

EXCERPT TO WRITE ABOUT

“Opening Doors for Others”From *Jackie Robinson: Strong Inside and Out*

by Denise Lewis Patrick

- As you read through this excerpt about Jackie Robinson, think about how Jackie Robinson connected to others at that time and to events of the time. Highlight where you find evidence of this, and jot your thinking in the margins.

After Jackie, more and more black players joined the major-league baseball teams. Larry Doby was the first in the American League, not long after Jackie. He played for the Cleveland Indians. Roy Campanella and Don Newcombe joined Jackie with the Dodgers. Jackie Robinson had opened the door, and it stayed open.

In the 1950s doors were opening all over America. Jackie Robinson had given many African Americans the courage to fight for equal rights. He had stopped accepting unfairness in silence. Jackie began to speak out more and more. He wrote a book about his life, *The Jackie Robinson Story*. A movie was made from it in 1950. Jackie played himself!

Jackie’s major-league career lasted almost ten years, almost all of them with the Dodgers. The team won six pennants and a World Series title. The 1956 season was his last. The Dodgers were moving to California. Jackie found out they were planning to trade him to the New York Giants. But he was already thinking of leaving baseball.

He wasn’t as fast as he used to be. He wasn’t playing as well as he wished. And by then he and Rachel were the parents of Jack Jr., Sharon, and David. He wanted time with his family.

Jackie announced that he would retire. He was ready to live a life outside of baseball.

New Careers

And that’s what Jackie Robinson did. He worked in business as a vice president at Chock Full o’Nuts, a coffee company. He wrote a newspaper column. He helped start a bank. Jackie met U.S. presidents and movie stars. He traveled and went deep-sea fishing with his family.

In 1962 he was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame. The ceremony was held in Cooperstown, New York. It was one of the proudest days of his life. Two important people from his early years were there to celebrate: his mother, Mallie, and Branch Rickey.

Jackie’s concern for opening doors kept him busy. His whole family took part in the 1963 March on Washington for equal rights for African Americans. The Robinsons stood with tens of thousands of Americans of all races to hear Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s famous “I Have a Dream” speech.

Jackie believed in Dr. King’s words about different races working and living together. That’s what his baseball career had been all about. He worked to bring more black managers and coaches to baseball. And he and Rachel raised money to make Dr. King’s

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dreams happen. To do this, they started having “Afternoons of Jazz” concerts each summer in their big backyard in Stamford, Connecticut.

Note: From this excerpt, the reader deduces that the author is focusing here on Jackie Robinson’s post–baseball career life. The heading itself—“Opening Doors for Others”—signals to the reader what the author most wants us to take away from this section and perhaps the entire biography.

Jackie Robinson’s role as the baseball player who broke the color barrier paved the way for other black baseball players to enter the game as well—and by extension, enter the game of American business and culture, too.

Notice that by the second paragraph, we recognize that the author is asserting a far bigger influence, lacing details of Robinson’s public speaking and life after retirement around claims such as “Jackie Robinson had given many African Americans the courage to fight for equal rights.” In the section “New Careers,” the author details Robinson’s successful life after baseball. What’s heartening about it is that the hallmarks of success aren’t strictly about his corporate posts or earnings; they include details that he was a man who loved his family and was smart enough to enjoy pursuits like deep-sea fishing and jazz. We can infer he was a balanced person, and because of it, he was able to continue to break barriers, working on behalf of equal rights. We learn that not only did Robinson and his family attend Martin Luther King, Jr.’s 1963 March on Washington, but they raised money for the civil rights cause. With these details, the author makes sure readers don’t pigeonhole Jackie Robinson as a groundbreaking baseball player. Not unlike Muhammad Ali, Jackie Robinson was an intellectual, spiritual, and moral person who saw that with fame came a responsibility to make America live up to its principles of equality and nonviolent resolutions.