



# THE VALUE OF COURAGE: THE STORY OF JACKIE ROBINSON

Written by Spencer Johnson and  
Illustrated by Steve Pileggi

## Reading and Activity Guide



### BEFORE READING

- + What does it mean to have courage?
- + Has anyone heard of Jackie Robinson before? Do you know what he is famous for? Nowadays, if you watch a baseball game, you will see many different faces and skin tones on the field. However, just about 70 years ago - it wasn't like that. White people were the only ones who were allowed to play baseball in the Major Leagues. Because they weren't allowed to play with Whites, Black people had to form their own league if they wanted to play baseball. Let's hear about how Jackie Robinson helped change that.

### DURING READING

- + Pause at the army bus part. Share with students that not very long ago, America had different laws - laws that said where you could or could not sit on a bus, or at a restaurant, or which drinking fountain or bathroom you could use....all based on the color of your skin. Do those seem like fair or wise laws to have? Some people worked very hard to get those laws changed. God created us all equally, and all in HIS image. Who are we to say one skin color or group of people is *better* or *more deserving* than another?
- + Pause after Jackie's and Branch Rickey's conversation: "Are you looking for a Black man who's afraid to fight back?" "No, I'm looking for a ball player with courage enough *not* to fight back." What does Branch Rickey mean? What's the difference between Jackie's question and Mr. Rickey's answer? Some people say it's weak to avoid fighting back. Is there a courage and a strength in *NOT* fighting back? How? *Mr. Rickey is not looking for a spineless player who will shrink away from white people's ridicule. But he's not looking for someone "strong" enough to fight back - Mr. Rickey doesn't want big fights on the baseball field. Instead, he's looking for someone with a deep strength and courage - strong enough to face the people ridiculing him and fight back by playing an excellent game - by proving Blacks are just as talented as whites.*
- + Our words and our actions reveal our character - what type of person we are on the inside. What do Jackie's actions reveal about his character - what kind of person is he? What do the white players' and fans' actions reveal about their character - what kind of people are they?
- + Why do you think none of Jackie's teammates stood up for him? When his teammates did stand with him, did it make a difference?



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- + Every year, Major League Baseball (MLB) teams [celebrate](#) Jackie Robinson's heroic work on April 15th by wearing his jersey number - 42. Nowadays, his number has been 'retired', which means no other player in the MLB can be #42. They do this to honor Jackie Robinson.
- + What does it mean to have courage? Does it mean you're not afraid?
- + Share something you learned from Jackie Robinson's story.
- + Explain that nowadays, our country no longer has these specific laws that separated Jackie on the bus or in baseball, but because of these laws and people's beliefs, things are still not always as equal or fair as we'd like them to be. We can be courageous like Jackie Robinson and help change minds and places.

#### SPRINGBOARD ACTIVITIES:

**Activity #1: Who was Jackie Robinson?** - Complete this [cut and paste timeline](#) of Jackie Robinson's life. You may want to look up more information about his life! And, here are two excellent activities from [BrainPop](#) about interviewing family heroes and adding to Jackie Robinson's timeline - What did he accomplish after retiring from baseball?

**Activity #2: "That all my doings and life may please You"** - Does your family pray [Luther's Morning Prayer](#)? *"I thank you, my Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen."* We can pray this prayer throughout the day when we are tempted, like Jackie, to take revenge or fight back. Instead, we can "fight back" in a way that is pleasing to God - doing our best anyway, despite what people say, and working with others to make things better.