Lesson 3 – Pre-Visit
Baseball Heroes in the Press

Objective: Students will be able to:
• Discuss privacy as it relates to their lives and the lives of celebrities.
• Express an opinion in a written editorial.
• Understand how media bias impacts our perceptions of celebrities.

Time Required: 1-3 class periods

Materials Needed:
- Player biographies for each student (included)
- Writing materials
- Computers and internet, for further research and/or publishing, if desired

Potential Primary Sources:
- Time Magazine Archives: http://www.time.com/time/archive/
- Google News Archive Search: http://news.google.com/archivesearch
- NewsLibrary: www.newslibrary.com
- Library of Congress Newspaper Archives:

Vocabulary:
Bias – inability to remain impartial.
Celebrity – a famous or well-known person.
Editorial – an article in a newspaper or other periodical presenting the opinion of the publisher, editor, or editors.
Opinion – a personal view.
Privacy – being free from disturbance in one’s private life or affairs.
Relevant National Learning Standards  
(Based on Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning)

**United States History. Standard 39.** Understands the struggle for racial and gender equality and for the extension of civil liberties.

**United States History. Standard 31.** Understands economic, social, and cultural developments in the contemporary United States.

**Historical Understanding. Standard 1.** Understands and knows how to analyze chronological relationships and patterns.

**Civics. Standard 35.** Understands issues regarding personal, political, and economic rights.

**Language Arts. Standard 1.** Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process.

**Language Arts. Standard 7.** Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts.

**Language Arts. Standard 9.** Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.

**Language Arts. Standard 10.** Understands the characteristics and components of the media.

**Arts and Communication. Standard 1.** Understands the principles, processes, and products associated with arts and communication media.

**Arts and Communication. Standard 3.** Knows and applies appropriate criteria to arts and communication products.

**Arts and Communication. Standard 4.** Understands ways in which the human experience is transmitted and reflected in the arts and communication.
1. Start by asking students, “What is a celebrity?” Come up with a class definition, including examples of celebrities, who they are, and what they do.

2. Ask students how the public learns about a celebrity’s life? What kind of information can we find out about a celebrity?

3. Discuss privacy and its importance for many people, including celebrities. If you were a celebrity, would you want strangers to know all about your life? What information would you want to keep to yourself? In your life, how do you maintain privacy?

4. Ask students what happens when a celebrity makes a mistake or a bad decision? Should the public know? What if the celebrity does something good?

5. Discuss how athletes, who are often celebrities in the public eye, should be expected to act. If standards of character for athletes were established, what would they be?

6. Discuss that part of what makes an athlete a celebrity is how they are handled in the press. Sports reporters in the newspaper, on the radio, and on television often focus on a player's actions both on and off the field. Ask students how the opinions of reporters might affect fans' perceptions of players.
1. Choose a baseball player (Ted Williams, Roberto Clemente, or Frank Robinson) and use the biographical sketch included with this lesson to investigate the player’s background. This can be done as a class with one baseball player, or with students working in small groups. Each student should have a copy of the sketch for the player they are researching.

2. Have students gather more information about their players by looking up newspaper and magazine articles from some of the websites noted above. Students may supplement their primary source research with secondary source research, but should rely above all on primary sources.

3. Based on their research, ask students to make a list of the most important/influential events in their player's life. These can be highlights, lowlights, or even traumatic events. Encourage students to concentrate on variety. Along with each event, have students list the year that the event occurred.

4. Have students create a timeline of the player's life. Mark the highlights and lowlights of the player’s career on the timeline. How do the media present these events?

5. Ask students the difference between an editorial or opinion article and a news article. Discuss differences in intention, meanings, and impact of the different types of articles.

6. Ask each student to choose one event from the player’s career or life and write an editorial/opinion piece about that event.

7. Students should decide how they want to portray the baseball player, what they want the reader to know, and why it is important to know that information.

8. Once the editorials have been written, they can be shared with the class through presentations, a class newspaper, or publishing online.

9. How do students' editorials portray the athletes? As heroes, villains, victims? Why did the students choose these perspectives?
Alternative:

Students may choose another celebrity and write an editorial about whether celebrities should be considered as role models. To support their argument, they should do research into the chosen celebrity’s life and career.

Conclusion:

To conclude this lesson, hold a class discussion about editorials in general. Do any of the editorials show a complete picture of the athlete? How are these different than regular news reports? Editorials are inherently biased, but are news reports biased, as well? How do you think media bias affects how we remember celebrities, like the baseball players?

To check for understanding, have students find two articles (either online or in a newspaper) about the same sporting event, or same current event. Students should compare the two articles and write an essay comparing and contrasting the authors' points of view in each article, and addressing how the press shapes public perception and opinion about events and issues.
Roberto Clemente

A majestic major league outfielder who earned election to the National Baseball Hall of Fame and worldwide acclaim for his humanitarian nature, Roberto Clemente overcame several obstacles on the path to stardom.

Clemente was born in Carolina, Puerto Rico. He had six older brothers and sisters. He loved baseball, but his family didn't have much money. They could not afford to buy baseball equipment. In spite of a lack of proper playing equipment, Clemente played baseball as often as he could. When he grew older, his hours spent practicing paid off when he made the major leagues.

In 1955, Roberto Clemente moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to play for the Pirates. Life in Pittsburgh was very different than life in Puerto Rico. The young Latino often found himself being criticized by the American media. One newspaper referred to him as a "Puerto Rican hot dog" because he hit hard, ran fast, stole bases, and seemed to be showing off. Other reporters said that he was "lazy" because he didn't want to play when he was injured. Roberto Clemente believed that fans deserved to see him play his best. He thought it would not be fair to them if he played at anything less than 100% of his ability. Uncomfortable speaking English, Clemente had difficulties communicating with the media and became angry when newspapers misquoted him.

In the 1960s, things began looking up for the Pirates and for Roberto Clemente. The Pirates had been a last-place team, but in 1960 Roberto Clemente helped bring the team all the way to the World Series. In 1966, he won the National League Most Valuable Player Award. Even critical reporters had to be impressed when, in 1971, he hit two home runs in the World Series and lead to the Pirates to another World Series win.
The very next year, 1972, he got his 3,000th hit - something that very few players have ever achieved. There was no denying it; Roberto Clemente was a great player.

When he wasn't playing baseball, Roberto Clemente spent his time helping other people. In Pittsburgh, he raised money for the Children's Hospital. In Puerto Rico, where Clemente spent the winter, he routinely held free baseball clinics for kids who could not afford proper equipment. He also supported other Latino athletes who had trouble getting used to life in the United States.

After a devastating earthquake struck Nicaragua in December of 1972, Roberto Clemente purchased food and supplies to help the victims. On New Year's Eve, he boarded an airplane loaded down with supplies. The plane was old and it crashed into the ocean off the coast of Puerto Rico. The crash killed all five men aboard the flight, including the 38-year-old Clemente.

Clemente's legacy remains powerful today. In Puerto Rico, the "Roberto Clemente Sports City" provides boys and girls with athletic and recreational opportunities. Through his outstanding career and philanthropic life, Clemente continues to serve as a role model for today's youth.
The last player to hit .400 in the major leagues, Ted Williams approached hitting as both an art and a science. Through his discipline, drive, and extraordinary eyesight, "The Splendid Splinter" became one of the best hitters in baseball history.

In 1941 Ted Williams had one of the best seasons of any baseball player in history. He finished the season with a batting average of .406, an average that no one else has ever topped. He also had the most home runs in the American League that year, and helped his All Star team to a victory with a home run.

Although he was a very talented player, Ted Williams didn't get along very well with the media. He was a quiet person, and did not like to be bothered by reporters for interviews. Some writers criticized him for his mediocre fielding and slow base running. Williams did not have the traditional power hitter's body shape, and his long legs made it seem as though he was not running as fast as he could.

Ted Williams had a hard time getting along with fans as well. When he started playing, he always tipped his hat to Red Sox fans while running the bases after home runs. Then, after he went several weeks with only a few hits, fans booed him. Although his good hitting came back after the short slump, he refused to tip his cap to fans in Boston for the rest of his career.

During the 1942 season, after the attack on Pearl Harbor brought the United States into World War II, some writers accused Ted of being un-patriotic because he had not enlisted in the army. Hardly any other major league players had enlisted either, but
reporters chose to focus on Ted Williams. Williams did enlist, and he turned out to be baseball's longest-serving member of the military. He was a Navy fighter pilot and missed three full seasons (1943-45) during World War II, and most of the 1952 and 1953 seasons during the Korean War.

After his playing days, Williams' public image began to change. When he was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1966, Ted Williams made an important speech. In his speech, he said that the Baseball Hall of Fame should be able to honor baseball players who had played in the Negro leagues because they had not had a fair chance to play in the major leagues. Five years later, Satchel Paige became the first player to be elected to the Hall of Fame based on his Negro leagues record.

As Ted Williams grew older, his relationship with reporters and fans improved. No longer bitter about his difficulties with the media, Williams emerged as an engaging and charming person who was willing to talk to almost any writer, player, or broadcaster. Williams also spent a lot of his time helping the Jimmy Fund, an organization that helps children and adults who have cancer.

Williams' popularity was clear at the 1999 All-Star Game, held at Boston's Fenway Park. After being brought to the pitcher's mound in a golf cart, fans gave Williams a standing ovation that lasted for several minutes. From his early days as a brash rookie for the Red Sox, through his six batting titles, his courageous military tours, and his charitable work, Ted Williams forged an indelible image in the minds of baseball fans.
Frank Robinson

Known for his temperamental ways early in his career, Frank Robinson overcame fights on the field and a brief brush with the law to become one of the game's most respected figures.

Frank Robinson began his major league career with the Cincinnati Reds in 1956. During his first year, he scored 122 runs and won the Rookie of the Year award. He quickly established a reputation for playing a hard-nosed, aggressive style of baseball. He crowded home plate, challenged pitchers, and slid hard while running the bases. In a 1959 game against the Milwaukee Braves, Robinson slid into third baseman Eddie Mathews. This event caused a fight between the two teams. It was also the first time in major league baseball that a black star player (Robinson) confronted a white star (Mathews) on the field.

In the early 1960s, Robinson received several death threats from racist fans. In response to the hate mail, he began carrying a gun with him. When a cook refused to serve him a meal and then drew a knife on Robinson, the star outfielder waved the gun at him. Robinson was arrested and fined $250.

Putting aside his troubles, Robinson became one of the greatest outfielders of the 1960s. He became the first baseball player to win the Most Valuable Player Award in both the National League and the American League. He also won baseball's Triple Crown in 1966 by leading the American League in batting average, home runs, and RBIs. Robinson helped his new team, the Baltimore Orioles, win the World Series in both 1966 and 1970.
Frank Robinson made history in 1975 when he became the first African-American manager in the history of the major leagues. Once again overcoming racism from those who resented a black manager, Robinson managed the Cleveland Indians from 1975 to 1977. He later managed the Baltimore Orioles, San Francisco Giants, and Washington Nationals. Much like he played, Robinson managed with a fiery intensity that drew the respect of others within the game.

In 2000, he was named a vice president of Major League Baseball. Today, Robinson is widely acknowledged as one of the game's great all-around contributors, having succeeded as a player, as a manager, and as an official with Major League Baseball's front office.