playing in front of tens of thousands of people each day who saw an eyewitness account of his talent. Millions of others read about his exploits on the baseball field in newspapers and magazines, or listened to radio broadcasts.   He was a living and breathing monument to U.S. civil rights.   Consider that when he joined the Brooklyn Dodgers on the field in 1947, it would still be seven years before the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed separate schools for whites and blacks; eight years before Rosa Parks sat in the white section of a Montgomery, Ala., school bus; 16 years before [Martin Luther King Jr](http://www.lawcrossing.com/article/3948/Law-Librarians-Get-Grant). made his "I Have a Dream" speech; and, 17 years before the Civil Rights Act of 1964.   Robinson used his workplace - a baseball diamond - to leverage social change. He was successful in showing everyday Americans how unfairly blacks had been treated and why they deserved fair treatment.   Robinson's favorite saying was "A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives."   Try on that phrase today. Take it with you everywhere you go. Take it to work and play. Take it home with you at night.   Jackie Robinson didn't impact a few hundred white guys who played baseball. He had an impact of every American of his generation and every American since. His life had immense importance, and now the lives of each of us needs to carry that forward by fighting racism anyway we can.  © Copley News Service  <http://www.lawcrossing.com/article/2965/Jackie-Robinson-s-accomplishment-reached-beyond-the-seats/>  Text Dependent Questions for, *Jackie Robinson’s accomplishment reached beyond the seats,* by Michael Kinsman**y**   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Text-dependent Questions** | **Evidence-based Answers** | | The author’s thesis in this essay is that, “none of his (Robinson’s) accomplishments on the diamond can compare with what he did for society.” Describe the evidence he uses to support his claim. | Student responses will vary. Students might talk about:   * Robinson was in front of public w/millions seeing and reading about him * Robinson showed character and courage * He was the first national figure before Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King * Used his workplace as a leverage to social change | | Jackie Robinson’s favorite saying was, “A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives”. Why do you think the author asks the reader to, “try on that phrase today”? | Student answers will vary. May include references to how Jackie Robinson used his workplace, character attributes, and situation to affect change. The author may want students to understand their ability to use their circumstances and personality to positively impact those around them. | |

Note to Teacher

* The text, “The Noble Experiment”, is also in the Interactive Reader; the consumable version of *Language of Literature*, where students can annotate the text.