

# Study Guide



## Jackie Robinson: A Game Apart

by  
Mike Wiley



### Did you know?

This performance is a public service of the Sampson CenterStage Performing Arts Series and the County of Sampson and is totally funded and underwritten through the financial contributions of many businesses, corporations, civic organizations, and individuals from across Sampson County and is provided **FREE** to students from Clinton City Schools and Sampson County Schools.

*Many thanks to all **Class Acts-Sampson CenterStage for Students** Sponsors...On the day of the performance a complete list of Class Acts Sponsors will be distributed to each teacher...*

***How you can help!** Please take a moment to have **YOUR** students write a note of appreciation to our sponsors...without them this performance would not be possible...*

This study guide was prepared and provided as a courtesy of the **Class Acts-Sampson CenterStage for Students** series and is designed to aid in preparing students for an exciting performance...We encourage you to make use of this valuable resource designed to not only enhance each student's theatergoing experience; but to also complement their total educational experience.

# GOING TO THE THEATRE (101)



## Going to the Theatre

Watching a live performance is very different than watching television or going to the movies. When you see a live performance you play a part too! Your role is an audience member. As an audience member you should obey the following instructions:

When you arrive, follow an usher to your seat. Your group may be assigned to specific areas or seats in the theatre. Please stay in the seat that you are given until the show is over.

Most theaters do not allow cameras, cellular telephones or recording devices. Please leave these at home or in your classroom.

Food, drink, candy and chewing gum are not allowed in the theatre.

When the theater lights dim, it means the show is about to begin...Please be quiet.

Listen and watch carefully. Talking and making noise disturbs the performers on stage and your fellow audience members. Please hold your comments until after the performance. Of course when something is funny you may laugh. You may even cry when something is sad.

Show your appreciation by clapping when the performance is over and when the performers bow.

Stay seated after the show and an usher or your teacher will lead you out of the theater.

## SPECIAL NOTE

This show will have a question and answer period following the performance. Please stay seated after the curtain call. If you have a question, raise your hand. Speak loudly and clearly when you are called on.

# Theatre Collaborators



**When we see a show, we often think of only the performers on stage. However, many people come together to make a performance happen. Read the list of theatre collaborators and answer the discussion questions with a partner.**

**Playwright** - writes the play

**Director** - helps the performers understand their roles and tells them where to move on stage. The director also collaborates with designers to create the entire picture you see on stage.

**Costume Designer** - imagines and designs the clothing and other items worn by the performers on stage.

**Lighting Designer** - imagines and creates the lights of a performance to enhance the mood and the setting.

**Sound Designer** - imagines and creates the music and other sound effects which help tell the story of a play

**Set Designer** - makes a map of each set and its changes

**Props** - items held or used by the actors on stage that help tell the story

**Gels** - pieces of plastic that are used in stage lights to change their color

## THINK ABOUT IT!



Why is changing the color of lights important for the mood in a scene?

If you were a character in a play, what color gel would you choose for your spotlight? Why?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS...

1. If you were to work in the theater business, which theater collaborator would you rather be?
2. Which job seems most challenging? Why?



# JACKIE ROBINSON: A GAME APART

## DISCUSSION GUIDE



### Mike Wiley – The Playwright and Actor

Actor and playwright Mike Wiley has spent the last decade fulfilling his mission to bring educational theatre to young audiences. In the early days of his career, Wiley found few theatrical resources to shine light on key events and figures in black history. To bring these often ignored stories to life, Wiley started his own production company. Through his work, he has introduced countless students to the stories and legacies of Emmett Till, the Tuskegee Airmen, Henry “Box” Brown and more. Most recently he has brought Timothy B. Tyson’s acclaimed book “Blood Done Sign My Name” to the stage. Mike Wiley has a Masters of Fine Arts from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, has appeared on the Discovery Channel, The Learning Channel and the National Geographic Channel and was recently profiled in *Our State* magazine.

### Jackie Robinson Bio

Jack Roosevelt “Jackie” Robinson was an exceptional athlete, activist and businessman. In 1939 he enrolled in the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and was the first athlete in school history to letter in four sports – football, baseball and track and field. Jackie was drafted into the Army in 1942 and eventually became a lieutenant.

After the Army, Jackie played in the Negro Baseball League. Branch Rickey, owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers, felt strongly about bringing African-American players to the league and asked Jackie if he would consider playing for his team. Jackie was told he would be offered a contract if he had “guts enough not to fight back” when racial slurs were shouted from the stands or if players attempted to injure him on the field.

Despite enormous pressure, Robinson earned the Rookie of the Year award in his first season with the Brooklyn Dodgers. In his second year, Jackie won the national League MVP award and batting title. Eventually, Jackie won respect and became an inspiration and a symbol of opportunity for all African Americans.

### Synopsis

*A Game Apart* provides a glimpse of Jackie Robinson’s life during a bygone era of separate and unequal locker rooms, of whites only hotels, and of restaurants with only a back door for colored athletes to enter. Witness the hopeless humiliation of a star player who was showered with adulation on the field and became a second-hand citizen when he walked off the diamond. Meet Jackie’s compatriots fighting the same battles between the end zones, inside the ring and around the track. *A Game Apart* is a powerful lesson of courage through dedication, perseverance, and leadership.





### The Setting

Modern Day

### Themes

Racism, hope, determination, nonviolence

### Key Characters

Jackie Robinson – National baseball hall of fame member, broke baseball's color barrier

Mallie Robinson – Jackie's mother

Mack Robinson – Jackie's brother and Olympic track and field athlete

Isaac Murphy – Kentucky Derby Champion

Langston Hughes – Famous American writer

Fritz Pollard – American football star

The Mayor of Clarksville, Tennessee in 1960

Branch Rickey – President of Brooklyn Dodgers (1940s)

Charley Thomas – Ohio Wesleyan baseball player

Joe Louis – Professional Boxer

### Vocabulary

Jim Crow

Racism

Plessy vs. Ferguson

Sharecropping

Negro Baseball League

The Noble Experiment

### Discussion Topics

- Jackie let his abilities speak for him instead of fighting back verbally or physically when treated badly by fans, teammates and competitors. Share a time when you felt proud of yourself for using self-control and courage to turn a bad situation into something positive.
- Jackie Robinson credited his mother, minister and brother Mack for keeping him out of trouble and on the right track. Are there adults in your life who influence you to be the best you can be? Make a list of those people and make it a goal to say "thank you" to those people for being positive role models. What are ways you can be a positive role model to someone you know?
- Why was it so important to Adolph Hitler that his athletes beat African-American competitors like Jesse Owens in the 1936 Berlin Olympics? Why are the performances of athletes in international competitions so closely linked to pride in one's country?
- After the 1936 Olympics, Jackie's brother Mack returned to a country "that closed its eyes to the Negro," yet he stated that he still felt "the pride of an individual who had represented a great nation on an international scale." Discuss the reasons Mack might feel this way.
- Why was Jackie Robinson adored for his efforts on the baseball field yet prevented from eating at some restaurants or staying at some hotels? How do you think some fans justified feeling differently about Jackie while watching him play than if they were to meet him on the street?
- Why were African Americans accepted more readily on the athletic field than in everyday life?
- Why were African Americans asked to fight the battles of WWII to protect the principles of democracy, yet unable to participate as full-fledged citizens (e.g. voting, equal access to schools and restaurants, etc.) when they returned home?
- What was "The Noble Experiment" and why might those words have been used to describe the event?
- Jackie Robinson once said, "Life is not a spectator sport. If you're going to spend your whole life in the grandstand just watching what goes on, in my opinion you're wasting your life." Discuss how the events of his life reflected this belief. Do you agree? What are some issues that would motivate you to "get out of the grandstand"?
- Discuss the tone and meaning behind Langston Hughes' poem *I, Too, Sing America*. Has "tomorrow" come?

### Recommended Reading & Viewing

"Did You See Jackie Robinson Hit That Ball?" – <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pnDp45PfOC0>

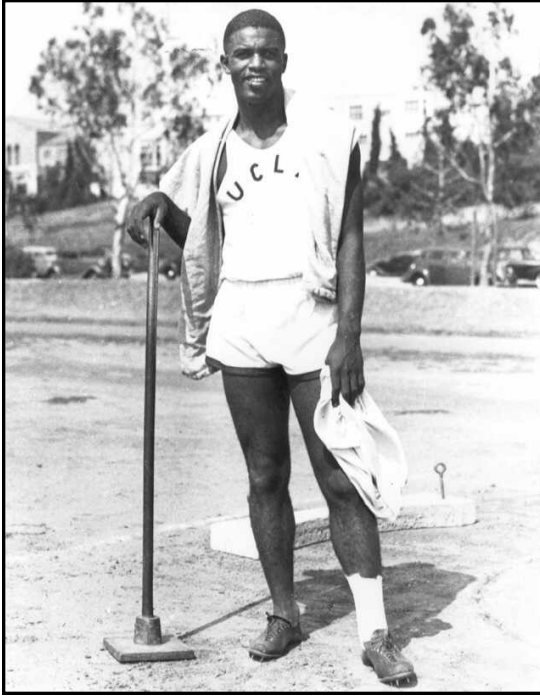
*I Never Had it Made: An Autobiography of Jackie Robinson* by Jackie Robinson (high school)

*Out of the Shadows: A Biographical History of African-American Athletes* by David K. Wiggins (high school)

*Promises To Keep: How Jackie Robinson Changed America* by Sharon Robinson (Grades 4-7)

*Stealing Home: The Story of Jackie Robinson* by Barry Denenberg (Grades 4-6)

# NOW THAT'S CHARACTER!



**Jackie Robinson at UCLA**

"When Branch Rickey asked Jackie Robinson to play for the Brooklyn Dodgers, he knew that Jackie would need to display strong character. He had enough self control to not fight back when people tested him with threats, insults and foul play. Jackie had to rise above the racial hatred in order to successfully integrate the game. He used his energy, instead, to become one of the best baseball players of his time. His character and his talent eventually helped him to earn the respect of teammates, fans and the competition. After becoming an American hero, he was able to speak out for the rights of all African Americans.

Isaac Murphy, the three time Kentucky Derby champion in the late 1800s, told a story in the play about a time when he was asked to lose a race on purpose for a large group of gamblers.

"I'd rather have a whole heap a' pride than a whole heap a' change," he said about refusing the offer and going on to win the race.



## THINK ABOUT IT!

Think of a time when you felt proud of yourself for using self control and courage to turn a bad situation into something positive. Partner with someone in class and share your stories with on another.



## REFLECTION

Jackie Robinson gave credit to his mother, his minister and his brother Mack for helping him stay out of trouble and on the right track. Are there adults in your life who influence you to be the best you can be? Make a list of those people below. Make it a goal this week to say "thank you" to these people for being positive role models.

# Stars of The Court, The Field, The Mud, The Stage & The Page.

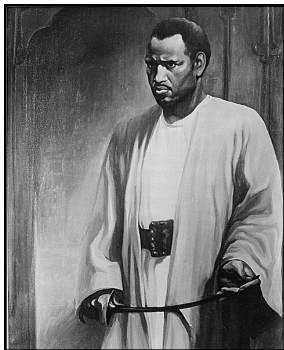
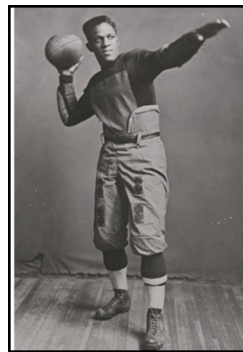
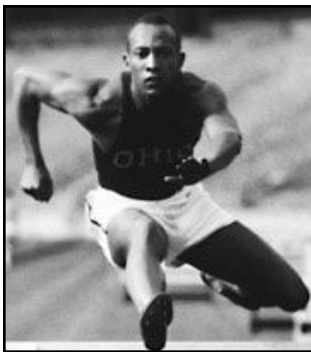
## DO IT!



Many African American heroes excelled in their talents despite the nation's Jim Crowe craze. Champion athletes were gaining respect and international acknowledgement in a whole variety of sports. Writers, performers, musicians and thinkers were making names for themselves as they excelled above other Americans who were offered more opportunities.

In the time between the end of World War I and the Great Depression, there was a cultural and artistic explosion in Harlem as many African Americans relocated to New York in search of more opportunity. The time period was named the Harlem Renaissance.

Write the number of each statement on the following page above the picture of the person it describes.



## **CONTINUED ACTIVITY**

### **Stars of The Court, The Field, The Mud, The Stage & The Page**

1. I rode in my first Kentucky Derby when I was fifteen, and I went to be the first person to win three Kentucky Derbies. I won 44% of my races, a record which has never been broken. My name is Isaac Murphy.
2. I was a true Renaissance man. I earned an academic scholarship to Rutgers University, becoming the third African American student there in history and graduated as class valedictorian in 1919. I was a two-time All American football player and also excelled in baseball, basketball, and track. I became a world famous actor and singer on the stage and the screen. My name is Paul Robeson.
3. I have always loved music, and when I was nine years old, I would sing on the street corners for coins. I eventually became one of the most popular blues singers of the 1920's. With my first recording, I became the most successful African American performing artist of my time. My name is Bessie Smith.
4. I was a cornerstone of the National Football League. I was an All American player at Brown University and went on to lead my first professional team, the Akron Pros, in rushing, scoring and punt returns while I was serving as the head coach. My name is Fritz Pollard.
5. I grew up in Eatonville, Florida, the first incorporated African American community in America. I attended Howard University, then moved to New York to work with other creative people of my time. I was considered an authority on Black culture during the Harlem Renaissance as a famous novelist, folklorist and anthropologist. My name is Zora Neale Hurston.
6. My mother taught me how to play piano. When I was a teenager, I studied with New York musicians in "stride style" piano and toured with bands around the country. My big band music of the jazz swing era gained popularity during the Harlem Renaissance and I became one of the leading musicians of my time. My name is Count Basie.
7. In college, I broke three world records and tied a fourth in a single track meet, although I was made to use "black-only" hotels and restaurants when I traveled with the team. I was the first person in American history to win four gold medals for Track and Field in a single Olympics— the 1936 games in Hitler's Nazi Germany. My name is Jessie Owens.
8. I was the first African American to win the French Open, the US Open and Wimbledon. In 1957 and 1958, the Associated Press named me Female Athlete of the Year. I opened the door for other African Americans to become tennis stars. Later in my career, I joined the ladies professional golf tour. My name is Althea Gibson.

## **GOING FURTHER!**

Choose one of these famous Americans, and research about their lives in books and on the internet. Present the information you find to your class.





# AT HOME

Dear Parents,

Recently, your student attended a performance of **JACKIE ROBINSON: A GAME APART**. Award winning actor, Mike Wiley, created a powerful picture of life for African Americans under Jim Crow laws. Your student learned about the landmark successes of Jackie Robinson and other famous Americans despite their treatment as second class citizens in this production about courage, dedication and leadership.

Prior to attendance, teachers reviewed proper theatre etiquette with students and gave some background information about the history of segregation in the United States. Aside from the many benefits for students of simply experiencing theater, the material addressed in this play supported many goals in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.

As a parent, you are your child's best teacher. They can also teach you through their experiences. Ask your student about the play they attended and read through this booklet. Share some experiences that you or other family members had during the time of segregation. This is a wonderful opportunity to talk about important history.

Thank you for your participation in the arts.



## DO IT!

A reviewer writes an opinion of the actors, sets, and director for a newspaper or magazine. Write your review of the play for your family.

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