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# Historical Representation of Jackie Robinson Within Primary and Intermediate Level Children's Literature

Amy Minor

*Eastern Illinois University*

This research is a product of the graduate program in [Elementary Education](#) at Eastern Illinois University.

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Historical Representation of Jackie Robinson Within

Primary and Intermediate Level Children's Literature

(TITLE)

BY

Amy Minor

**THESIS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
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Historical Representation of Jackie Robinson Within Primary and Intermediate Level Children's  
Literature

Amy N. Minor

Eastern Illinois University

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### **Abstract**

Educators today meet national and state initiatives by spending approximately half their time on non-fiction literature. Starting as early as primary grades students are to analyze multiple texts on the same historical topic. Student's reading levels vary; consequently, trade books can be used to reach each individual child. Due to this, trade book usage has increased. Research indicates trade books can contain possible historical misrepresentations. Few studies have been completed, therefore more research is necessary. My research examined the historical representation of Jackie Robinson within trade books for primary and intermediate grades. After determining events in reading the historical research about Robinson's life and legacy, I examined the trade books for patterns of representation and misrepresentation. I located historical misrepresentation including minimized or the omitted parts of Jackie Robinson's life. Suggestions on ways to integrate and supplement sources to balance the historical gaps determined in the sample data pool are offered.

I would like to thank my loved ones for their support throughout this process.

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## **Introduction**

Jackie Robinson is a name students hear because he was the first African American to play Major League Baseball. In addition to this, there is much more about his life that children should be taught. Jackie used his actions, more precisely, lack of actions to help initiate change in America. He was a brave soul in a harsh world and his courageousness assisted change in a separated environment. With the emphasis on informational text in the Common Core English Language Arts Standards, trade books are a logical choice for educators to meet national and state initiatives. Trade books are condensed versions, therefore it is important to determine that the author portrays Jackie Robinson as a historian would. The method of research implemented for this study and its findings will assist educators in making informed decisions on trade books they select for their students.

## **Literature Review**

Informational texts play an important role in building content knowledge of students. Therefore, national standards require a 50-50 balance between literature and informational text reading in the elementary grades (Common Core State Standards Initiative [CCSSI], 2010). Much of the emphasis on informational text in the English Language Arts Standards for grades K-5 is drawn from social studies disciplines (Griffin & Swan, 2013). Students read and write social studies information demonstrating their new knowledge and understandings in the discipline (D'Souza & Gleeson, 2016). Elementary teachers can reach these expectations by utilizing textbooks, documentaries, primary sources, and trade books (Bickford & Rich, 2014). Each of these curricular resources offers strengths and weaknesses within the classroom.

## **Textbooks**

Textbooks are one instructional tool for teaching content area in elementary classrooms. There is a great deal of criticism of these books, their content, presentation, and level of difficulty (Bean, Hartman, & Zigmond, 1994). Textbooks but more specifically “Elementary social studies textbooks gave bland, homogeneous, and insufficient treatment to most topics” (Bean, et al., 1994, p. 217). Textbooks are costly and not differentiated for diverse reading levels. In the primary grades, kindergarten through second grade math and reading textbooks are abundant unlike discipline specific content. Along with the shift in the types of reading state and national initiatives require all students to compare and contrast two different texts on the same topic, which is impossible with a textbook’s single narrative (National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 2013; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices [NGA] & CCSSO, 2010). Educators can enhance and expand knowledge on a given topic presented in textbooks by pairing specific documentaries with the student’s textbook. Documentaries are another form of informational text used to meet national standards.

### **Documentaries**

In social studies education, historical feature films and documentaries have been used in the teacher’s curriculum for more than two decades (Buchanan, 2015). Using film can add action to a text which could be beneficial to students who struggle with reading comprehension (Barry, 2009). On the other hand, documentaries are spoken at one level of complexity therefore increasing the difficulty of finding a resource that closely matches the age and ability of increasingly diverse student groups (Barry, 2009). Documentaries are frequently used as a part of a larger framework of history thinking providing and presenting the counter narratives that disrupts dominant narratives to help students critique historical representations and omissions (Buchanan, 2015). The films contain a specific intent based off the producer and generally

contain primary source evidence that make the film a valuable historical source (Buchanan, 2015). Educators could provide the primary sources presented in the film along with others to enhance historical understanding on the given topic. Textbooks and documentaries are both resources teachers can utilize, but primary sources allow teachers access to raw historical materials.

### **Primary Sources**

Textbooks and documentaries can minimize and direct content in specific ways. Thus, educators can fill curriculum gaps using primary sources. Since funding is a current issue in education, primary sources offer tons of possibilities for elementary educators. The Library of Congress houses thousands of primary sources, free for classroom use. Teachers can use primary sources made available from local and state historical societies such as diaries and photographs to authenticate the study of social studies in the elementary school classroom (Morgan-Fleming, Morris & Janisch, 2001). Primary sources assist students' understanding of a time period or event. Therefore, deepening student's perception of the past (Morgan & Rasinski, 2012). Primary sources in elementary grades allow students to experience firsthand history that connects them to a person, event, or time period (Morgan & Rasinski, 2012). Students can use historical evidence learned from reading the primary sources to assist in making a reasoned argument (Morgan-Fleming et al., 2001).

Griffin and Swan's (2013) study found the following:

The ideas, concepts, skills and understanding gained in a study of the social studies disciplines prepare young people to be more effective citizens and provide students with

the tools to understand, interpret, and effectively meet the challenges in our ever changing twenty-first century world. (p. 319)

Educators can select primary sources that are relevant to a particular topic in history and complement them with trade books at a variety of reading levels to reach every student.

### **Trade Books**

Current policies in education encourage teachers to expand the range of text types children read and write (Strachan, 2014). The CCSS informational text category includes an assortment of text types including biographies, autobiographies, books about history and social studies, and digital sources (Strachan, 2014). Trade books are often written in these different engaging formats on a wide range of topics (Palmer & Stewart, 2003). Students can be introduced to new vocabulary and concepts through trade books (Palmer & Stewart, 2003). “Research shows that given material that is too difficult to read, few students are able to sustain interest and motivation” (Frye, 2009). Therefore, teachers can benefit significantly by using trade books since they provide an in-depth look of a subject while accommodating various reading levels, unlike textbooks or documentaries. Teachers need to teach students at their individual reading instructional level. Trade books written as engaging narratives for young students can be located on numerous historical topics and are relatively inexpensive (Bickford & Rich, 2015). Out of these four curriculum resources, trade books appear to be the logical choice for elementary teachers to meet the mandated state and national expectations. Educators can find a significant number of quality trade books on Jackie Robinson to reach each of their students’ needs.

### **The Historiography of Jackie Robinson**

Jackie Robinson was a catalyst for changing the talent of Major League Baseball (MLB). His jersey number 42 was retired universally in 1997. Though he is renowned in MLB, his path to being honored was not an easy one.

Jack Roosevelt Robinson was born to Mallie and Jerry Robinson on January 31, 1919 in Southern Georgia (Duckett, 1995; Linge, 2007; Rampersad, 1997). Jackie became the youngest of five children for his parents. He joined his siblings Frank, Edgar, Mack and Willa Mae on the plantation. Jackie's father left the family when he was at the young age of six months old. Mallie decided to move her family to Pasadena California when Jackie was a little over one year old. As a child in Pasadena, the first episode of resentment towards blacks that affected Jackie directly occurred when he was eight years old. After a little white girl taunted him and Jackie responded to her with an insulting word, her father threw stones at Jackie until the mother stepped in and scolded her husband for fighting with a child (Rampersad, 1997). Young Jackie's first experience with racism was a powerful one.

In high school and college Jackie earned the title of star school athlete. After high school, he continued his education as well as performing as an outstanding athlete at Pasadena Junior College. Two years later Jackie Robinson enrolled in UCLA. In the history of the university he was the first athlete to letter in four sports during the same season. However, during his college experience Robinson's color of his skin remained an obstacle as he continued to be excluded from top sports honors he deserved. UCLA campus is not only remembered as a place where Jackie Robinson excelled as an athlete it is also where he met his future wife. After two years, Robinson left UCLA, "I was convinced that no amount of education would help a black man get a job and I needed to relieve some of my mother's financial burdens" (Duckett, 1995, p. 11). At the time, Jackie Robinson saw no real future in athletics, none of the major

leagues were integrated at this point (Linge, 2007), therefore, he wanted to pursue a career as an athletic director to work with youngsters in the field of sports (Duckett, 1995).

On December 7, 1941 Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and the United States was now at war. The U.S. government needed America to work together to win the war. Soldiers of all colors were dying for our country but only black soldiers experienced new discrimination daily (Cooper, 1998). Jackie Robinson was ordered to report in March of 1942. Jim Crow segregation was prominent in the armed forces, for example Robinson was considered a prime candidate for Officer Candidate School, but he was refused without explanation at first. In January 1943, he finally earned his gold bars signifying the rank of second lieutenant. Later in 1943, Lieutenant Robinson was asked to go overseas as a morale officer. Since he was on limited service due to his bad ankle he needed to sign a waiver relieving the Army of their responsibility if something happened to him. Jackie Robinson had to take a bus to a nearby Army hospital, the driver attempted to force him to move from the middle of the bus to the back. Robinson was aware that racial discrimination was barred on vehicles operated on an Army post and refused the drivers command. Jackie Robinson faced several charges from this racial accident. After a trial that lasted more than four hours, he was found “not guilty of all specifications and charges” (Rampersad, 1997). On November 28, 1944, Robinson received an honorable discharge from the Army (Rampersad, 1997), “I was naïve about the elaborate lengths to which racists in the Armed Forces would go to put a vocal black man in his place” (Duckett, 1995, p. 19). Jackie was once again reminded how racism controlled his world.

After happily saying goodbye to Army life Jackie Robinson was searching for his next opportunity in life. A friend informed him that there was good money in black baseball (Duckett, 1995). He joined the Negro Baseball League and became a player for the Kansas City

Monarchs. As Robinson continued his career in baseball Branch Rickey, the boss of the Brooklyn Dodgers felt it was time for equality in baseball (Duckett, 1995). After careful scouting, he picked Jackie Robinson as the player for his Nobel Experiment. He told Robinson, "I'm looking for a ballplayer with guts enough not to fight back" (Duckett, 1995, p. 33). Branch Rickey wanted Jackie Robinson to respond to racism in the same nonviolent way Martin Luther King Jr and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi responded (Fischer, 2004; Yanko, 2014). Mr. Rickey knew that his plan would rudely awaken America. He was going to smash the unwritten segregation law in baseball. Jackie Robinson signed a contract to play with the Montreal Royals of the International League to start Mr. Rickey's action plan. On February 10, 1946, Rachel Isum and Jackie Robinson married. Jackie's childhood reverend and dear friend Karl Down performed the ceremony. Robinson played one season with the Montreal Royals, in which he faced seemingly endless hatred from opposing fans as well as other hostile players.

On April 15, 1947 Robinson made his MLB debut as a Brooklyn Dodger. Even as a major-league baseball player he could not escape from Jim Crow laws. Whether it be where the team was eating or lodging the separation continued to be an obstacle in Robinson's career. Not only were their everyday struggles, Robinson experienced excessive abuse during the beginning of his career. He received death threats, was forced to listen to vicious words from players, fans, and even opposing managers all without giving into the urge to respond. Persevering through all the brutal treatment Jackie proved his athletic abilities and was voted rookie of the year. After more than two silent years on the field Jackie began to show his competitive spirit with the blessing of Mr. Rickey (Duckett, 1995; Linge, 2007). Jackie Robinson's decade long career with the Dodgers was full of animosity and achievements. He officially retired from MLB in 1957. Robinson using his fame and newly freed time, joined the Civil Rights Movement, fundraising



and speaking on behalf of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). His name returned to the spotlight in baseball when he was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1962 his first year of eligibility (Duckett, 1995; Linge, 2007; Rampersad, 1997).

Jackie and Rachel Robinson continued to fight together and alongside others against civil rights issues. He argued and stood up for what he believed until his death in 1973. Jackie Robinson died from a heart attack. He is remembered in history not only for his baseball career but for his position in equality and breaking the color barrier.

### **Methods**

When analyzing my selected data pool of children's literature, I used rigorous qualitative research methodology (Krippendorff, 2013). To determine my data sample, I searched for all published children's literature with Jackie Robinson as the main character. I located 116 trade books ranging significantly in reading levels. In order to narrow my study, I only focused on primary and intermediate trade books.

The content analysis tool (Table 1) I produced for my initial readings helped detect patterns that emerged in the primary and intermediate books. After the initial readings were completed I reviewed my findings and included the patterns in my revision of my content analysis tool. Next, I reread the entire data pool using my corrected content analysis tool (Table 2) to allow me to determine a more focused analysis. Findings were classified as explicit, minimized, or omitted.

Since I was the only one who read the trade books it is possible that a pattern was missed. I conducted multiple readings of the data pool to reduce this chance. I also reevaluated the patterns I found.

<p>Table 1</p> <p><i>Content Analysis Protocol</i></p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Author's Name, Year, Book's Title, Publication Date, Publication Company</li> <li>2. Targeted grade/age range:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Primary (K-2)</li> <li>b. Intermediate (3-5)</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Genre             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Historical fiction</li> <li>b. Non-fiction (biography, narrative non-fiction, expository, something else)</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Word Choice:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Tier 1: mistreated</li> <li>b. Tier 2: segregation</li> <li>c. Tier 3: Jim Crow</li> </ol> </li> <li>5. Violence:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Explicit:</li> <li>b. Implicit:</li> <li>c. Omitted:</li> </ol> </li> <li>6. If violence is present – who is doing it?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Jackie Robinson</li> <li>b. The crowd/fans</li> <li>c. The opposing team</li> <li>d. The opposing manager</li> <li>e. Jackie's teammates</li> </ol> </li> <li>7. Genesis of Segregation - The beginning             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Explicitly mentioned slavery/segregation:</li> <li>b. Omitted/too implicit to be identified</li> </ol> </li> <li>8. Jackie Robinson and Martin Luther King Jr - Do Jackie Robinson books mention MLK?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Yes:</li> <li>b. No:</li> </ol> </li> <li>9. Which issues were mentioned?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Social segregation</li> <li>b. Political segregation</li> <li>c. Economic segregation</li> <li>d. Armed Forces segregation</li> </ol> </li> <li>10. Did the author present Jackie Robinson's experiences of segregation during his military career?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Explicit:</li> <li>b. Implicit:</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

- c. Omitted:
- 11. Was Branch Rickey presented as a white against segregation?
  - a. Explicit:
  - b. Implicit:
  - c. Omitted:
- 12. Was Jackie Robinson presented as a silent ballplayer during the beginning of his career?
  - a. Explicit:
  - b. Implicit:
  - c. Omitted:
- 13. Was Jackie Robinson presented as a strong outspoken voice later in his career?
  - a. Explicit:
  - b. Implicit:
  - c. Omitted:
- 14. Was Jackie Robinson’s career after baseball and involvement in civil rights presented?
  - a. Explicit:
  - b. Implicit:
  - c. Omitted:
- 15. Was Jackie’s Robinsons retired jersey presented?
  - a. Explicit:
  - b. Implicit:
  - c. Omitted:
- 16. Was the banishing or decreasing Jim Crow laws in baseball present?
  - a. Explicit:
  - b. Implicit:
  - c. Omitted:

<p>Table 2</p> <p><i>Content Analysis Tool</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Book’s Title -                      Author’s Name -                      Publication Date -                      Publication Company -</li> <li>2. Targeted grade/age range:                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. Primary (K-2)</li> <li>d. Intermediate (3-5)</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Genre                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. Historical fiction</li> <li>d. Non-fiction (biography, narrative non-fiction, expository, something else)</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Word Choice:                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. Tier 1 (e.g., mistreated)</li> <li>e. Tier 2 (e.g., segregation)</li> <li>f. Tier 3 (e.g., Jim Crow)</li> </ul> </li> <li>5. How do the narratives characterize the origins of segregation?</li> </ul>

- c. Unexplained. As something what “just was” like the weather
  - d. Explained but minimized. As something that whites initiated
  - e. Explained in detail. As something whites initiated, maintained and benefited from
6. Which issues were mentioned?
- e. Social segregation
  - f. Political segregation
  - g. Economic segregation
  - h. Armed Forces segregation
7. Did the author present Jackie Robinson’s experiences of segregation during his military career?
- d. Explicit:
  - e. Implicit, Vague, Minimized:
  - f. Omitted:
8. Are other Civil Rights leaders mentioned?
- a. Yes:
  - b. No:
9. Did the author present any type of violence during Jackie’s baseball career?
- d. Explicit:
  - e. Implicit, Vague, Minimized:
  - f. Omitted:
10. If violence is present – who is doing it?
- f. The crowd/fans
  - g. The opposing team
  - h. The opposing manager
  - i. Jackie’s teammates
11. How do the authors characterize the first baseball league Jackie participated in?
- a. Negro
  - b. Colored
  - c. African American
  - d. Black
  - e. Omitted:
12. How is Branch Rickey characterized?
- a. Benefiting from Jackie Robinson as an owner
  - b. Idealistic to end segregation
  - c. Both a & b
  - d. Something Different
  - e. Omitted
13. Was Jackie Robinson presented as a silent ballplayer during the beginning of his career?
- d. Explicit:
  - e. Implicit, Vague, Minimized:
  - f. Omitted:
14. Was Jackie Robinson presented as a strong outspoken voice later in his career?
- d. Explicit:
  - e. Implicit, Vague, Minimized:
  - f. Omitted:
15. How is Jackie Robinson’s wife characterized?

- a. strong, positive contributing factor in his life
  - b. mentioned but minimized
  - c. omitted
16. Was Jackie Robinson's involvement in civil rights after his baseball career presented?
- d. Explicit:
  - e. Implicit, Vague, Minimized:
  - f. Omitted:
17. Did the author present Jackie's Robinsons induction into the Hall of Fame?
- d. Explicit:
  - e. Implicit, Vague. Minimized:
  - f. Omitted:
18. Was the banishing or decreasing Jim Crow laws in baseball present?
- d. Explicit:
  - e. Implicit, Vague, Minimized:
  - f. Omitted:

### Findings

The data sample compiled only primary and intermediate trade books about Jackie Robinson consisted of 44 books. I could locate and purchase at a reasonable price, 35 of those. Therefore, my data pool accounted for 35 of the 44 possible books available on the specific topic. School districts see significant differences in student's reading abilities starting in the primary grades. While some students in a class read above grade level, others read below. Each student has an independent reading level. Learning to choose books at their independent level is important to help students sustain their reading for longer periods of time (Diller, 2005). Primary books target grades kindergarten to second and intermediate books range from third to fifth. Third grade teachers need to offer both levels to meet the needs of all their students. A small portion of Jackie Robinson books on the market, fall under the primary grades age range. Five were included in the randomly-selected data sample used in this study.

The genre, historical fiction in children's books intertwines facts and fiction into literature. Quality historical fiction that is realistic and purposeful can bring history alive to the

reader (McTigue, Thornton, & Wiese, 2013). Historical fiction and non-fiction books can provide the balance needed on a specific historical topic. Most children's books included in this study were informational text ( $n = 27$ ; 77%) and the rest were historical fiction ( $n = 8$ ; 22%).

Non-fiction books can include all three tiers of vocabulary. Tier One vocabulary tends to be basic words such as mistreated. Tier Two words can have multiple meanings, meanings across several disciplines or are high frequency words like segregation. An example of a Tier Three, subject related and very specific vocabulary word is Jim Crow. In my findings, very few books ( $n = 5$ ; 14%) had Tier Three vocabulary words within them. The majority of books included Tier One vocabulary words ( $n = 17$ ; 48%) and Tier Two vocabulary words ( $n = 13$ ; 37%).

Segregation is a concept that elementary students might struggle to understand. The origins of segregation are possibly unclear to young students. Consequently, their background knowledge on this topic could be minimal. Segregation was mentioned in 34 of the 35 books. Sadly, in all the books the origins of segregation were unexplained and portrayed as something that "just was" like the weather ( $n = 34$ ; 100%).

Segregation, the separation of people based on skin color frustrated Jackie Robinson daily. Robinson wanted to help his mother with her financial burdens and left college to assist. As a black man, he struggled to find a career that allowed him to help. His athletic talents could have been used to earn his family money much earlier than 1947, but he was kept separated from professional sports due to his skin color. The types of segregation omitted from the whole data sample were political and economic. Social segregation appeared in almost all the books ( $n =$

33; 94%) and armed forces segregation was presented in more than half of the sample ( $n = 19$ ; 54%).

Jackie Robinson had the potential to become an excellent leader in the army, but was barred by an army controlled by Jim Crow. He along with other black soldiers, were first kept from officer school for no apparent reason. The baseball team on base would not allow him to participate even though he was a great competitor. He even faced charges from a dispute on an army bus. Jackie Robinson's experiences of segregation during his military career were detailed explicitly in nearly half of the trade books ( $n = 15$ ; 42%), as some minimized ( $n = 6$ ; 17%) or omitted it ( $n = 14$ ; 40%).

Some Americans believe that their own personal opinions are always right. They go out of their way to make them known. During Robinson's baseball career, many people used violence to inform him that they did not think he belonged. From being yelled at, to receiving death threats Jackie Robinson experienced a lot of hatred from others. The authors in more than half of the books explicitly specify types of violence that occurred during his baseball career ( $n = 24$ ; 68%), some authors chose to minimize the violence ( $n = 9$ ; 25%), and a small portion omitted it altogether ( $n = 2$ ; 5%).

Before Robinson caused an uproar as the first black athlete in professional baseball he was a member of another baseball league. This baseball league had multiple names given to it over the years. The trade books in the randomly-selected data sample also used a variety of names for this baseball organization. Negro league was the most common name used ( $n = 23$ ; 65%). A small portion of the books called the baseball league a black league ( $n = 6$ ; 17%), one

book used the name African American when discussing the league ( $n = 1$ ; 2%), while some books omitted this section in Jackie's life ( $n = 6$ ; 17%).

Branch Rickey, the president of the Brooklyn Dodgers decided to find a black athlete to bring into his organization. He believed that he could assist his team while making a breakthrough to smash the unwritten law that kept blacks out of professional baseball (Duckett, 1995). A small percent of the data sample included both idealistic to end segregation and benefiting from Jackie Robinson as an owner as the reasons Branch Rickey wanted Robinson ( $n = 7$ ; 20%) an even smaller percent only included benefiting from Jackie Robinson as an owner ( $n = 3$ ; 8%) most books concluded that Branch Rickey was idealistic to end segregation ( $n = 15$ ; 42%). Some of the trade books omitted Branch Rickey altogether ( $n = 7$ ; 20%) and a few suggested something different than the above reasons ( $n = 3$ ; 8%).

For Jackie Robinson's entrance into professional baseball to go as smoothly as Branch Rickey was hoping he asked him to be silent during the beginning of his career. He told Jackie, "I'm looking for a ball player with guts enough not to fight back" (Rampersad, 1997, p. 126). He knew if Robinson reacted to the violence and opinions of others he could delay breaking the color barrier. This was detailed explicitly in a small portion of trade books ( $n = 7$ ; 20%) as most minimized ( $n = 16$ ; 45%) or omitted it ( $n = 12$ ; 34%).

Branch Rickey gave Jackie Robinson permission to respond to the vitriol—and not simply remain silent—after more than two years of silence. A large percent of the trade books omitted that Jackie Robinson was a strong outspoken voice later in his baseball career ( $n = 26$ ; 74%), one book was vague about it ( $n = 1$ ; 2%), and a small number described it explicitly ( $n = 8$ ; 22%).



Once Robinson retired from baseball he continued to be outspoken and became involved in civil rights. He personally committed to working towards social justice. The trade books used in the random sample were almost balanced on this topic. Jackie's involvement in civil rights was explicit in 13 books ( $n = 13$ ; 37%), minimized in 10 ( $n = 10$ ; 28%), and omitted in 12 ( $n = 12$ ; 34%). Jackie Robinson and his wife Rachel fought alongside other civil rights leaders including Martin Luther King. A higher percent of the trade books did not include other civil rights leaders ( $n = 22$ ; 62%) than books that did include other leaders ( $n = 13$ ; 37%).

The success of Jackie Robinson becoming the first African American to play in the major leagues helped other African Americans become a part of an organization. The banishing or decreasing Jim Crow laws in baseball were explicitly stated in some of the books ( $n = 14$ ; 40%), implicit or vague in a few ( $n = 10$ ; 28%), and the number of books that omitted this topic fell in the middle of these two ( $n = 11$ ; 31%).

Jackie Robinson credits his wife Rachel for being a strong support system for him. He praised her for being a tough hardworking lady. In most of the trade books used for this study Rachel Robinson was mentioned but minimized ( $n = 18$ ; 51%) or omitted ( $n = 14$ ; 40%) she was only characterized as a strong positive contribution to his life in 3 books ( $n = 3$ ; 8%).

Jackie Robinson was inducted into Baseball Hall of Fame the first year he was eligible. His baseball career will always be remembered as a successful career. Most books state his accomplishment explicitly ( $n = 23$ ; 65%), few minimized it ( $n = 5$ ; 14%), and others omitted his accomplishment ( $n = 7$ ; 20%).

## Discussion

Educators today know that to reach all their students they must differentiate their instruction. Teachers meet their students at their personal instructional reading level where the child can accurately decode and comprehend text. Schools districts use different programs to determine each individual child's level for success. The levels will vary within the classroom. Teachers need a variety of books with reading levels ranging from primary to intermediate available for their students. Though there are more intermediate books on the specific topic I could locate five primary books.

Every individual student tends to gravitate and excel with certain reading genres. Non-fiction books might be too complex for them to read and use inquiry skills on the specific topic, but historical fiction, could provide them enough content knowledge causing them to want to know more. The eight historical fiction books used in this study could help supplement the students who struggle while reading non-fiction.

Using different genres within the classroom is one way to incorporate new vocabulary. Vocabulary instruction is needed to fully comprehend non-fiction text (Kuhn, McCarty, Montgomery, Rausch, & Rule, 2017). I found that few books in the randomly selected data sample used Tier Three vocabulary words. Teachers would need to use different strategies to familiarize students with the Tier Two vocabulary words such as segregation. After going over the definition of segregation the teacher could place students into small groups. The groups would look at different images and read a variety of scenarios to determine if each should be placed under the vocabulary word segregation or in the not segregation pile. These examples would come from textbooks, documentaries, primary sources, and other trade books. Once all groups have finished the activity the teacher would go over all examples given and the class would discuss where each belongs. This activity will familiarize students with different types of

segregation as well as help them form strong understanding of what classifies as segregation. Vocabulary development is a critical factor in comprehending the text.

Jackie Robinson's life story revolves around segregation. Thus, I am highly surprised that every single book characterized it as something that just was like the weather. Social segregation is mentioned in 94% of the trade books. Armed forces segregation was also a topic of more than half of the sample. Educators would need to supplement materials to teach the necessary background knowledge students need in order understand the different types of segregation. Teachers could use the same examples from the above activity but this time have the groups take the examples from the segregation pile and separate them by the type of segregation being demonstrated (social, political, economic, or armed forces). Robinson broke the "color barrier" in baseball an example of social segregation.

The United States was forced to join the war after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Robinson was drafted in 1942. At that time, Jim Crow laws kept white soldiers and black soldiers from having the same rights. Jackie Robinson was one of many black soldiers that experienced segregation even though their lives were at risk. They were expected to fight for their country but were not allowed to sit certain places while eating dinner. Teachers could show students where he was stationed on a map while they are teaching segregation to them.

Jackie Robinson endured a lot for being the first African American to play professional baseball. White citizens who did not think Jackie belonged in professional baseball treated him awful. He constantly experienced offensive language being yelled at him and even received death threats. A large percent of the trade books explicitly state different types of violence that

occurred during Robinson's baseball career. Teachers must determine the depths of violence they are willing to teach their particular age group.

The violence is shown by the fans, the opposing team and manager, and by Robinson's teammates. Students will need to understand that even though a wide assortment of people were violent towards Robinson, the majority were white people. Educators will also need to make students aware that not all white people were violent towards Jackie Robinson; some were even rooting for him to be successful. Teachers could make a T chart organizing the different individuals that were violent towards him on one side or supportive of him on the other. Under the violent side an example would be Ben Chapman, and Pee Wee Reese would fit under the supportive side. Instead of writing their name it would be beneficial to print out pictures of the people so students can see that most if not all individuals on the violent side, are white.

The president of the Brooklyn Dodgers, Branch Rickey, was a white businessman. He was one particular white citizen rooting for Jackie Robinson to be successful. Mr. Rickey who was idealistic about ending segregation and a smart businessman searched for a black athlete to bring to his organization. Students will need to be taught how Jackie Robinson was going to be able to help Mr. Rickey smash the unwritten law that kept blacks out of professional baseball. The authors of seven books decided to omit Branch Rickey even though without him Robinson would not have been a player in the big leagues. He played in a different baseball league when Mr. Rickey found him. This league had multiple titles over the years. The official name is the Negro Leagues. Seven books called it something else, and six books omitted this time in his life. Students need to understand that the difference between the Negro League and the Professional Baseball League to fully comprehend how Jackie Robinson helped change history for other black athletes. A Venn Diagram would be a great tool to show the differences, as well as the

similarities of the two leagues. Students will be able to see that the Negro League players worked just as hard but for much less pay and honor. The players in the professional league experienced an easier life style.

Jackie Robinson was the chosen player to help Branch Rickey break the color barrier in baseball. Branch Rickey knew there was a lot of talent missing from the big leagues because of segregation. Jackie Robinson had to promise Branch Rickey that he would be a silent baseball player—in the face of hostility—during the beginning of his career even though others would treat him horribly. Educators will need to teach this part of history and why it was so important for him to ignore the violence since only seven books in the random sample detail it explicitly. By using one of the seven books as a model text, educators can facilitate the question of why Robinson needed to be a silent ballplayer.

The success of Jackie Robinson's career was a major factor in the banishing or decreasing Jim Crow laws in baseball. Presidents saw how black athletes could benefit their organizations. Many other teams signed Negro League players once the Dodgers hired Robinson. All but eleven trade books included this part of baseball history. Educators can include the timelines of professional baseball while comparing segregation in other parts of life during the same years. They could also show different baseball cards of black athletes in the professional leagues to examine their debut year.

Once the color barrier in baseball began to deteriorate, Jackie Robinson was given permission to speak out by Branch Rickey. He stood up to the umpires and to the media to resist hostility and racism. Robinson became involved in civil rights once he retired from baseball. He and his wife Rachel joined forces with other civil rights leaders. He believed that America had a

long way to go even though blacks were now allowed to play professional baseball. Jackie Robinson used his platform to help make a difference for others. Teachers need to show Jackie Robinson in another light while learning about him. One way to do this is to incorporate primary documents. Historically, he is much more than a famous baseball player to history.

Jackie's wife Rachel Robinson was a strong hardworking woman. She was only characterized as a strong positive contribution in three trade books. Educators will need to fill in this gap because he credits Rachel for being his support system. Teachers could include materials specifically written about Rachel. Not only was she Jackie's wife she was also a nurse, a mother, and a civil rights leader. She continued to be a positive strong woman even after Jackie died.

Jackie Robinson became the first African American inducted into the Hall of Fame. He was inducted the first year he was eligible. Seven trade books omit this prestigious honor. Being selected into the Hall of Fame is the highest respect in baseball.

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**Appendix A – Data Pool****Primary Books**

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**Intermediate Books**

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