



A League of Their Own

Before Reading Poll

From 1920 into the 1950s, Black baseball leagues produced some of the best players in the history of the game. What do you think about this quote from baseball great Satchel Paige?

Never let your head hang down. Never give up and sit down and grieve. Find another way.

Agree

Disagree

Explain why you voted the way you did.

Article

RED BANK, New Jersey (Achieve3000, May 5, 2021). From 1920 into the 1950s, summer Sundays in parts of Kansas City revolved around Black baseball games. Families dressed in their best, and crowds by the thousands gravitated to the stadium. Fans watched their Kansas City Monarchs play the Chicago American Giants, the Homestead Grays, or the Newark Eagles. It was more than a joyful day out at the ballgame. It was a celebration.

That scene captures the excitement of the "Negro Leagues," as they were known. In that era, racial discrimination and segregation policies blocked Black citizens from enjoying many aspects of American life, including mainstream sports. Black baseball teams and their elite play were a source of fun, pride, and solidarity for Black communities.

Chicago-based Andrew "Rube" Foster had the grand vision to launch the Negro National League. It started in 1920 with eight teams. All but one were under Black ownership. In 1933, the New Negro National League was founded, followed by the Negro American League. The financial fortunes of the Negro Leagues would ebb and flow over the next three decades, but their popularity and high-level of play stayed strong.

Between World War I (1914–1918) and World War II (1939–1945), baseball's place as America's national pastime was indisputable. The segregated Major Leagues fielded Hall of Fame legends like Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, and Dazzy Vance.

By all accounts, Black baseball teams matched that talent. They had stars such as slugging catcher Josh Gibson, speedster Cool Papa Bell, smooth-fielding first baseman Buck O'Neil, and the irrepressible Satchel Paige with his 100+ miles-per-hour fastball. Baseball historians maintain that the only thing that kept these Black all-stars from burning up the big leagues was segregation. The big leagues also did not acknowledge or preserve the records of Black teams and players. And unfortunately, accounts of some of their on-field feats were lost.

The year 1947 brought a groundbreaking shift, not just for baseball but American society at large. The Brooklyn Dodgers recruited the outstanding Jackie Robinson, integrating the Major Leagues. In 1948, the Cleveland Indians added Larry Doby and Satchel Paige. The pair helped Cleveland win the World Series that year. The color line was broken at last. It was a monumental victory for Black Americans in their ongoing struggle for equal rights.

For Black baseball teams, though, that triumph proved to be the beginning of the end. Major League clubs continued to sign the best young Black players, snapping up the likes of Willie Mays, Ernie Banks, and Hank Aaron. The Negro Leagues battled on until 1961, when they folded for good. Fans could now cheer on Black players as Major League stars. At the same time, Black Americans lost teams that had been cornerstones in their communities.

In 2020, Major League Baseball announced that Negro League players from 1920–1948 would finally get the recognition they deserve. Their batting averages, pitching records, and other statistics will take their rightful place as part of Major League history.

"All of us who love baseball have long known that the Negro Leagues produced many of our game's best players, innovations, and triumphs against a backdrop of injustice," League Commissioner Rob Manfred said. "We are now grateful to count the players of the Negro Leagues where they belong: as Major Leaguers within the official historical record."



Photo Credit: AP Photo/Matty Zimmerman, File

In this photo from 1942, Kansas City Monarchs pitcher Leroy Satchel Paige warms up before a Negro League game.

Dictionary

elite (*adjective*) top; best

innovation (*noun*) a new idea or way of doing something

irrepressible (*adjective*) unstoppable

solidarity (*noun*) unity or agreement of feeling or action

Activity

PART 1

Question 1

Which of these is **most** important to include in a summary of this Article?

- (A) The Negro Leagues were launched by Andrew "Rube" Foster, and all but one of the original teams were under Black ownership.
- (B) Some of the historical accounts and records of the on-field feats of Negro League Baseball players were lost.
- (C) Some of the Negro League baseball teams included the Newark Eagles and the Homestead Grays.
- (D) The Negro Leagues produced some of baseball's best players and were a source of pride and joy for many Black communities.

Question 2

Which is the closest **antonym** for the word *elite*?

- (A) ferocious
- (B) standard
- (C) transparent
- (D) partial

Question 3

The Article states:

Families dressed in their best, and crowds by the thousands gravitated to the stadium. Fans watched their Kansas City Monarchs play the Chicago American Giants, the Homestead Grays, or the Newark Eagles. It was more than a joyful day out at the ballgame. It was a celebration.

The author's purpose for writing this passage was to _____.

- (A) establish the significance of the Negro Leagues in Black communities and create an upbeat tone
- (B) highlight the most popular teams of the Negro Leagues and create an argumentative tone
- (C) demonstrate that Black baseball team players matched the talent of players in the Major Leagues
- (D) argue that segregation once kept Black citizens from sharing happier aspects of American life

Question 4

According to the Article, which of these is an accurate comparison between the Negro Leagues and the Major Leagues?

- Ⓐ Some of the teams in both the Negro Leagues and the Major Leagues were organized by Andrew "Rube" Foster.
- Ⓑ The slugging abilities and on-field feats of Negro League players matched those of Major League players.
- Ⓒ The Negro League players' records were preserved in the same way as those of Major League players.
- Ⓓ Some of the pitching records of both Negro League and Major League players were lost due to poor recordkeeping.

Question 5

Which passage from the Article best supports the idea that the Negro Leagues were important to Black Americans?

- Ⓐ Chicago-based Andrew "Rube" Foster had the grand vision to launch the Negro National League.
- Ⓑ Black baseball teams and their elite play were a source of fun, pride, and solidarity for Black communities.
- Ⓒ Major League clubs continued to sign the best young Black players, snapping up the likes of Willie Mays, Ernie Banks, and Hank Aaron.
- Ⓓ Baseball historians maintain that the only thing that kept these Black all-stars from burning up the big leagues was segregation.

Question 6

According to the Article, why was integrating Major League Baseball a bittersweet victory?

- Ⓐ As more Black players joined Major League teams, the Negro Leagues folded for good.
- Ⓑ As more Black players got recognition in the Major Leagues, Negro League statistics were lost.
- Ⓒ As Black players joined Major League teams, Negro League fans stopped watching baseball.
- Ⓓ As Black players got more recognition, they did not want to play in the Negro Leagues.

Question 7

The Article states:

In 1933, the New Negro National League was founded, followed by the Negro American League. The financial fortunes of the Negro Leagues would *ebb* and flow over the next three decades, but their popularity and high-level of play stayed strong.

Which is the closest **synonym** for the word *ebb*?

- Ⓐ torment
- Ⓑ maintain
- Ⓒ decline
- Ⓓ prevail

Question 8

According to the Article, which of these events happened *last*?

This question asks about when events happened. It does not ask where in the Article the events appear. Reread the Article for clues, such as dates.

- Ⓐ Negro League players' statistics were considered part of Major League history.
- Ⓑ The Brooklyn Dodgers recruited Jackie Robinson to play for their team.
- Ⓒ Satchel Paige joined the Cleveland Indians and helped them win the World Series.
- Ⓓ The Negro National League was founded by Andrew "Rube" Foster.

After Reading Poll

Now that you have read the article, indicate whether you agree or disagree with this statement.

Never let your head hang down. Never give up and sit down and grieve. Find another way.

Agree

Disagree

Explain why you voted the way you did. Then read and respond to what others have to say.

Sorry, comments are not available at this time. Please try again later.

Thought Question

Write a summary of today's Article. As you write your summary, complete the following steps:

- Draft a topic sentence that includes the main idea of the Article.
- Cite a few important facts that support the main idea.
- Try to use one or more vocabulary words in your writing.
- Write a conclusion that restates the main idea.
- Proofread and edit your work.

Poll Results

OPINION STATEMENT: **Never let your head hang down. Never give up and sit down and grieve. Find another way.**

| BEFORE READING | AFTER READING |
|----------------------|---------------|
| HOW YOU VOTED | |
| Agree | Agree |
| Disagree | Disagree |

| WORLDWIDE RESULTS | | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|-----|----------|---------------------------------|-----|
| Agree | <input type="text" value="95"/> | 95% | Agree | <input type="text" value="93"/> | 93% |
| Disagree | <input type="text" value="5"/> | 5% | Disagree | <input type="text" value="7"/> | 7% |

Stretch Article

RED BANK, New Jersey (Achieve3000, May 5, 2021). From 1920 into the 1950s, summer Sundays in parts of Kansas City revolved around Black baseball games. Families dressed in their best, church services ended early, and crowds by the thousands gravitated to the stadium to watch their Kansas City Monarchs play the Chicago American Giants, the Homestead Grays, or the Newark Eagles, and cheer on their favorite athletes. It was as much a celebration as it was a joyful day out at the ballgame.

That scene captures the heartfelt excitement of the "Negro Leagues," as they were known at the time. In that era, racial discrimination and segregation policies precluded Black citizens' participation in many happier aspects of American life, including mainstream sports. Black baseball teams and their elite play were a source of fun, pride, and solidarity for Black communities.

Chicago-based Andrew "Rube" Foster had the grand vision and organizational acumen to launch the Negro National League in 1920, starting with eight teams. All but one were under Black ownership. In 1933, the New Negro National League was founded, followed by the Negro American League. The financial fortunes of the Negro Leagues would ebb and flow over the next three decades, but their public popularity and high-level of play stayed strong.

Between World War I (1914–1918) and World War II (1939–1945), baseball's place as America's national pastime was irrefutable. The segregated Major Leagues fielded Hall of Fame legends like Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Dazzy Vance, Dizzy Dean, and others.

By all accounts, Black baseball teams matched that talent with stars such as slugging catcher Josh Gibson, speedster Cool Papa Bell, smooth-fielding first baseman Buck O'Neil, and the irrepressible Satchel Paige with his 100+ miles-per-hour fastball and pinpoint control. Baseball historians aver that the only thing that kept these Black all-stars from burning up the big leagues was segregation. Unfortunately, accounts of some of their on-field feats were lost due to incomplete record-keeping. And because the big leagues did not acknowledge or preserve the records and statistics of Black teams and players.

The year 1947 brought a groundbreaking shift, not just for baseball but American society at large. The Brooklyn Dodgers promoted the incomparable Jackie Robinson to their roster, integrating the Major Leagues. Soon, the Cleveland Indians added Larry Doby, and in 1948, Satchel Paige joined the team as a 42-year-old rookie reliever. The pair helped Cleveland win the World Series that year. The color line was broken at last, an epochal victory for Black Americans in their long, ongoing struggle for fair treatment and equal rights.

For Black baseball teams, though, that triumph proved to be the beginning of the end. More Major League clubs fortified their rosters by grabbing the best young Black players, the likes of Willie Mays, Ernie Banks, and Hank Aaron. The Negro Leagues battled on until 1961, when they folded for good. Fans could now cheer on Black players as Major League stars. At the same time, Black Americans lost teams that had been cornerstones in their communities.

In 2020, Major League Baseball affirmed the legacy of Black baseball teams and their laudable contributions to the sport. It announced that Negro League players from 1920–1948 would finally get the recognition they deserve: Their batting averages, pitching records, and other statistics will officially be considered alongside their White counterparts as part of Major League history.



Photo Credit: AP Photo/Matty Zimmerman, File

In this photo from 1942, Kansas City Monarchs pitcher Leroy Satchel Paige warms up before a Negro League game.

"All of us who love baseball have long known that the Negro Leagues produced many of our game's best players, innovations, and triumphs against a backdrop of injustice," League Commissioner Rob Manfred said. "We are now grateful to count the players of the Negro Leagues where they belong: as Major Leaguers within the official historical record."

Dictionary

acumen (*noun*) keen insight

aver (*verb*) to confidently say that something is true

epochal (*adjective*) extremely important, significant, or influential

irrefutable (*adjective*) undeniable

Stretch Activity

PART 1

Question 1

Which of these is **most** important to include in a summary of this Article?

- (A) The Negro Leagues were launched by Andrew "Rube" Foster, and all but one of the original teams were under Black ownership.
- (B) Some of the on-field feats of Negro League Baseball players were lost because of incomplete record-keeping.
- (C) The Negro Leagues produced some of baseball's best players and were a source of pride and joy for many Black communities.
- (D) Some of the Negro League baseball teams included the Kansas City Monarchs and the Chicago American Giants.

Question 2

Which is the closest **synonym** for the word *epochal*?

- (A) momentous
- (B) precarious
- (C) devious
- (D) ravenous

Question 3

The Article states:

Families dressed in their best, church services ended early, and crowds by the thousands gravitated to the stadium to watch their Kansas City Monarchs play the Chicago American Giants, the Homestead Grays, or the Newark Eagles, and cheer on their favorite athletes. It was as much a celebration as it was a joyful day out at the ballgame.

The author's purpose for writing this passage was to _____.

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- Ⓒ Some of the pitching records of both Negro League and Major League players were lost due to poor recordkeeping.
- Ⓓ Some of the teams in both the Negro Leagues and the Major Leagues were organized by Andrew "Rube" Foster.

Question 5

Which passage from the Article best supports the idea that the Negro Leagues were important to Black Americans?

- Ⓐ Baseball historians aver that the only thing that kept these Black all-stars from burning up the big leagues was segregation.
- Ⓑ Chicago-based Andrew "Rube" Foster had the grand vision and organizational acumen to launch the Negro National League in 1920, starting with eight teams.
- Ⓒ Black baseball teams and their elite play were a source of fun, pride, and solidarity for Black communities.
- Ⓓ More Major League clubs fortified their rosters by grabbing the best young Black players, the likes of Willie Mays, Ernie Banks, and Hank Aaron.

Question 6

According to the Article, why was integrating Major League Baseball a bittersweet victory?

- Ⓐ Because Black players joined Major League teams, many Negro League fans stopped watching baseball.
- Ⓑ As more Black players joined Major League teams, the Negro Leagues folded for good.
- Ⓒ As more Black players got recognition in the Major Leagues, Negro League statistics were lost.
- Ⓓ Because Black players got more recognition in the Major Leagues, they did not want to play in the Negro Leagues.

Question 7

The Article states:

In 2020, Major League Baseball affirmed the legacy of Black baseball teams and their *laudable* contributions to the sport....

"[T]he Negro Leagues produced many of our game's best players, innovations, and triumphs against a backdrop of injustice," League Commissioner Rob Manfred said.

Which is the closest **synonym** for the word *laudable*?

- Ⓐ manageable
- Ⓑ unattainable
- Ⓒ adaptable
- Ⓓ commendable

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According to the Article, which of these events happened *last*?

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- Ⓐ The Negro National League was founded by Andrew "Rube" Foster.
- Ⓑ Satchel Paige joined the Cleveland Indians and helped them win the World Series.
- Ⓒ Negro League players' statistics were considered part of Major League history.
- Ⓓ The Brooklyn Dodgers promoted Jackie Robinson to their roster.