

The complexion of america english literature essay

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Andrew EtchisonLewisAPUSH: Period 2Jackie RobinsonThe complexion of America was forever changed when Jackie Robinson stepped on that sacred field in Brooklyn, April 15, 1947, sporting the legendary number 42. Throughout the life of Jackie Robinson, racism and complications attempted to keep him down, but he prevailed and proved millions of Americans wrong. Jackie Robinson, being the first African American to play Major League Baseball, not only broke the color barrier in the sport itself, but challenged the culture in regards to the idea of white supremacy. Racial animosity in America at the time towards African Americans was at its peak. Hate crimes and killings in America during the forties and fifties were extremely common. African Americans in America were still seen as inferior to whites, no matter how successful they were. At the time, government legislation called for separate but equal facilities, yet the equal part was never fully applied. African Americans were subject to extreme prejudice and hate simply because their skin was of a different color. African Americans who were returning from World War II began to question these white supremacist ideas, and were ready to change them. African American men had fought and died for their country just like any other soldier, yet when they returned home they were treated and thought of as second class citizens. In Robinson's childhood, racism and segregation were exceedingly common in his everyday life. Robinson grew up extremely poor, coming from a bloodline of sharecroppers and slaves. Without a father, who had left the family, Robinson moved to California in 1920 with his 4 siblings. In 1935, Robinson was attending John Muir High School, and with his brother's influence, he participated in numerous high school sports including football, baseball,

track, and basketball. Robinson was a true talent even in high school, playing shortstop, quarterback, winning awards for long jumping, and playing guard for the basketball team. It was clear that Robinson had true athletic talents, and without his brother's coercion to play, these talents could have been wasted. Robinson shined at John Muir High School this being only the beginning to his legendary career. Robinson then went on to attend Pasadena Junior college and continued playing all the sports he excelled at in high school. Just as he had shown in high school, Robinson continued his dominance at Pasadena Junior College not only in sports but as an admirable student. Not only were Robinson's athletic achievements being recognized, but also being recognized for his personality winning him the Order of the Mast and Dagger award. Robinson then had to deal with family hardships, when his brother Frank passed. After his brother's death, Jackie attended the University of California Los Angeles, determined to act on his athletic talents for the memory of his brother. Robinson continued his trend of dominance and success in basketball, football, and track but coincidentally had an unusually poor baseball career at UCLA. Robinson, for a short, while pursued football as his main sport, playing for numerous teams, one even in Honolulu. Although talented, Jackie was drafted into the army in 1942 ending his potential football career. Robinson was drafted into a segregated Calvary unit but never saw combat. In his short time in the army Jackie would experience a strong taste of racism, and it was a taste that he would fight against until the day he died. In one instance, Robinson was riding on an unsegregated army bus line and was told find a seat in the back, when refusing, he was taken into custody. Jackie attempted to question the driver

for racism, and then was court-martialed and even charged for the ridiculous crime of public intoxication, the ironic thing being that Robinson did not even drink alcohol. The blasphemy that could be made up against African Americans at the time depicts what the American society was like, racist and unwilling to change. This event carved deep into Jackie a burning hate for racism, and showed what some people thought of African Americans at the time. These racist encounters would be the precursor to what Jackie would experience in his later venture into the MLB. After his honorable discharge from the military in 1944, Robinson wrote to the co-owner of the Kansas City monarchs, a Negro league baseball team. In 1945, Robinson agreed to a contract of 400 dollars a month to play for the Monarchs in the Negro leagues. Robinson hit an astounding .387 and played in the Negro league all-star game of 1945. Robinson, experiencing success in the Negro leagues, had aspirations to one day play on the world stage of American sports, Major League Baseball. Extreme racism and segregation in society and the fact that no African American had ever played Major league baseball ever, Robinson was prepared to face extreme hate and consequences. The only team in the MLB that was seriously considering and looking into recruiting from the Negro leagues was the Brooklyn Dodgers. Branch Rickey, a scout for the dodgers, put Robinson into the team's farm organization, and he played for the Montreal Royals. Then on October 23, Robinson signed his contract that would have him playing in the 1946 season with the Royals. His contract was initially \$400 but was raised \$200 by Branch Rickey asking of Robinson only one thing: turn a cheek to racism and prejudice he was about to face in his time in the Major Leagues. Robinson was then making an

astounding \$600 a month, which in today's currency would be around \$7651. Jackie then moved on from the Negro leagues and was ready for the minor leagues. When Robinson reported for spring training in Florida for the Royals, he was not prepared for the racism and prejudice that was to come. The first instance he encountered was having to stay apart from his team because they would not allow blacks in their hotel. As the Royals attempted time and time again to schedule games with Robinson on their lineup, racial hate prevented them from doing so. Stadiums and fields were shut down so games couldn't be played, Robinson was even threatened with arrest. The fact that the Royals couldn't even schedule a game simply because an African American was on their lineup card shows how hateful and racist America was at the time. In America during the forties, racial prejudice like that was so common it was seen as normal. In his minor league season, Robinson was firing on all cylinders having an incredible batting average of .349 and was awarded MVP for the league. With a large fan base of Royal supporters behind him, crowds flocked to see him play. After an astounding minor league season in 1946, Robinson was called up to the Major League's leading into the 1947 by the Dodgers. Robinson was about to make history in Major League Baseball and change America forever by breaking not only the color barrier, but paving the way for the civil rights movement. The trials and tribulations that were to come for Robinson in Major League Baseball were going to be some of the greatest struggles in his life, and no one could predict the lasting effects Robinson would have not only on the game, but America as a whole. When Robinson broke the color barrier, he was challenging the decades of racism and prejudice towards blacks putting an

enormous target on his back. Robinson made his Major League Debut on April 15, 1947, history was made by an African American from a poor sharecropping family. Jackie was now playing for something bigger representing the African American community as a whole when he played. Hank Aaron even wrote of the time he watched Robinson as a child " Jackie Robinson gave all of us—not only black athletes, but every black person in this country—a sense of our own strength" (Aaron). As Robinson's fame grew tens of thousands of African Americans came out to see him play, but no one was prepared for the animosity that Robinson was going to be subject to. Even members of Robinsons own team expressed hatred for him, some refusing to play on the same field as him. These players stopped complaining after seeing that Robinson's skills could earn them thousands more in a World Series run. Robinson and his family also received threats on their lives. Amidst all the hate and racism, Robinson was determined to prove himself. He knew that no one would listen to him until he had showed he could be a successful player; otherwise he was just an African American who got a lucky shot. Jackie Robinson was determined to prove the critics wrong and make a stand against racism. The Dodger organization saw that a career could come from Robinson, and supported him regardless what the other players thought about his presence in an all-white league. As the season continued things would only get tougher for Robinson. Because teams could not strike or protest playing against Robinson due to the possibility of suspension, they took to physically and verbally abusing him. Physical abuse such as getting a gash in his leg came from players on the Cardinals and verbal abuse from the Phillies where Robinson was verbally abused on numerous occasions

from many players. Through his intense struggle, Robinson found friendship in another African American player in the American league, Larry Dobby. The two would converse via telephone and found comfort each other hoping to make it through the grueling season both in one piece. Despite all the struggles Robinson had to overcome in his rookie season, finishing the season with a batting average of . 297, including leading the league in steals and sacrifices. Robinson's spectacular season led to him winning the Rookie of the Year Award, being the first colored player to do so also becoming the highest paid athlete in Dodgers history. Jackie Robinson played his remarkable rookie season under tremendous pressure. To think of the things that could have been achieved in his first year if he wasn't under these extreme conditions is simply unfathomable. Robinson played with the fire of a man who knew what he wanted, and played to electrify the crowd. He had an always hustle and hate to lose attitude which would propel his success as a baseball player and civil rights activist. Robinson held his head high and shut his critic's mouths; simply by showing them he was better. Robinson, in his later years of Major League Baseball, came out of his shell compared to his quiet and successful attitude in his rookie years. Now that he showed his critics he could play, there was nothing they could do but keep their mouths shut. As more African American players joined the league, hate for specifically Robinson lowered, but he still dealt with everyday racism and hatred just because of his skin color. Robinson continued his dominance for nine more seasons after his rookie season, doing exceedingly well in all of them. Robinson had a batting average of above . 250 every season, stealing nearly 200 bases, and making 6 World Series appearances, winning one. As

Robinson asserted dominance for 10 seasons, he was a figurehead not only for African American athletes, but for racial equality. People saw Jackie Robinson be extremely successful at what he did, and questioned why they should hate him simply because of his skin color. Jackie Robinson was a role model for all African American citizens, showing them that their critics can be silenced. The effects of his baseball career would kick start the beginning a long journey towards racial equality, and the fight Robinson would continue even after he was no longer playing baseball. The success of Jackie Robinson led the way for other extraordinary African American baseball players that would eventually come through the league. After Jackie Robinson's career in Major League Baseball, he continued to be a civil rights activist off the field. He was diagnosed with diabetes in 1957, but was still greatly determined to pursue racial equality for all despite his deteriorating health. In 1962, Jackie Robinson was elected into the Baseball Hall of Fame, becoming the first African American to do so. Robinson's number 42 was later retired on June 4, 1972. Robinson became a member on the board of the NAACP a well-established organization that protected the rights of African Americans and all minorities subject to discrimination or prejudice. Robinson also became the vice president of Chock Full of Nuts Coffee, becoming the first black executive of a major company. Jackie Robinson not only was a successful baseball player but a savvy businessman, and a social and political activist. Robinson donated a reasonable amount of his earnings to many charities and nonprofit organizations. After his baseball career, Robinson was also extremely politically active. Robinson supported both Democrats and Republicans in his life, due to presidential candidates swaying race and civil

rights policies. Robinson had dreamed of the day a when black manager would coach in Major League Baseball , but passed one short year before he would've gotten the chance to see Frank Robinson coaching for the Cleveland Indians. Robinson also threw the first pitch in the world series of 1972 and received a 25th year anniversary plaque from his debut in Major League Baseball. As his health deteriorated due to diabetes and heart disease, he died of a heart attack at age 53. After his death, his widowed wife Rachel Robinson set up the Jackie Robinson Foundation which still continues to this day. The foundation today provides scholarships, mentoring, and life skills for all deserving keeping alive the legend of Jackie Robinson. Jackie Robinson after his baseball showed that he was determined to fight for African American racial equality, but he also gave hope to the common African American everywhere. Significance-Jackie Robinson breaking the color barrier of Major League Baseball between black and white in 1947 is an event that laid the foundation for the civil rights movement. Jackie Robinson is still significant today because he showed America that their years of prejudice and racism were utterly unnecessary. Robinson was a figurehead for racial equality, and a leader in regards to African American integration into society. Jackie Robinson is a legendary figure because he inspired everyone by showing them that no matter what someone thinks of you, you can prove them wrong if you are truly determined to do so. When Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier and played 10 successful seasons in the Major Leagues, it proved decades of white supremacist ideas wrong. Robinson was a role model and an activist who even after his baseball career, continued to fight for equality for all African Americans. After his

death, the Jackie Robinson Foundation continues thriving today giving out \$22 million in scholarship grants alone to aid not only African Americans but any oppressed people. In the Major League's today as I write my semester event Jackie Robinson is still being honored! Every player playing in the MLB today, April 15, 2013, wore the number 42, a legendary and symbolic number with no name on their jersey. The fact that the jersey doesn't have the players name on it symbolizes what Robinson stood for. It doesn't matter who you are or what skin color you are, we're all people. Not only did Jackie Robinson achieve recognition throughout America, but he showed the rest of the world that it shouldn't matter what you look like or what color your skin is, everyone is a person. On top of the recognition and prestige Robinson holds in the Major Leagues, a movie was also made about him called 42. I saw the movie myself and enjoyed it thoroughly simply because I got to see what this man had achieved. The fact that all these things have been done to remember this marvelous man shows you what kind of impact he had not only on baseball, but the movement for African American and any oppressed groups towards equality. The lasting effects Jackie Robinson had on America are still being shown 66 years later, paying respects to a man that laid the foundation for a movement that would change America forever. What if #1If Jackie Robinson had never broken the color barrier in 1942, the task would be left for another African American baseball player, but could they have done it as successfully as Jackie Robinson had done it? If Jackie Robinson had not broken the color barrier the integration of Blacks into Major League Baseball would've taken many more years possibly even decades. If Robinson hadn't broken the color barrier it would've been left to another

person, and the success of this other person most likely would've been nothing like the success Robinson had. The success Robinson had in his first years of playing in the MLB was instrumental to the integration of African Americans in every sport. Also, if the task was left to another African American baseball player to break the color barrier, the pressure and hate might've broken them down more than it had to Robinson. People began to look up to Robinson as their idol simply because of his outstanding character and how he carried himself, forcing many to question why they hated this man simply because he was black. People saw that Jackie Robinson could be just as successful as a white baseball player, and this questioned the deep roots of racism that blacks were inferior to whites. Many racists were born and raised that blacks were inferior, and Robinson proved these ideas wrong extremely successfully. If the task of breaking the color barrier was left to another African American, the success and legacy that lives on to this day would not be nearly as significant simply because of the person Jackie Robinson was. If the task was left to another man, the pressure would have beat them down and caused them to fold under the extreme pressure and hate. Without a strong soul such as Jackie Robinson the integration of blacks into sports including Major League Baseball would've without a doubt been put at a standstill for many more years. What if #2Robinson's integration into the game of Baseball at the time was due largely to the fact that the officials of Major League Baseball supported it. When teams threatened to strike and sit out games because they refused to play against Robinson, Major League Baseball sided with Robinson believing everyone deserved their shot despite their skin color. The dodgers also played an instrumental

role in forcing integration. When Robinson's teammates threatened to sit out they told them that they could leave or quit, because he was going to play. After seeing Robinson's success, the players then later realized the possibility of more money because of a World Series run and no longer protested against Robinson. Major league baseball also threatened the players and teams that were planning to strike and sit out games against the Dodgers with suspensions and fines. With the looming threat of suspension these men could not afford to lose pay and face fines, and were forced to play despite their beliefs. If Major League Baseball had not sided with Robinson and the integration of blacks into Major League Baseball, integration could've taken many more years if not decades. Another underlying reason Major League Baseball supported integration is because it saw the potential profit in the enormous fan base of mostly African American but also white fans that supported Robinson, and other Negro league teams. To many of his fans, Robinson was their idol. If people saw that their idol would not be allowed to play in the Major Leagues simply because of his skin color, many would've rose up and protested the MLB whites and blacks included. People came to see spectacular baseball games and players who were extremely skilled at what they did, not to keep a potential star out of the game simply because he was black. Without the support of Major League Baseball and the Dodgers organization Jackie Robinsons and all future African American athlete's integration into baseball and other sports would've most certainly failed or taken many more years. Summary Questions: I chose Jackie Robinson as my topic for two main reasons; because I play and enjoy baseball, and to get a little insight on why this

event was as significant to baseball as a whole. Baseball has always been an interest of mine, even since I was a little kid, and I wanted to look into its past time. As I did a little research before choosing my event into the topic I found that Robinson laid the stepping stones for the Civil Rights movement, and I began to grasp how influential the man himself was. The figure and role model of all African Americans at the time should be something that everyone should have knowledge of, and I hope I can share it. The lasting effect Jackie Robinson had on the game, and America as a whole is something that should be more widely known. Jackie Robinson and his legacy should most certainly never forgotten or taken for granted which is why I chose Jackie Robinson as my semester event. For some reason as I grew up playing baseball, I knew little of Jackie Robinson besides the number 42, or how significant breaking the color barrier was. I was altogether ignorant to what was going on in America at the time. As we cover racism and the civil rights movement in class my eyes have suddenly been opened to some atrocities that have happened. Although the story of Jackie Robinson is no tragedy, it was no walk in the park either. My research has shown me how tough African Americans actually had it in America at the time. Having remarkably little previous knowledge on Jackie Robinson how he broke the color barrier along with leaving a lasting impression on America my previous beliefs have not changed much. I finally grasp that Jackie Robinson breaking the color was more than just African Americans being allowed into Major League Baseball, I learned that integration into Major League Baseball by Robinson would set the stage for the civil rights movement and inspire millions of African Americans. My research has shown me what America used

to be like along with how far we have come, and realize how much further we still have to go as a nation.