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The First “Colored World Series”

Key Features of Powerful Teaching and Learning:

(National Council for the Social Studies: “A vision of Powerful Teaching and Learning in the Social Studies: Building Social Understanding and Civic Efficacy.”
<http://www.socialstudies.org/positions/powerful/>)

Meaningful: Lesson emphasizes the need for students to understand social issues in historical context.

Integrated: Students will engage reading and listening skills to complete the assignment.

Active: Students will use interpretive skills based on the historical research presented.

Purpose/Rationale/Introduction: Students will utilize reading and listening skills to learn the key issues in American history and Black baseball history. This lesson covers the period between 1920-1925. Students will also learn about the beginning of the Negro Baseball Leagues and its signature historical baseball event, the first colored World Series. This lesson supplements material for units on the Jazz Age and Great Depression.

Objectives:

1. Students will learn about the American cultural climate and race relations during this time period.
2. Students will learn of the communities that supported black baseball teams and locate them geographically.
3. Students will learn of the significant teams in black baseball history during this period.
4. Students will be able to compare and contrast issues in different communities around the country.

Grade Level: 9-12

Subject: Social Studies

Standards

NCSS Standards: I, II, III, V

ISTE Standards: 1, 5

Missouri Standards: 2, 5, 6

Time Allotment: 1, one hour class session

Materials/Primary Resources:

Kansas City Star article on the First World series

Biographical Encyclopedia of the Negro Baseball Leagues, by James Riley

The Negro Leagues Book, edited by Dick Clark and Larry Lester

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Procedures and Activities:

- Students will read aloud in class the article on the first Negro Leagues World Series.
- Students will complete a writing activity based on different scenarios from the article.

Lesson & Discussion:

First Colored World Series (*Kansas City Star* article, June 1999)

Read article aloud in class about the First “Colored” World Series of Baseball between the Kansas City Monarchs and the Hilldale Club of Darby, PA.

Assignment: Imaging you are living in the times and areas connected to the Negro Leagues World Series games. Choose one of these “characters” to become and write a letter from their perspective.

- A. You are a fan who traveled to one of your team’s away games during the series. You are writing home to your brother or sister describing the experience. Choose one of the games described in the article.
- B. You are a baseball fan attending a game at one of the neutral sites during the World Series, even though your hometown team was not a participant. Furthermore, you are a white fan who has never been to a Negro Leagues baseball game before. You are writing a letter to a friend who is also a baseball fan, describing the experience.
- C. You work in the train station in Kansas City when the Monarchs return from the first few games of the series (as described in the story). You are writing to a relative who lives in the American South.
- D. You are a player on one of the teams writing home to your parents about the experience of playing in one the games. (Additional research: Names of the players are listed at the end of the article. Research the player you have chosen in *The Biographical Encyclopedia of the Negro Baseball Leagues*.)

Conclusion:

The history of Negro Leagues Baseball coincided with many major events in American history in the middle of the 20th century. Many cultural issues and major events helped shape American society moving into World War II. The success of the Negro Leagues helped paved the way for the Civil Rights movement.

Extension and Enrichment:

Students could go to the local library archives or use internet indexes to search local newspapers from the same time period as the World Series games (October 1924). Students would report on what news events were being covered during this time. Students should have a story listed, with date and source cited.

Assessment:

Students will be assessed on the content of their letters and class participation in the reading exercise.

Alternative Assessment:

Teacher could allow students a few minutes to read the article on their own and then offer a review quiz of information in the article.

Resources for Diverse Learners:

News article can be offered to students for reading at 50% summary.

The Kansas City Star

June 26, 1999

Monarchs were Kansas City's first champions

Blair Kerkhoff

The Negro League World Series started for many of the same reasons as the white World Series. Two leagues squabbled, battled for players, bragged that their league was better and thought they could make a lot of money, which proved incorrect. It wasn't National and American, but the established Negro National League of Midwest teams and the upstart Eastern Colored League of teams along the Eastern seaboard. It was only natural the feuding would be settled by a showdown.

What a showdown it was.

The first Negro World Series in 1924 lasted nearly three weeks and was played in four cities. The best-of-nine format went the distance and beyond. In the end, the Kansas City Monarchs prevailed over Hilldale of Philadelphia.

The 1924 occasion came off only after J.W. ``Wilkie' Wilkinson, the Monarchs' white owner, Hilldale owner Ed Bolden and Negro Leagues president Rube Foster ended their bickering and settled on sites and how to share the gate receipts.

Unlike the major-league series, the Negro Leagues decided to take their games to neutral sites to showcase their event. The first two games were scheduled for Hilldale Park in Darby, Pa., and then two would be played in Baltimore. Games five through seven were set for Muehlebach Field in Kansas City. The final two games, if the series went the distance, would be played in Chicago's Schorling Park.

Why Baltimore and Chicago? Although the Negro League had been in operation for only four years it had grown into one of the nation's top black-owned enterprises. With 16 teams in the two leagues, interest was soaring and fans in those cities had strongly supported the Baltimore Black Sox and Chicago American Giants.

``By 1923 the leagues were drawing over 400,000 fans a year,' said Bob Kendrick, the museum's director of marketing. ``Often games were booked like a concert is today. They went where the fans were and where they could get the stadiums.'

Strength vs. strength

The series set up as a battle between the Monarchs' booming bats against Hilldale's pitching prowess and the Philadelphia team was called the favorite by the black press. Each had a player who would later be elected to the Hall of Fame: Monarchs pitcher/outfielder Wilbur ``Bullet Joe' Rogan and Hilldale infielder Judy Johnson, and both were outstanding in the series.

Rogan not only was the league's best all-round player, ``he is one of the most popular players in the game with a pleasing personality,' reported the *Kansas City Call*, which went on to crow that Rogan once struck out Bob Meusel of the Yankees four times in a row during a barnstorming game.

Johnson was ``an asset to any team,' the *Call* wrote, but Hilddale's great strength lied in a pitching staff of ``Spitball King' Phil Cockrell, Lefty Winters, Red Ryan, Scrip Lee and former Monarchs pitcher Rube Currie.

Perhaps it was Cockrell's wet ball that caused his three throwing errors in the first game Oct. 3 and allowed the Monarchs to win the opener 6-2. Hilddale committed eight errors in all in an embarrassing performance. Rogan took the victory. The Monarchs, a road victory in their pocket, were flush with confidence.

The feeling eroded quickly. Johnson tripled in two runs among his three hits, Winters scattered four hits, and Hilddale romped in the second game 11-0.

The scene shifted to Baltimore, where game three ended in a 6-6 tie, called for darkness after 13 innings. Two Kansas City errors in the ninth allowed Hilddale to push across the tying run. Rogan drove in three runs and pitched a scoreless 13th inning.

Defensive lapses cost the Monarchs in a 4-3 loss in the fourth game. Hilddale pushed across the winning run in the ninth after loading the bases with none out. Second baseman Newt Allen fielded a grounder but threw wild to catcher Frank Duncan, allowing Johnson to score the winning run.

Back home Despite trailing in the series, the Monarchs were treated to a royal welcome when their train pulled into Union Station. More than 5,000 fans and a 50-piece band greeted the team, which was escorted to 18th Street and a parade in their honor.

``The Philadelphia team ... appears to be a rather cocky bunch of ballplayers since they've been able to get the jump on the Monarchs,' reported *The Kansas City Times*.

The Times challenged any doubter of the quality of Negro League baseball to take in the games, and many white fans did.

``Let there be no dubious attitudes concerning the brand of baseball to be exhibited ... all the elements of big-league baseball will be present,' The Times reported before the fifth game.

The series was big news in the nation's black press but wasn't ignored in Kansas City's white press. Reports of each game and a box score appeared in the morning *Kansas City Times* or evening *Kansas City Star*.

But *The Times* and *The Star* and nearly ever other newspaper in America was caught up in the ``other' World Series between the New York Giants and Washington Senators, featuring one of the game's greatest pitchers in Kansas native Walter Johnson. Huge

crowds gathered outside The Star's office each day to follow the progress of games from New York and Washington on a giant scoreboard.

About 150 fans from Philadelphia followed Hilldale to the Midwest, paid their \$1.65 for a reserved seat or \$1 general admission at Muehlebach Field, and felt good about their team's chances.

Hilldale was ahead in the series, out hitting the Monarchs .246 to .182, and believed Kansas City didn't win the opening game as much as it had lost it.

Hilldale felt even better about itself after winning the opener at Kansas City 5-2 by scoring four runs in the ninth, two coming on Johnson's homer to center. The Monarchs committed five errors, four in the final two innings, sending home 7,000 disappointed fans.

Finally, some good news for the Monarchs; a 6-5 victory in the sixth game and a 4-3 triumph in 12 innings the next day tied the series. Manager Jose Mendez, a Cuban and former pitcher, inserted himself in the ninth after Hilldale had tied it. He retired the side and the next nine batters.

On to Chicago, where the Monarchs pulled off the most dramatic victory of the series in the eighth game. Trailing 2-0 in the ninth, Kansas City had two outs and Rogan on second. An infield single moved him to third, and Rogan scored on Hurley McNair's single. Frank Duncan then blasted a two-run double down the left-field line for the game-winner.

Winner takes all

Hilldale fought off elimination with a 5-3 victory. Seventeen days and thousands of traveling miles after the opener, the series came down to a final game on a cold Oct. 20 day in Chicago. Even though Rogan hadn't pitched since the opening game in Kansas City, the 37-year-old Mendez, who had undergone arm surgery earlier in the year, picked himself as the starter for the decisive game.

Mendez - ``El Diamante Negro' (the black diamond), as he was known in Cuba - knew something about pressure games. New York Giants manager John McGraw tried to sign him in 1905 but was rebuffed by owners intent on keeping the major leagues white.

In 1908, Mendez pitched 25 scoreless innings against the Cincinnati Reds, who were touring Cuba. A year later, Mendez struck out Ty Cobb and Sam Crawford in a 1-0 victory over the American League champion Tigers. He came to the Monarchs because of his relationship with Wilkinson, who had signed him for his touring All-Nation's team in the 1910s.

On this day, Mendez was nearly unhittable, surrendering three harmless singles and walking one. Hilldale didn't come close to scoring and when the Monarchs pushed across five runs in the eighth, the championship was theirs.

The Call stripped the bold-lettered headline across the top: ``MENDEZ PITCHES MONARCHS TO CHAMPIONSHIP.'

``Sportswriters speak of Cy Young, Chief Bender, Mordecai Brown and others who had many ballgames behind them as super-athletes,' the Call reported. ``If they were super, what of Jose Mendez, who gets off an operating table to pitch a (three)-hit shutout on a cold day. And his years on this earth and on the ball diamonds exceeds theirs.'

The celebration in Kansas City didn't last long. No sooner did the Monarchs return than several headed south to extend their seasons with other teams. They needed the money. The World Series proved not to be the financial bonanza envisioned by officials.

The 10-game attendance totaled 45,857 producing gate receipts of \$52,113.90. The largest crowd attended the Oct. 12 game in Kansas City when 8,885 paid. After expenses, about \$23,000 was distributed to the owners of the participating teams and second- and third-place teams in each league.

The Monarchs shared \$4,927.53, or about \$300 each. That's \$30 per game. They could have made more barnstorming.

The shares grew smaller in 1925 when the Monarchs lost to Hilddale in the second World Series and the event was discontinued after the 1927 series.

But for one year, the interest was high, the crowds were adequate, the play was sometimes exceptional and the Monarchs were champions of baseball, Kansas City's first major championship team.

The lineups

RF Otto Briggs
2B Frank Warfield
3B ``Biz' Mackey
C Louis ``Big Bertha' Santop
LF Clint ``Buckeye' Thomas
1B Tod Allen
P Phil ``Spitball King' Cockrell

RAFT OPTIONS for Diverse Learners

A RAFT is a writing exercise that can be modified in a variety of ways. The purpose of a RAFT is to allow students to creatively demonstrate their knowledge of the content. The RAFT has four parts:

R=Role

A=Audience

F=Format

T=Topic

For The First “Colored World Series”, the assessment activity is a writing assignment, and the lesson plan offers several options. Students with disabilities may find all of those options too complex. The following is a chart of possible choices that provide for varying levels of comprehension, application and synthesis of the content.

Choose one element from each column to construct a RAFT that best fits the learning styles and needs of the students.

Role	Audience	Format	Topic
A newspaper reporter for the Kansas City Times	The citizens of Philadelphia	An invitation	The potential profit To be made from the Negro World Series
Ed Bolden	The coach of the the Hilldale of Philadelphia	A letter or article	The thrill of the moment
A 12 year old Black boy From Philadelphia	The family of the character chosen in the Role column.	A poem	The implications of this series on race relations
The mother of Jose Mendez	The patrons of the local newspaper	A song	The caliber of Negro League Players
The mayor of Kansas City In 1924	The pitcher of the opposing team	An illustration	A play-by-play of a portion of one of the games