

BATTER UP LESSONS

The End of the Negro Leagues
developed by
Ms. Michelle Hamlett’s Historiography Classes 2020-2022
Eastside High School

Learning Objective(s)	Essential Question(s)	Suggested Activities	Standards
<p>The student will be able to connect post-WWII efforts to end segregation to the breaking of baseball’s “color line”.</p> <p>The student will be able to explain how the breaking of the “color line” by Jackie Robinson, et. al., led to the collapse of the Negro Leagues.</p> <p>The student will be able to cite examples of the social and economic repercussions of the disbanding of Negro League teams.</p>	<p>How did the success of integration lead to the demise of the Negro Leagues?</p>	<p>Explain how the phrase “unintended consequences” may be applied to the successful integration of baseball.</p> <p>Effa Manley actively worked for the civil rights of African Americans. How do you think she felt when the integration of MLB downfall of the Negro Leagues?</p>	<p>6.2.12.CivicsPI.4.a: Compare and contrast socialism, communism, fascism, and liberal democracy, analyze the extent to which they promote and protect civil, political, social and economic rights for people, and explain the reasons for their growth or decline around the world.</p> <p>6.1.12.HistorySE.14.b: Use a variety of sources from diverse perspective to analyze the social, economic and political contributions of marginalized and underrepresented groups and/or individuals.</p>

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Research Sources

Note: At the time of this publication these websites were active.

“The end of Negro League Baseball came quickly after World War II. In 1947 the reintegration of the baseball leagues started with the signing of Jackie Robinson by the Brooklyn Dodgers (New York). Robinson became the first 20th Century black baseball player allowed in the all-white professional leagues. After that signing, this was soon followed by the signing of other leading Negro League players, the Negro Baseball Leagues quickly and quietly folded.”

<https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/negro-baseball-leagues-1920-1950/>

“The successes of Robinson, Doby and other African Americans like Roy Campanella and Monte Irvin drew the attention of Black communities and drained the Negro Leagues of its fan base. The Negro National League disbanded in 1948, and the Negro American League limped through the 1950s, its attempts to sign white players and women having little lasting impact on the turnstiles.”

<https://www.history.com/topics/sports/negro-league-baseball>

“Slowly but surely, more African Americans left the Negro Leagues for the greener pastures of the big leagues, robbing the Negro Leagues of their best talent. Wilkinson saw the end coming sooner than most and sold his interest in the Monarchs in 1948. The Negro National League folded after the '48 season, while the Negro American League played on through the '50s.”

<https://www.mlb.com/news/jackie-robinson-success-decline-of-negro-leagues>

“After World War II, Jackie Robinson hurdled baseball’s racial divide. But while integration – baseball’s great experiment – was a resounding success on the field, at the gates and in changing racial attitudes, Negro League teams soon lost all of their stars and struggled to retain fans. The teams hung on for a bit, before eventually folding.”

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/how-baseballs-negro-leagues-defied-stereotypes-segregation-180974201/>

“But as times changed, so too did the segregated economy. As Negro League fans became Major League fans once the color-line was breached, black baseball and many of the other businesses that made up the black economy essentially became obsolete. Against the backdrop of African-American soldiers returning from the war with increased expectations for civil liberties and improving economic opportunities, the desegregated Major Leagues represented the possibility of progress. Many previously segregated businesses also began to realize that the most important color was green. As laws and customs changed, black patrons were no longer compelled to patronize segregated hotels and restaurants, and they frequently chose to take their business elsewhere. Small local businesses like barbershops and funeral homes continued to serve their communities, but larger establishments failed under pressure of competition. As such, the Negro Leagues and similar race businesses, all with a vested interest in segregation, simply had no economic future.”

<http://www.thevillagecelebration.com/negro-league-baseball-african-american-economy-2/>

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“After narrowly surviving the 1930s, the Negro Leagues were in resurgence during the first half of the 1940s. Nearly full employment due to the war effort once again gave many African Americans disposable income. For the first time in more than a decade, teams consistently made money, and attendance was at an all-time high. Some teams were assessed as being as valuable as major-league franchises.³⁶ As the postwar period of economic prosperity set in and all sectors of the population saw rising income levels and standards of living, indications were Black businesses, including the Negro Leagues, were finally about to fulfill their potential. This was not to be.

...To complicate matters further, a number of White teams refused to honor the contracts of the Negro Leagues and pirated the players outright without compensating the team owners.”

<https://sabr.org/journal/article/negro-league-baseball-black-community-and-the-socio-economic-impact-of-integration/>

“Negro League owners found themselves in an impossible spot. They realized they couldn’t argue against the integration that ultimately would put them out of business.

<https://baseballhall.org/discover/african-american-newspapers-preserved-negro-leagues-history>