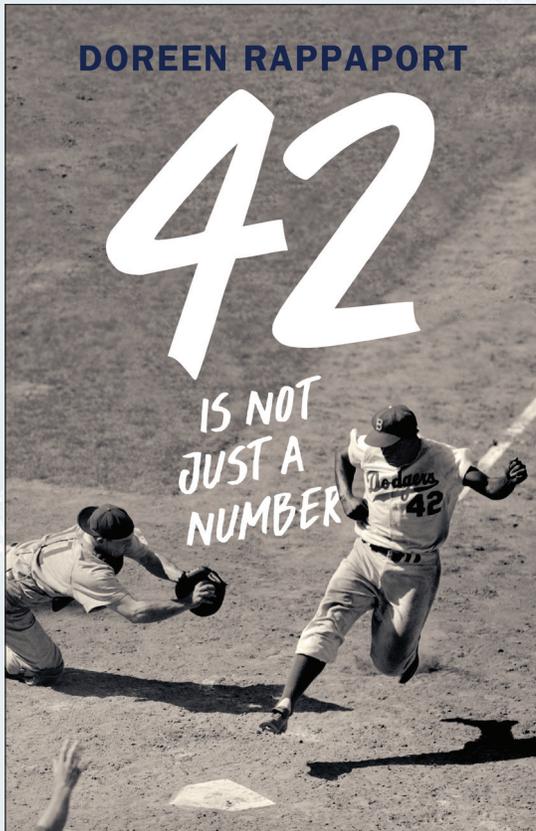


42 IS NOT JUST A NUMBER

THE ODYSSEY OF JACKIE ROBINSON, AMERICAN HERO

DOREEN RAPPAPORT



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Also available as an e-book and in audio

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Doreen Rappaport became an avid Brooklyn Dodgers fan in 1949, when she was ten and Jackie Robinson was a Dodger. She is now the award-winning author of more than fifty-seven children's books, many of which celebrate Americans who made a difference. She lives in upstate New York.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Jackie Robinson changed history when he broke Major League Baseball's color barrier in the 1940s. As this powerful biography shows, he was the perfect choice for the challenge. Not only was he an extraordinary athlete, but he also had the courage to face and triumph over vicious racism from other players and the public. Since his childhood, he had fought back against prejudice in school and in the military. But knowing the importance of this new role, especially to other black Americans, Robinson ignored hatred and endured loneliness as his team's lone black player. Award-winning author Doreen Rappaport traces Robinson's journey from childhood through his triumphant first year as a Dodger, introducing us to key figures in his personal life and in the sports world whose support bolstered him during his tumultuous time in the major leagues. Her use of quotes and personal details bring readers along on Jackie Robinson's tough journey to transform America and its favorite sport.

Common Core Connections

This discussion guide can be used with large or small groups and will help students meet several of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts. These include the reading literature standards for key ideas and details (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL) as well as the speaking and listening standards (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL). Questions can be used for group discussion and as writing prompts for independent work.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was Jackie Robinson's childhood like? How about his teenage years? Identify ways that racial prejudice affected him as he was growing up. Give some examples of how he reacted to racism at that time.
2. Describe Jackie's experience in the military, including examples of the racial bias that he and others faced. How did he deal with the mistreatment? Summarize his court-martial trial, its participants, and its outcome, and analyze what motivated it.
3. Why couldn't Jackie, who was a standout college athlete, see a future for himself as a professional athlete? When Jackie was young, what were the opportunities for black athletes? What did the 1936 Olympics show about them? Contrast the role of black athletes in that era with their role in professional sports today.
4. What part did the Negro Leagues play in Jackie's career? Describe his experiences there. Which parts of the experience were positive for him and which were negative?
5. Why was integrating the major leagues so important to Wendell Smith? How did he advance the cause? How did he help Jackie? How else did the press pressure Major League Baseball to add black players? Give examples of the role of the press in Jackie's life once he was a Dodger.
6. Arguments against adding black ballplayers included "white fans would never come to see them play, destroying the business of baseball" (page 42). Relate the argument to what actually happened. What was the economic impact of Jackie Robinson on the Dodgers and on Major League Baseball in general?
7. What motivated Branch Rickey to integrate the major leagues? What was his attitude toward Jackie? In the end, how did Jackie feel about Rickey?
8. What was Jackie's interview with Branch Rickey like? Why did Rickey act out the role of people who would mistreat Jackie if he became a major-league player? Explain what Rickey meant when he said, "I'm looking for a ballplayer with guts enough not to fight back" (page 51).
9. How did Jackie's teammates on the Royals and then the Dodgers react to him? Why did Rickey tell Jackie's fellow players that if they didn't want to play with Jackie, he would gladly trade them?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

10. Give examples of how players on other teams and their managers treated Jackie. How did their actions help change the attitude of Jackie's Dodger teammates toward him?
11. Why was Jackie so lonely as a ballplayer on the Royals and the Dodgers? What changes could have made him less lonely?
12. Explain some of the reasons that Jackie Robinson was a great choice for a player to integrate the major leagues.
13. Discuss the statement that "Black Americans were depending on him to succeed, to show the white world that they were equally talented if given the chance. It was an overwhelming and constant burden" (pages 80–81). Why did Jackie feel that way? What effect did the burden have on him, his health, and his family?
14. The author's note says of Jackie Robinson, "He was a one-person civil rights movement" (page 95). In what ways did he advance the cause of civil rights? Give evidence of how black fans felt about him and his accomplishments.
15. When Jackie was inducted as the first black player into the Baseball Hall of Fame, he thanked his mother. Why was she so important to him? What values did she give him? How did his siblings influence him?
16. Jackie also thanked his wife, Rachel, at the Hall of Fame ceremony. How did she help him when he was a ballplayer? What impact did his career have on her life?
17. Why is 42 so important that Major League Baseball no longer lets any new player use it? Relate that fact to Jackie Robinson Day and how it's celebrated.
18. Why do you think the author chose the title *42 Is Not Just a Number*?

This guide was prepared by Kathleen Odean. Kathleen was a school librarian for more than fifteen years and now presents all-day workshops on new books for young people, including one that focuses on Common Core nonfiction. She served as chairperson of the 2002 Newbery Award Committee and is the author of several guides to children's books, including *Great Books for Girls*, *Great Books for Boys*, and *Great Books About Things Kids Love*.

