

LEVELED BOOK • K

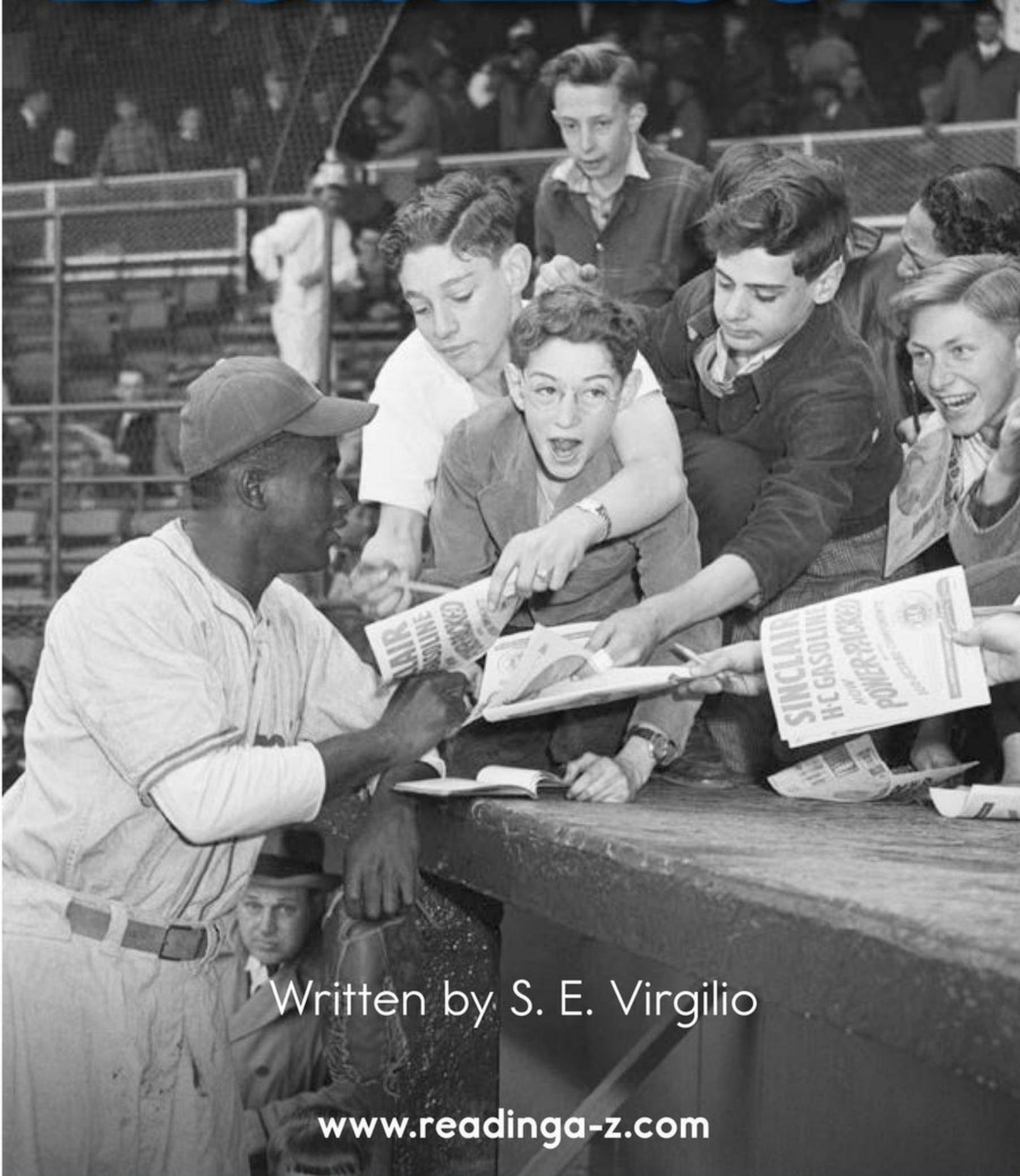


Jackie Robinson

Written by
S. E. Virgilio

MULTI
level
K•N•Q

Jackie Robinson



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Focus Question

How did Jackie Robinson change history?

Words to Know

athletes
condition
prejudice

professional
rights
segregated

Title page: Robinson signs autographs for excited young Dodgers fans in 1947.

Page 3: Robinson's family pitches in to help him blow out a candle on his thirty-fifth birthday in 1954.

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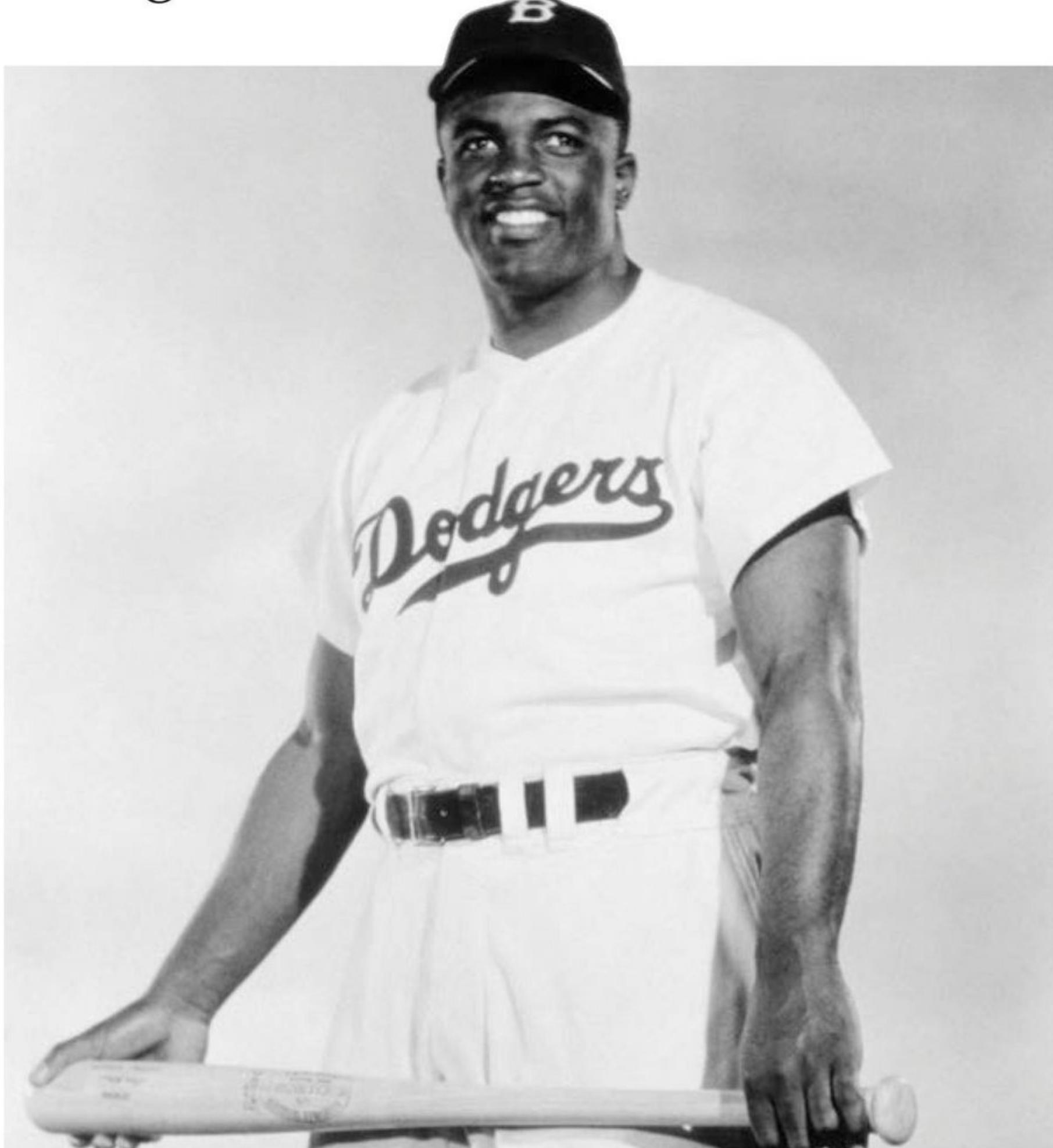


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Introduction

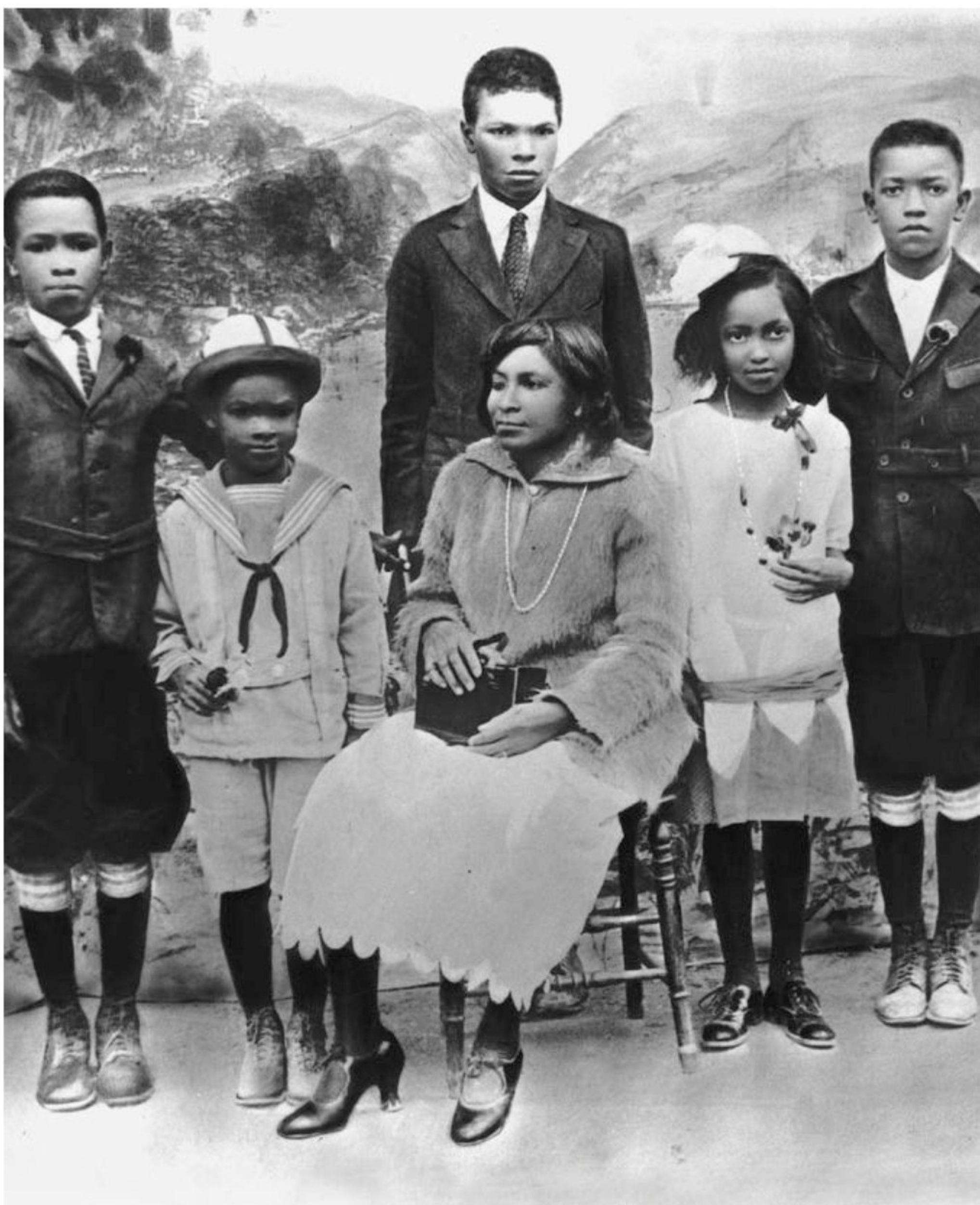
African Americans play a big part in **professional** sports today. For many years, however, black **athletes** weren't allowed to play with white athletes. Jackie Robinson helped change all that.



Jackie Robinson was both a baseball hero and a champion for equal rights.

The Early Years

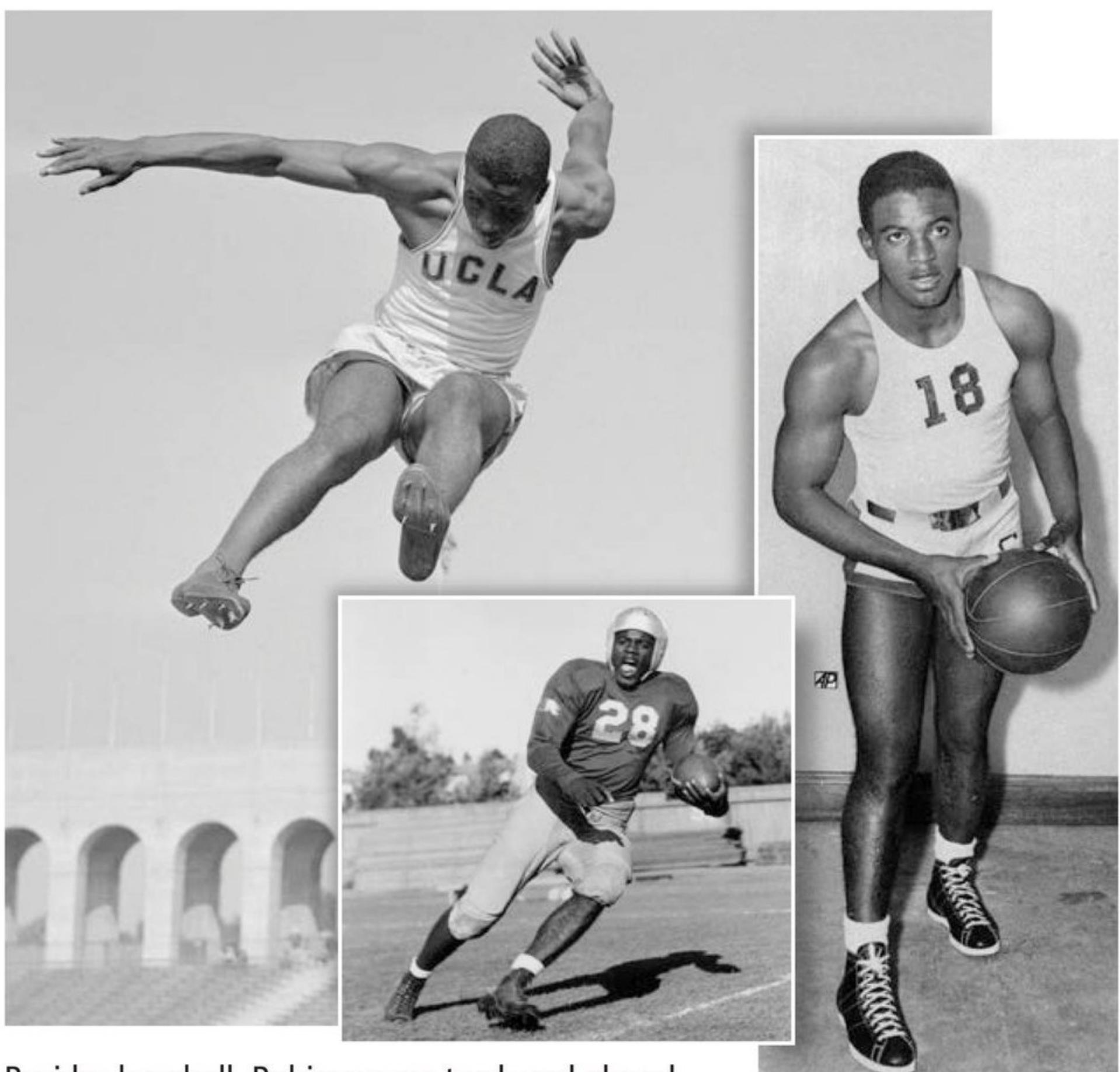
Jack Roosevelt Robinson was born into a poor Georgia family in 1919.



Jackie Robinson (second from left) poses with his family around 1925.

In college, he was a star on his school's football, track, basketball, and baseball teams.

His family had little money, however. He left college in 1941 to help support his family and did not finish.



Besides baseball, Robinson ran track and played football and basketball in college. He was great at all of them.

Taking a Stand

In December 1941, the United States entered a war. Like many young men, Robinson had to serve in the war.

One day, he and a group of soldiers got on an army bus.

The bus was **segregated**. White soldiers sat in the front and black soldiers in the back. Yet Robinson knew he was as good a soldier as the white men. He would not move to the back when he was told to.

Robinson was arrested, but he had only stood up for what was right. He was let go.



Robinson poses in his U.S. Army uniform.

You're Hired!

After his time in the army, Robinson played baseball. In 1945, however, baseball was segregated, too. White and black athletes played in separate leagues.



Robinson played shortstop in the mid-1940s. He later played first and then second base.



The umpire motions Robinson to first base after he is hit by a pitch in 1947.

Robinson felt that there should not be separate baseball leagues based on skin color. So did Branch Rickey, the man who ran the Brooklyn Dodgers. Rickey wanted the Dodgers to be the first white team to include a black player. Rickey knew that this player would not only have to be a great athlete. He would also have to face **prejudice** because he was African American.

Rickey hired Robinson. He had one condition, though. Robinson could only fight prejudice one way—by playing great baseball.

A Team of Two

Rickey and Robinson teamed up to end segregated baseball. But being the first isn't always easy.

"Plenty of times I wanted to haul off when somebody insulted me for the color of my skin, but I had to hold to myself. I knew I was kind of an experiment. The whole thing was bigger than me."

—Jackie Robinson



Robinson shakes Rickey's hand after signing his 1948 contract.

Number 42 Takes the Field

Wearing number 42, Robinson took the field on April 15, 1947. A crowd of twenty-six thousand people watched as he walked to the plate. Insults rang out from the other team's dugout, but Robinson just played ball.



Robinson waits for the pitch in April 1947.

Equal rights won that day. So did the Dodgers. As for Robinson, he went on to have a great career.

Another Great Steal

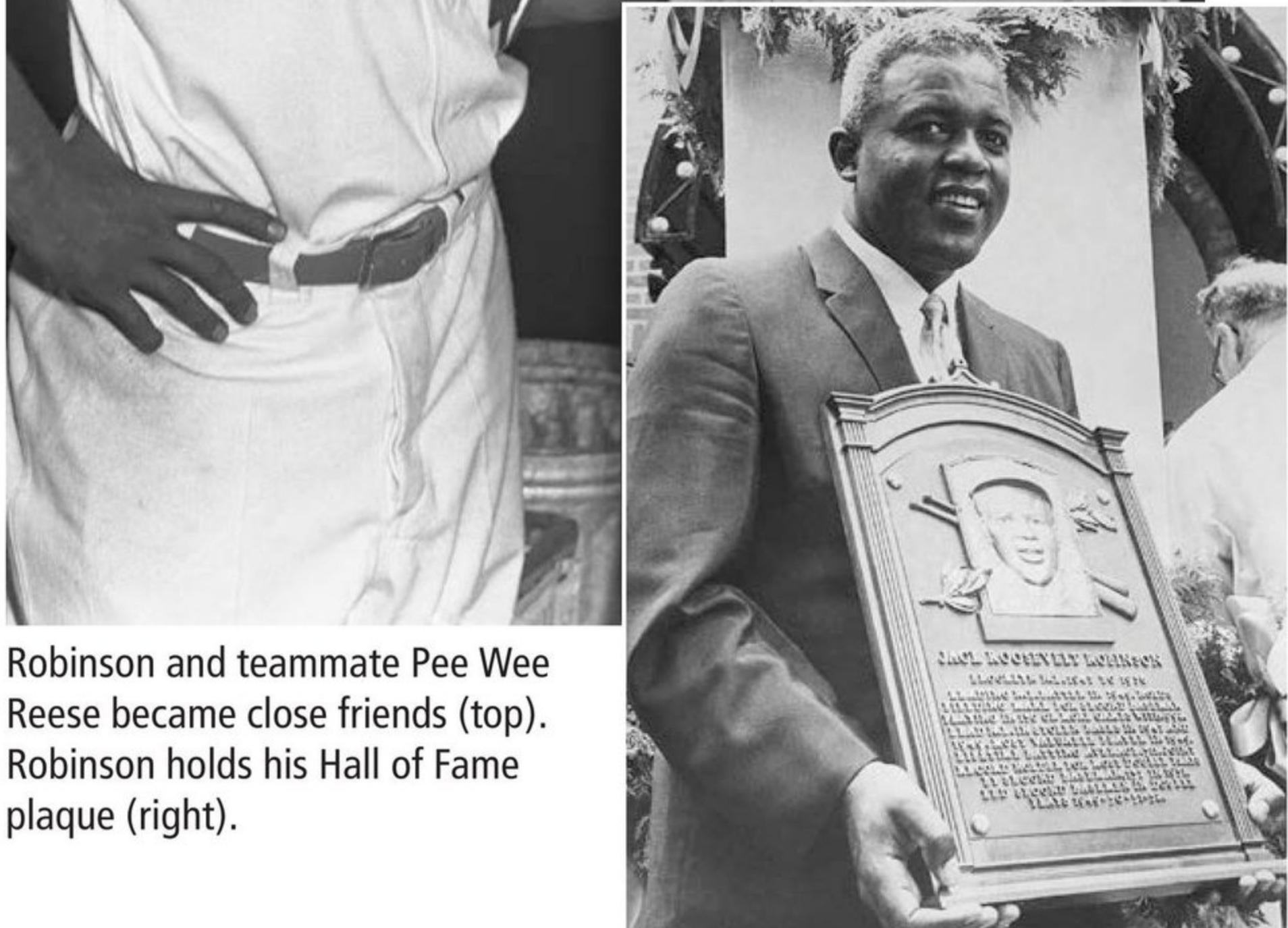
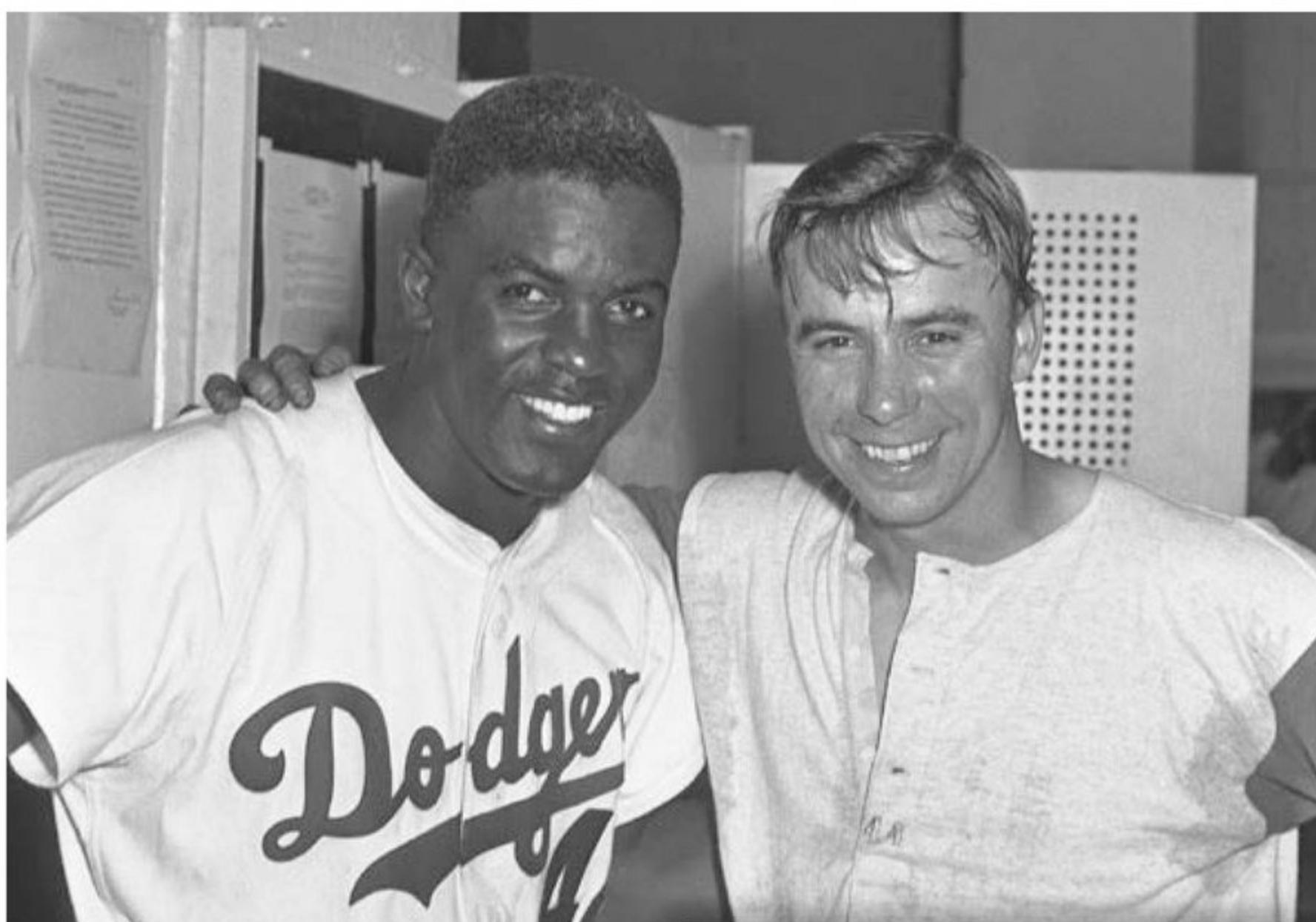
In 1955, Robinson made one of the greatest steals in baseball history. Leo Lennox was there:

"The crowd was roaring. Robinson went into his slide and the catcher reached for the tag. 'Safe!' called the umpire. Robinson did it! He stole home!"



The Yankees catcher attempts to tag Robinson during the 1955 World Series.

In 1962, he became the first African American to get into the Baseball Hall of Fame.



Robinson and teammate Pee Wee Reese became close friends (top). Robinson holds his Hall of Fame plaque (right).

His Number, His Day

In 1997, the number 42 was retired from professional baseball. No other player could wear that number.

The only time the number 42 is worn is on April 15, the day of Robinson's first game with the Brooklyn Dodgers. On that day, every player's uniform bears the number 42 in memory of Jackie Robinson.



The Angels and the Athletics both wear number 42 jerseys on April 15, 2014 (top). President Barack Obama views Robinson's jersey during a tour of the Baseball Hall of Fame (right).



Beyond Baseball

After Robinson stopped playing baseball in 1957, he went into business. He also continued to work for equal rights for all people. He died in 1972.

Today in the United States, more people of color play in the world of sports than ever before. We all have Number 42 to thank for that.



Robinson helped run the coffee maker Chock Full o' Nuts. He was the first black vice president of a U.S. national company. Here, he works at his desk in January 1962.

Glossary

athletes (<i>n.</i>)	people trained in sports or games that require strength, speed, and skill (p. 4)
condition (<i>n.</i>)	a circumstance that must happen or be accepted before an agreement can move forward (p. 10)
prejudice (<i>n.</i>)	a bad opinion of something, without an understanding of a certain person, group, or subject (p. 9)
professional (<i>adj.</i>)	earning money for doing an activity rather than doing it purely for pleasure (p. 4)
rights (<i>n.</i>)	freedoms or powers that people can claim (p. 12)
segregated (<i>adj.</i>)	kept apart based on group differences (p. 7)

Jackie Robinson

A Reading A-Z Level K Leveled Book

Word Count: 402

Connections

Writing

Pretend you are Jackie Robinson on April 15, 1947. Write a journal entry describing your experiences, thoughts, and feelings about the day. Use information from the book as support.

Social Studies

Make a timeline of Jackie Robinson's life, including at least five events.

Share your timeline with a partner.



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