

ACTIVITY 6

Instructional Model: Reading Like a Historian

Engaging students by reading primary documents by the original author that were created at a specific time, such as Abraham Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address*, or Martin Luther King's *I Have a Dream* speech, increases rigor while providing relevant connections to real-life people and events. Primary documents are what adolescents are engaged in daily through social media and global access through technology. The four stages of investigation in the Disciplinary Literacy model provide experiences and strategies for deeply understanding all text, especially complex text.

In today's seminar, "reading like a historian" will be used to model the Disciplinary Literacy Four-Stage Text Investigation process. The primary document for this activity is an interview with Jackie Robinson recorded in 1952 and aired on the Bob Edwards show on July 9, 2009. It was originally broadcast on National Public Radio as a "This I Believe" feature. The document is available to the public on the This I Believe Web site, thisibelieve.org/essay/16931/. Jackie Robinson's original typed speech, including handwritten edits (a motivational document to have projected on a screen for students), is available through the Library of Congress site: www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/images/at0196ap1s.jpg.

Jackie Robinson pioneered integration for professional athletics by becoming the first black player in Major League Baseball in 1947. He was voted the National League's Most Valuable Player in 1949.

Please read the Jackie Robinson speech,
"Free Minds and Hearts at Work."



"Free Minds and Hearts at Work"

By Jackie Robinson, 1952

At the beginning of the World Series of 1947, I experienced a completely new emotion when the National Anthem was played. This time, I thought, it is being played for me, as much as for anyone else. This is organized Major League baseball, and I am standing here with all the others; and everything that takes place includes me.

About a year later, I went to Atlanta, Georgia, to play in an exhibition game. On the field, for the first time in Atlanta, there were Negroes and whites. Other Negroes, besides me. And I thought: What I have always believed has come to be.

And what is it that I have always believed? First, that imperfections are human. But that wherever human beings were given room to breathe and time to think, those imperfections would disappear, no matter how slowly. I do not believe that we have found or even approached perfection. That is not necessarily in the scheme of human events. Handicaps, stumbling blocks, and prejudices—all of these are imperfect. Yet, they have to be reckoned with because they are in the scheme of human events.

Whatever obstacles I found made me fight all the harder. But it would have been impossible for me to fight at all, except that I was sustained by the personal and deep-rooted belief that my fight had a chance. It had a chance because it took place in a free society. Not once was I forced to face and fight an immovable object. Not once was the situation so cast-iron rigid that I had no chance at all. Free minds and human hearts were at work all around me; and so there was the probability of improvement. I look at my children now, and know that I must still prepare them to meet obstacles and prejudices.

But I can tell them, too, that they will never face some of these prejudices because other people have gone before them. And to myself I can say that, because progress is unalterable, many of today's dogmas will have vanished by the time they grow into adults. I can say to my children: There is a chance for you. No guarantee, but a chance.

And this chance has come to be, because there is nothing static with free people. There is no Middle Ages logic so strong that it can stop the human tide from flowing forward. I do not believe that every person, in every walk of life, can succeed in spite of any handicap. That would be perfection. But I do believe—and with every fiber in me—that what I was able to attain came to be because we put behind us (no matter how slowly) the dogmas of the past: to discover the truth of today; and perhaps find the greatness of tomorrow.

I believe in the human race. I believe in the warm heart. I believe in man's integrity. I believe in the goodness of a free society. And I believe that the society can remain good only as long as we are willing to fight for it—and to fight against whatever imperfections may exist.

My fight was against the barriers that kept Negroes out of baseball. This was the area where I found imperfection, and where I was best able to fight. And I fought because I knew it was not doomed to be a losing fight. It couldn't be a losing fight—not when it took place in a free society.

And; in the largest sense, I believe that what I did was done for me—that it was my faith in God that sustained me in my fight. And that what was done for me must and will be done for others.

STAGE A

1. When was this text made?

STAGE B

Common Core State Standard (CCSS)—Literacy in History/Social Studies, Grade 9–10 Key Ideas and Details #1.

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

This CCSS requires the unwrapped (Ainsworth, 2010, p. 121) skills of CITING and ANALYZING which students need to be able to do. It requires teaching the concepts of specific textual evidence as it relates to such features as the date and origin of information. The rigor indicated by the skills are at the Bloom's levels of *Understanding* and *Analyzing* (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001, p.8).

► **Message—(The Big Idea of the text)**

- **Form**—Evaluate Jackie Robinson's purpose for using this form of communication, a speech, to distribute his message.

What evidence from the text supports your response?

What medium of communication today would a professional athlete use to distribute his message and how is it different from the form Jackie Robinson used?

- **Audience**—What audience was Jackie Robinson addressing in this message? Cite text evidence.

Compare today's professional athlete's audience with Jackie Robinson's audience. Include three points of comparison.

Identify four points today's professional athlete would present to an audience.

Infer why Jackie Robinson's message still resonates with today's audience?

- **Imagery**—Describe four specific mental images Jackie Robinson's speech evoked in you. Provide connections between your mental image and the message.

Provide three examples of vivid language in his message.

- **Tone**—Describe the tone Jackie Robinson set in the message.

Judging from the tone, list two reasons why Jackie Robinson could have felt justified in setting another tone.

Change the tone of the message in Jackie Robinson's text. Evaluate what would have been the emotional impact upon the audience.

- **Conflict**—What three points of conflict, relevant to the time period, represent Jackie Robinson's frustrations?

Provide textual evidence. Extend your understanding by describing two points of conflict a professional athlete would include in a message presented today.

Read the original typed speech. Analyze how the outcome of the message was changed by analyzing two edits made by Jackie Robinson.

Determine an emotional conflict Jackie Robinson's message created within you, or may create within others.

Provide textual evidence for the source of this conflict. Compose a speech for your community baseball league describing how you or others would resolve this emotional conflict today.

2. What was happening that was important to society?

4. Who was the speaker? Why is he or she important?

3. What was happening that was historically important? Locally? Other places?