



Lesson 1 – Pre-Visit 19th Century Baseball

Objective: Students will be able to:

- Understand the historical impact of segregation upon the development of African American baseball.
- Identify a variety of laws and historical events that had an effect on African Americans during Reconstruction and the Post-Reconstruction era.
- Create a time line of significant events in the early history of African American baseball.

Time Required: One class period

Materials Needed:

- Time Line Key (included)
- A copy of the "Black Baseball 1860-1910" article for each student (included)
- Student access to Microsoft Publisher, or a similar publishing program
- Students' U.S. History textbooks

Vocabulary:

Barnstorming - To tour an area playing exhibition games

Civil Rights - The rights to full legal, social, and economic equality extended to African Americans

Discrimination - Making a distinction in favor of, or against, a person based on a category to which that person belongs rather than on individual merit

Integration - To give members of all races, religions, and ethnic groups an equal opportunity to belong to an organization, place of business, etc.

Jim Crow Laws - Any state law discriminating against black persons

Segregation - The separation or isolation of a race, class, or ethnic group by the use of separate facilities, restricted areas, or by other discriminatory means



Applicable Common Core State Standards:

RH.9-10.1. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

RH.9-10.3. Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

RH.9-10.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

RH.11-12.1. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

RH.11-12.3. Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

W.9-10.3., W.11-12.3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

W.9-10.4., W.11-12.4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W.9-10.6., W.11-12.6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

W.9-10.9., W.11-12.9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

SL.9-10.1., SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade-appropriate topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.



Lesson

1. To begin this lesson, draw a time line from 1860 to 1910 on the board. As you discuss social and political events of the Reconstruction and Post-Reconstruction era, document the events related to baseball underneath the line, and national events on the top of the line. A Time Line Key is included with this lesson.
2. Determine students' prior knowledge about Reconstruction. Use the following background, or have students read a relevant section of your history textbook.

After the Civil War, the United States entered an era known as Reconstruction. During this time, the nation faced problems of rebuilding the South, reuniting the states, and ensuring the rights of newly freed African Americans. Congress passed the 13th Amendment to the Constitution in 1865, formally ending slavery. The 14th and 15th amendments (passed in 1868 and 1870 respectively) gave blacks citizenship, and gave black men the right to vote. During this time, African Americans looked for ways to enjoy their newfound freedom, assert their independence, and exercise their rights as American citizens.

Many white Americans, however, were uncomfortable with the idea that African Americans would become their social equals. In spite of Constitutional Amendments that were supposed to protect the rights of African Americans, many states passed Black Codes which severely limited the rights of African Americans. Due to these laws, blacks experienced segregation, lynching, intimidation, voting restrictions, and unequal justice. With the Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896, it became legal to create separate public facilities for African Americans, ranging from transportation to schools.

3. Discuss that during the era of Reconstruction, the popularity of baseball soared in communities across the United States. As professional and semi-professional teams began to form in the 1870s, dozens of black ballplayers played alongside white ballplayers.
4. Explain that students will be looking at how the experiences of African Americans in baseball reflected changes happening in American society during, and immediately following, Reconstruction.



5. Hand out copies of the "Black Baseball: 1860-1910" article (included). Give students 5 to 10 minutes to read the article.
6. Discuss how segregation impacted opportunities for African Americans in baseball.
 - Compare and contrast the careers of Bud Fowler and Moses Fleetwood Walker.
 - How did Moses Fleetwood Walker come to be the first black major league player? Why do you suppose that he is not very well known today?
 - What were the short and long term affects of the "Gentleman's Agreement"?
 - How did the "Gentleman's Agreement" relate to other issues of race affecting American society during the 1880s?
 - How did African American players respond to their unofficial ban from major league baseball?
7. Introduce the activity.



Activity

1. Divide students into small groups of 3-4.
2. Explain that each student group will create a newspaper edition from the time period discussed during this lesson. Newspapers should include articles about national and baseball events. It is important that all items included in the newspaper accurately reflect people and events from this time period.
3. For reference, students may use the “Black Baseball” article, as well as their textbooks, and any other relevant sources.
4. Students should use Microsoft Publisher, or a similar publishing program, to produce their newspapers.
5. The finished product should reflect students’ understanding of the politics and society of Post-Reconstruction America and the effects on black baseball.
6. Features should include at least:
 - Three news articles regarding the political and social agenda of the Post-Reconstruction era
 - One editorial
 - Three advertisements
 - Two letters to the editor regarding the segregation of public and private facilities
 - Two political cartoons (draw your own)
 - A sports section including:
 - Box scores from a baseball game
 - An article about an integrated baseball team
 - An article about an all-black team
7. Final products should be creative, well-organized, and accurately reflect people and events of the time period.



Conclusion:

To conclude this lesson and check for understanding, provide students with the following writing assignment.

Solomon White was a player, team captain, manager, owner, writer, and publicist for black baseball. In the early 20th century, he wrote a *History of Colored Base Ball*. Today, the book is a very important source for historians who wish to know about the experiences of African American players in the late 19th century.

Put the following excerpt on a projector or provide students with copies. Students should read the excerpt and answer the essay question that follows.

"The colored ball player suffers great inconvenience, at times, while traveling. All hotels are generally filled from the cellar to the garret when they strike a town. It is a common occurrence for them to arrive in a city late at night and walk around for several hours before getting a place to lodge."

"The situation is far different to-day in this respect than it was years ago. At one time the colored teams were accommodated in some of the best hotels in the country, as the entertainment in 1887 of the Cuban Giants at the McClure House in Wheeling, W. Va., will show."

"The cause of this change is no doubt due to the condition of things from a racial standpoint. With the color question upper-most in the minds of the people at the present time, such proceedings on the part of hotel-keepers may be expected and will be difficult to remedy."

Essay Question:

According to White, how did social conditions for black players change between the 1880s and the early 1900s?



Time Line Key:

1863 - In the Emancipation Proclamation, President Lincoln freed slaves in all states "in rebellion" (in other words, Confederate states).

1865 - The Civil War ended.

1865 - The 13th Amendment was approved, making all slavery illegal.

1868 - The 14th Amendment, which protected civil rights and extended citizenship to African Americans, was ratified.

1870 - The 15th Amendment was ratified, giving black male citizens the right to vote.

1877 - Many states began passing "Jim Crow" laws, which allowed for the public separation of African Americans and whites.

1878 - Bud Fowler joined the Lynn Live Oaks, becoming the first professional African American baseball player.

1884 - The Toledo Blue Stockings joined the International League. Their catcher, Moses Fleetwood Walker, became the first African American to play Major League baseball.

1885 - The Cuban Giants were organized. They became the first professional black baseball team.

1887 - Moses Fleetwood "Fleet" Walker joined the Little Giants.

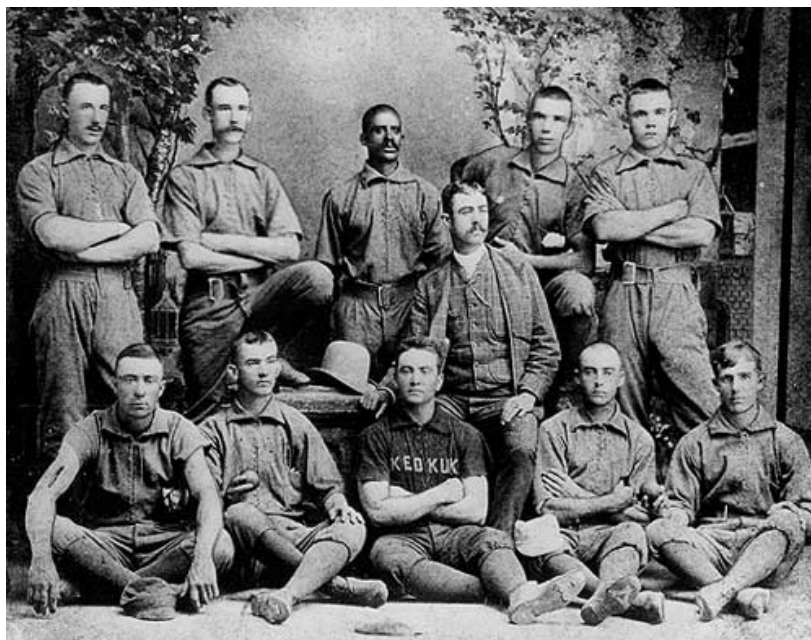
1887 - A "gentlemen's agreement" prevents Major League owners from hiring African American players.

1896 - In *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Supreme Court ruled that blacks and whites could be segregated as long as the facilities were equal.



Black Baseball: 1860-1910

During the 1870s and 1880s, over fifty African Americans played professional baseball alongside white players. In 1878, Bud Fowler became the first African American to play baseball professionally. Fowler pitched for the Lynn Live Oaks, a minor league team based in Massachusetts. Though he was most comfortable at second base, Fowler played almost every position on the field during his baseball career.



Bud Fowler with a semi-pro team in 1872

In 1887, Fowler joined the Binghamton Crickets. Although he was hitting .350, the Crickets let him go because some white teammates did not want to play alongside him. Refusing to give up his career, Fowler signed with Montpelier of the Northeast League and hit .452. Fowler continued to play professionally until the age of 47, finally retiring in the mid-1890s.

While Fowler was the first African American to earn a salary for playing baseball, Moses Fleetwood “Fleet” Walker was the first African American to play major league baseball. In 1883, Walker signed a contract with the Toledo Blue Stockings, a minor league team. When Toledo became a major league team by joining the American Association in 1884, Walker became the first black major leaguer in history. He quickly developed a reputation as one of the finest catchers in the game.



The Toledo Blue Stockings went out of business after the 1884 season, forcing Walker to seek employment elsewhere. After brief stops in the Western League and Eastern League, Walker signed with the Newark Little Giants of the International League in 1887. There he caught for pitcher, George Stovey, another African-American star player. Walker and Stovey became the first African-American “battery” (the combination of catcher and pitcher) in history.

Later that season, the International League voted to ban any new black players from joining the league. Players like Walker, who were already under contract, were allowed to remain, but the league directors had clearly sent a message that an all-white league was preferred. Shortly thereafter, the National League and the American Association adopted unofficial bans against black players. They joined a number of minor leagues who had already adopted such bans. With this “gentlemen’s agreement” in place, African-American players no longer had the opportunity to play organized professional baseball, either in the minor leagues or major leagues.

In order for black players to play professionally, they were left with no choice but to form their own teams. In 1885, employees of the Argyle Hotel in Babylon, New York,

organized the first all-black professional team. They called themselves the Cuban Giants, even though none of the players hailed from Cuba. Other all-black teams sprouted up around the country. Since these teams were not part of an official league, they barnstormed, travelling around the country to play exhibition games against local town teams.



The Cuban Giants

One of the most successful of the all-black teams was the Page Fence Giants. At one point, the Giants won 82 consecutive games. Like most of the barnstorming teams, the Giants played all of their games on the road. Yet, they traveled in style, equipped with a custom made railroad car that had sleeping quarters, a full time cook, and a porter to handle their luggage.



The Page Fence Giants

By 1910, more than 60 professional black teams toured the country. Unfortunately, all of them had to deal with “Jim Crow” laws, which had been passed in the years after the Civil War. Based on a doctrine of “separate but equal,” the laws segregated blacks from whites in many public places, including schools, buses, movie theaters, restaurants, and hotels. Yet, there was little equality. White restaurants, hotels, and theaters were generally cleaner and more attractive than their black counterparts. Jim Crow laws affected almost every part of society. Some stores catered only to white customers. Even water fountains were segregated, with some labeled “for whites only.” Many ballparks and stadiums had separate seating sections for black and white customers.

As black ballplayers barnstormed around the country, they faced constant reminders of not being wanted, particularly in restaurants and hotels. Black players would continue to face such discrimination well into the 20th century, even after major league baseball became re-integrated.