Lesson 2 – Pre-Visit
The Negro Leagues

Objective: Students will be able to:
• Recognize social, political, and cultural issues affecting African Americans during
  the first half of the 20th century.
• Identify important individuals associated with the formation and success of the
  Negro leagues.
• Understand the importance of Negro leagues teams to the African American
  community.

Time Required: One class period

Materials Needed:
- A copy of the "Black Baseball 1920-1947" article for each student (included).
- Ken Burns' Baseball: Inning 5 (PBS) and television/DVD player.
- Computers with Internet access

Vocabulary:
Barnstorming - To tour an area playing exhibition games
De facto segregation - Segregation in practice but not necessarily established by law
De jure segregation - Segregation officially established by law
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
Racism - Hatred or intolerance of another race or other races
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.
1. Begin the lesson by reviewing that in the 1870s and 1880s, black ballplayers played alongside white ballplayers on professional baseball teams. In 1887, however, team owners adopted a “gentleman’s agreement” that no new contracts would be given to black ballplayers. The gentleman’s agreement effectively forced black ballplayers from all professional leagues by 1900. This coincided with the rise of Black Codes and “Jim Crow” laws that legalized discrimination and limited basic rights for African Americans.

2. Discuss that in order for black players to play professionally, they formed their own teams. In 1885 the first all-black professional team was organized. Occasionally, some teams tried to get together and form organized leagues, but the leagues were all short-lived. That changed in 1920, when Andrew "Rube" Foster founded the Negro National League (NNL). The NNL signaled the start of the Negro leagues, which would continue to operate in various forms through the early 1960s.

3. Soon, other leagues formed in eastern and southern states, bringing the thrills and innovative play of black baseball to major urban centers in the United States. The Negro leagues maintained a high level of professional skill and teams became centerpieces for economic development in many black communities.


5. Give students 5 to 10 minutes to read the article.

6. Screen the following chapters from Ken Burns' *Baseball: Inning 5*, or select from the segments below those you have time for:
   - 2. "Shadow Ball"
   - 3. "Like We Invented the Game"
   - 5. "Midnight Rider"
   - 7. "Josh"
   - 9. "Carrying the News"
   - 11. "Plain Prejudice"
   - 16. "I Ain't Sorry"
7. As students watch the segments have them take notes on the following topics - or - stop after each segment to discuss the following topics:
   o Why was it necessary to form a separate league for African American players?
   o How did Negro leagues teams travel?
   o What was life like for Negro leagues baseball players during the 1920s, 30s, and 40s?
   o Was segregation a problem only in the South?
   o Who were some of the most famous Negro leagues players at this time?
   o Which player did you like most and why?
   o How did the style of play in the Negro leagues differ from the style of play in the white major leagues?
   o Did Negro leagues teams ever play in front of integrated audiences?
   o What was it like for ordinary citizens to go to a Negro leagues baseball game?
   o What was the impact of the Negro leagues on Black society?

8. Introduce the activity.
1. For this activity, divide students into groups of 4 or 5. Each group will form a Negro leagues team that will plan an imaginary barnstorming tour in the late 1930s.

2. Ask each team to decide the following:
   - The name of their team.
   - Their team's hometown.
   - The team members' nicknames.
   - The field position(s) each team member plays.
   - What was the team's best game ever?
   - What are sports writers saying about the team and the team's future?

3. Have each group put together a road trip schedule for their Negro leagues team. Students should use the "Black Baseball 1920-1947" article as a point of reference to determine which cities they would like to visit and which teams they plan to play against. The road trip must include at least 3 cities, and should also include at least 2 small towns along the way.

4. Tell students that they can travel a maximum of 400 miles between stops. Distribute road maps or atlases, or access online mapping sites like MapQuest, Google Maps, or Google Earth. Ask students to plot their route from city to city, without using interstate highways (most of which were not yet built).

5. The teams are now ready to go on their imaginary road trips. Ask students to consider the travel arrangements they will have to make. Who will drive? Where will the team eat and sleep?

6. Come back together as a class and discuss what would be different about taking this road trip back in the late 1930s compared to today. Ask students to refer back to the notes they took while watching Ken Burns' *Baseball*.

7. Discuss how segregation would have affected Negro leagues teams as they barnstormed around the country. Ask students to consider whether players would face segregation in both the North and the South.
8. You may wish to explain **de facto segregation** or segregation by practice instead of law, which occurred in the North and West, and **de jure segregation** or segregation based on law, which existed in the South.

**Conclusion:**

To conclude this lesson and check for understanding, have students write three diary entries from the perspective of their Negro leagues ballplayers. Each diary entry should be one page in length. The three entries should relate to the three stops the team made on its barnstorming road trip. Since each team's road trip is different, their diaries will vary. Tell students that their diary entries can include many details of everyday life, comments about the places in America they are visiting, the games they have played, and any exciting or upsetting episodes that may have occurred.
Black Baseball: 1920-1947

Prior to 1920, black baseball existed as a loose association of professional barnstorming teams, short-lived professional leagues, and semi-professional leagues. That structure began to change in 1920, when pitcher-turned-pioneer Andrew "Rube" Foster founded the Negro National League (NNL). The NNL signaled the unofficial start of the Negro leagues, which would continue to operate in various forms through the early 1960s.

The Negro National League originally featured eight teams: the Chicago American Giants, Chicago Giants, Cuban Stars, Dayton Marcos, Detroit Stars, Indianapolis ABCs, Kansas City Monarchs and St. Louis Giants. Achieving a level of stability that had escaped previous leagues, the NNL flourished throughout much of the 1920s. The league demonstrated that baseball with African-American ownership and players could succeed.

Later in 1920, Thomas T. Wilson, owner of the Nashville Elite Giants, organized the Negro Southern League with teams in Nashville, Atlanta, Birmingham, Memphis, Montgomery and New Orleans. A third league, the Eastern Colored League (ECL), formed in 1923. This league consisted mostly of teams located on the East Coast. The ECL originally featured six teams, including the Baltimore Black Sox, the Cuban Stars, and the Lincoln Giants of New York.
Unfortunately, the Great Depression led to the demise of the Negro National League in 1931. A second Negro National League, organized by Gus Greenlee, quickly took up where Foster’s league left off and became a dominant force in black baseball from 1933 through 1949.

Despite the difficult economic challenges of the Great Depression, the three major Negro leagues weathered the storm and steadily built what was to become one of the largest and most successful black-owned enterprises in America. New stars emerged, including blazing fast pitcher Satchel Paige, power-hitting catcher Josh Gibson, and speedy center fielder James “Cool Papa” Bell. Such star players drew crowds wherever they traveled.

Several team owners relied not only on star players, but also on innovation to keep fans coming to games. Gus Greenlee, owner of the Pittsburgh Crawfords, financed the building of his own ballpark after he discovered that his players were not allowed use the dressing rooms at Forbes Field. Greenlee Field became the first black-owned baseball field in the country. Greenlee also created the East-West All-Star Game, which featured top stars as voted upon by the fans. During the 1930s and 1940s the East-West Game was played annually at Chicago’s Comiskey Park. The game became black baseball’s most popular attraction and its biggest money maker.

Another innovative owner, J.L. Wilkinson of the Kansas City Monarchs, devised the use of portable lights, which allowed his team to play games at night. In becoming the first professional team to play night baseball, the Monarchs catered to the black working class, which had free time in the evening after spending most of the day working in stores and factories.
Even as the Negro leagues flourished, their players continued to face segregation, particularly on the road. Diners that catered to white customers, along with hotels that were “white only,” regularly turned black players away. When Negro leagues players traveled to the Caribbean to play ball during the winter, they were treated with considerably more respect than they were in the United States. In places like Cuba and Mexico, the color of their skin simply did not seem to matter as much as the players' talent.

During World War II, a number of black stars left their teams, called to serve in various branches of the military. Yet, black baseball continued to thrive during the war. Millions of African Americans, now working in war-related industries, had more money to spend on tickets to Negro leagues games. During this prosperous time, league officials revived the annual Negro League World Series.

As World War II came to a close, many felt that it could not be long until baseball's color barrier would be broken. African-Americans had proven themselves on the battlefield, and the stars of the black baseball had proven their skills in the game. The time for integration had come.