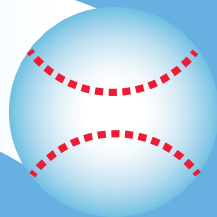
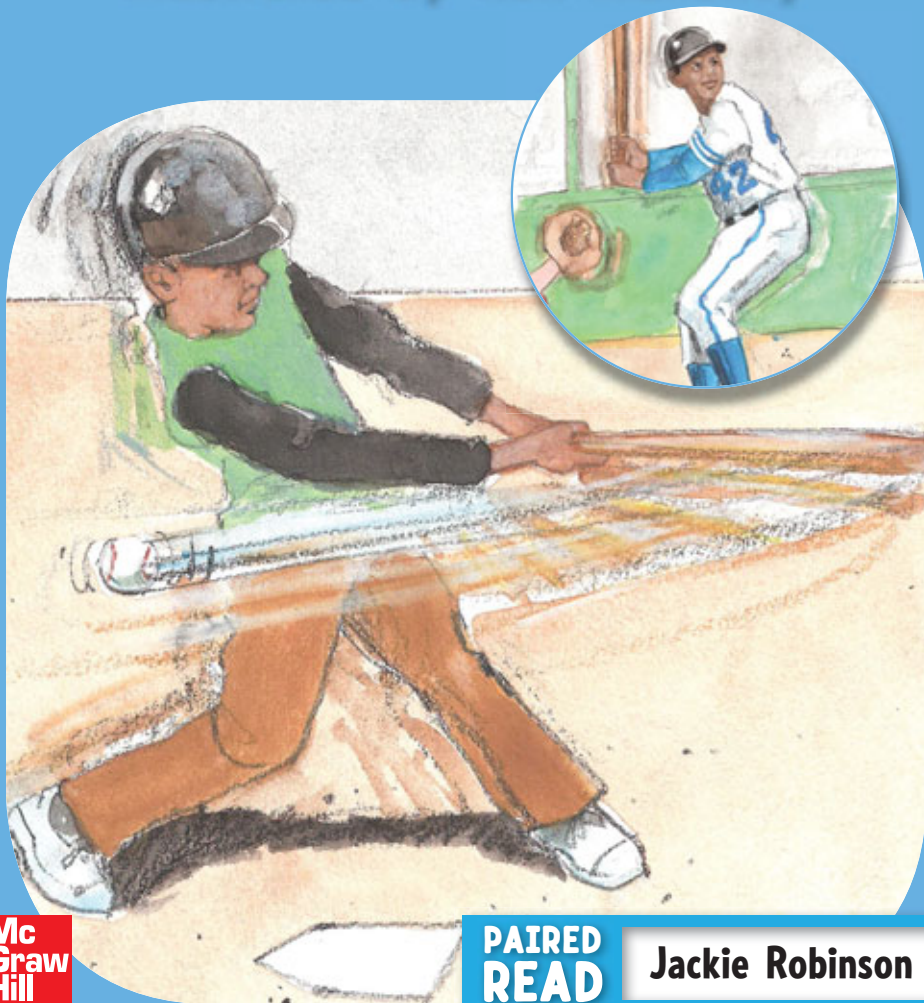


Historical
Fiction

On the Ball



by Emma Turner
illustrated by Ron Mahoney



Mc
Graw
Hill

PAIRED
READ

Jackie Robinson

STRATEGIES & SKILLS

Comprehension

Strategy: Visualize

Skill: Cause and Effect

Vocabulary Strategy

Idioms

Vocabulary

amazement, bravery,
disappeared, donate,
leaders, nervous, refused,
temporary

Content Standards

Social Studies

History

Word count: 848**

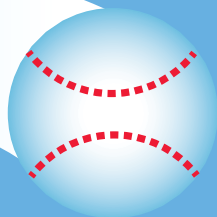
**The total word count is based on words in the running text and headings only. Numerals and words in captions, labels, diagrams, charts, and sidebars are not included.



Essential Question

How can one person change the way you think?

On the Ball

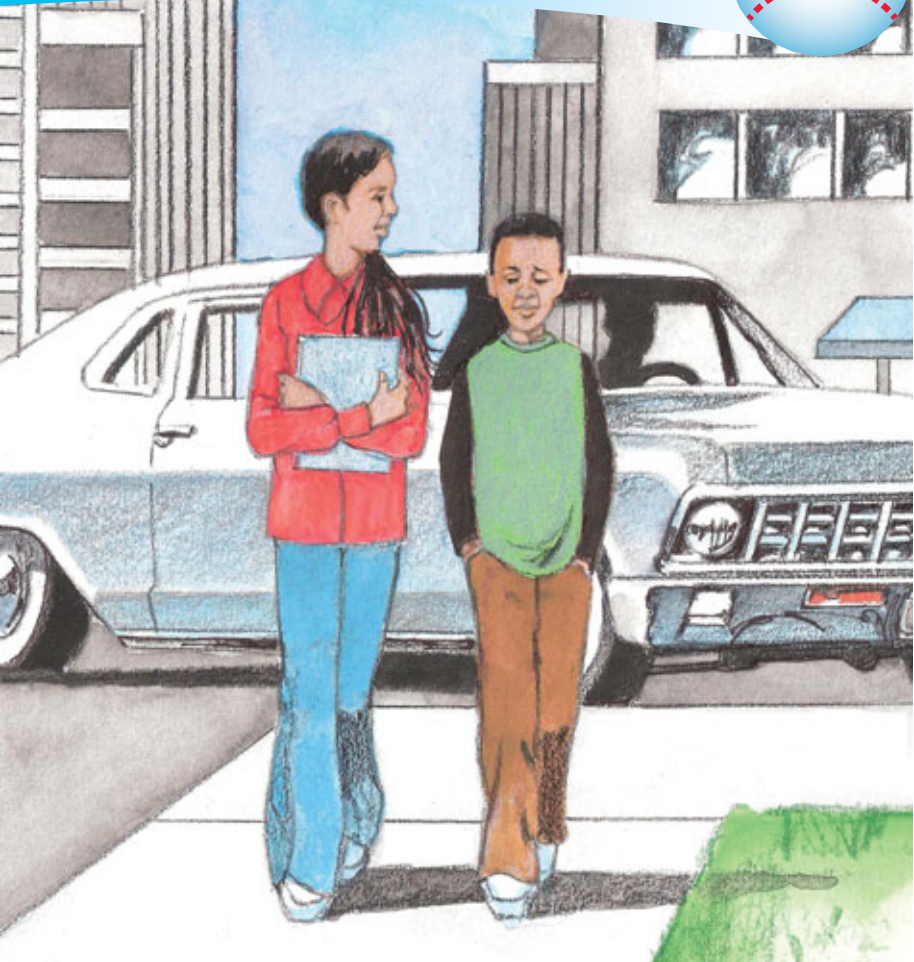
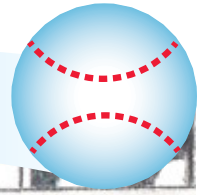


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Chapter 1

Baseball Tryouts



It was Friday afternoon. James and Bella were walking home from school together. James didn't look happy.

"Hey, what's up?" Bella asked, nudging her younger brother with her shoulder.

“Baseball tryouts are next week,” said James. “I’d like to play, but I’m not sure if I’m good enough.”

“You have to try,” said Bella. “If you get nervous, think of someone who inspires you—Jackie Robinson maybe.”

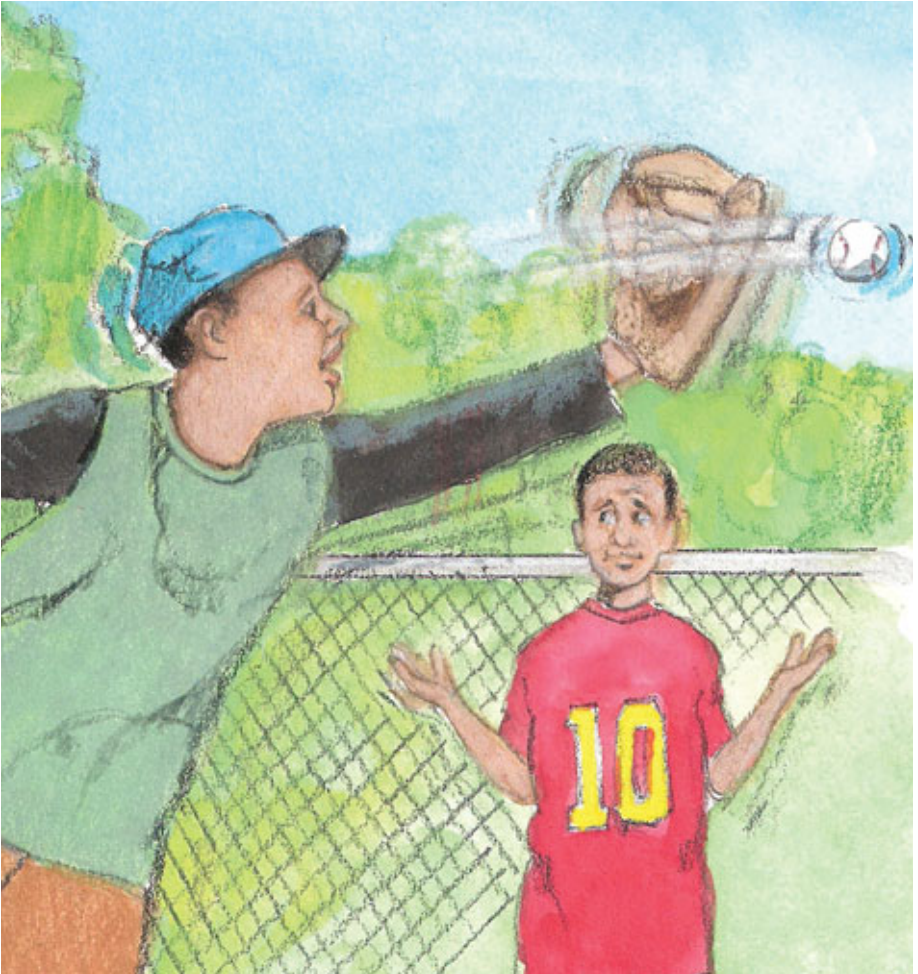
“Jackie who?” asked James.



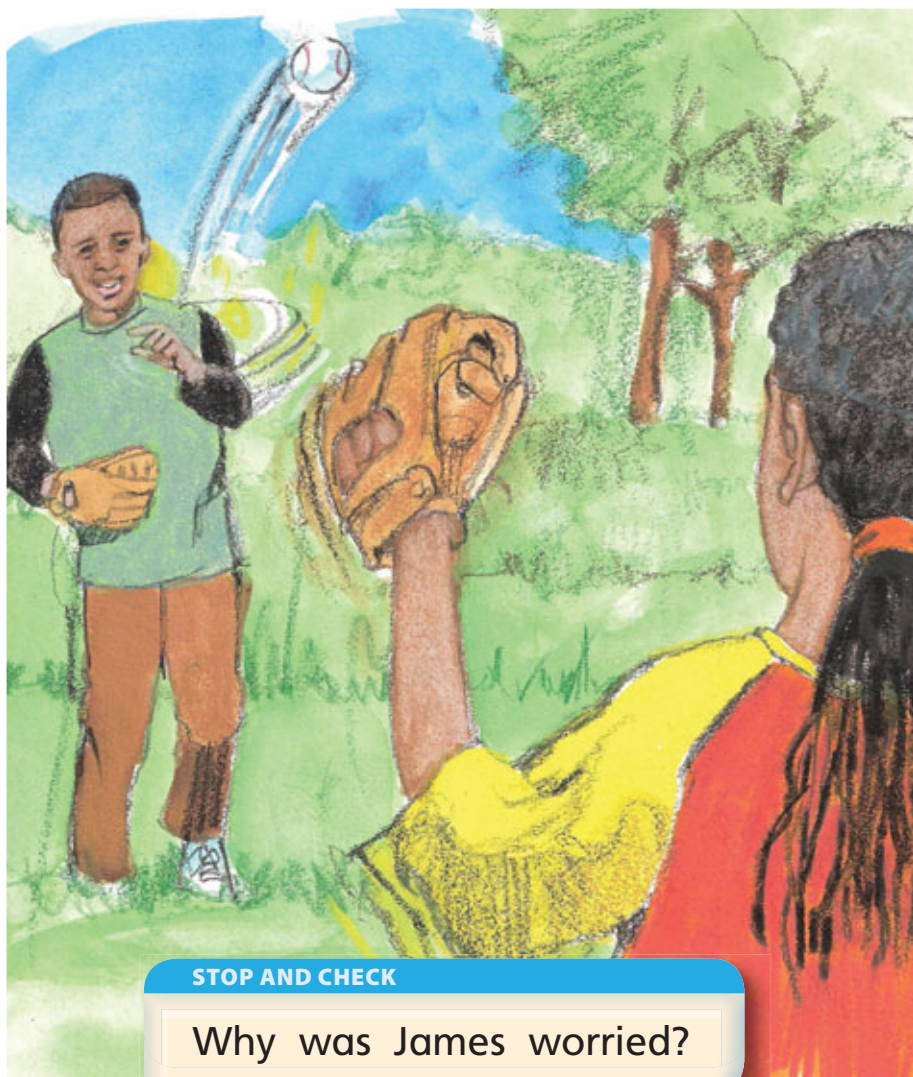
“Jackie Robinson. He was an amazing baseball player. But when he was young, African Americans had to play on separate baseball teams. Jackie changed all that in 1947. He was the first African American to play on a major league baseball team!” said Bella.



Next week after school, Bella stayed behind to watch James try out. His side was fielding first. James did well, until he got nervous and dropped an easy catch. Some of the other kids laughed at him. "How could you possibly drop that?" a boy named Darnel Fenton called out.



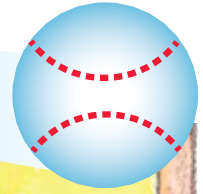
“Don’t let Darnel Fenton get you down,” Bella said later. “Your attack of nerves is just a temporary setback. Let’s go to the ballpark together after school to practice. Even Jackie Robinson had to start somewhere.”



STOP AND CHECK

Why was James worried?

Making the Team

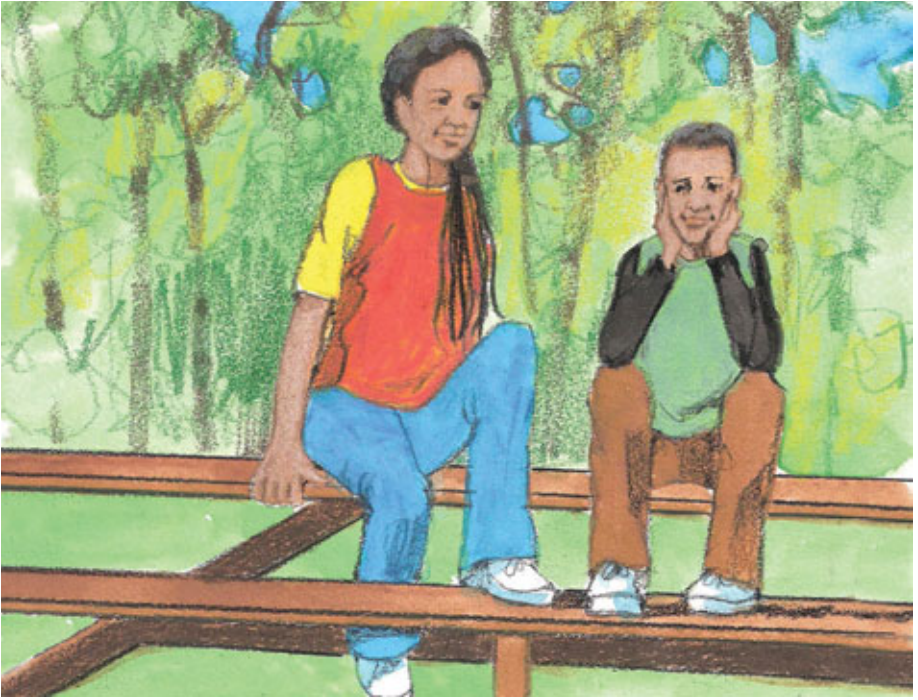


On Friday, James came home very excited. "I made the team!" he told Bella in amazement. "Thanks for all your help."

"No problem," said Bella. "I'm always happy to donate my time to a good cause," she added, jokingly.

At practice on Thursday, James started to worry again. He was the first player to bat. The pitcher threw an easy ball over the plate. James swung at the ball, but missed it. "Get it together!" Darnel Fenton shouted across to him.





When practice was over, James and Bella sat on the bleachers and talked. "What will my friends think if I mess up?" James asked.

Bella smiled at him. "Your real friends will stand behind you. Just try your best, and be a good sport. Hopefully, someone will give Darnel Fenton the same advice." Bella paused, and then she said, "I'm going to give you a nickname to help you. I'm going to call you Jackie Junior!"

“Hey, what happened to Jackie Robinson, anyway?” James asked Bella.

“He played for the Brooklyn Dodgers. At first, some other teams tried to avoid playing the Dodgers. Some people in the stands called him names, and some players pitched the ball at his legs on purpose. But Jackie refused to give up.”



James's frown disappeared. "You seem to know an awful lot about Jackie Robinson. Your pitching isn't bad either," he said thoughtfully. "Maybe you should try out for a ball team as well!"

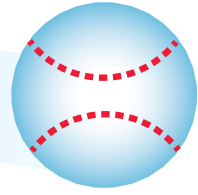
"Thanks, but politics is more my thing," Bella told James. "I'm running for class president this year. It's 1972. It's time there were more female leaders in the world. And Jackie Robinson wasn't only interested in baseball. He also fought for civil rights. He insisted African Americans be treated the same as everyone else. He demanded they have the same rights and the same freedoms. He knew how to represent!"

STOP AND CHECK

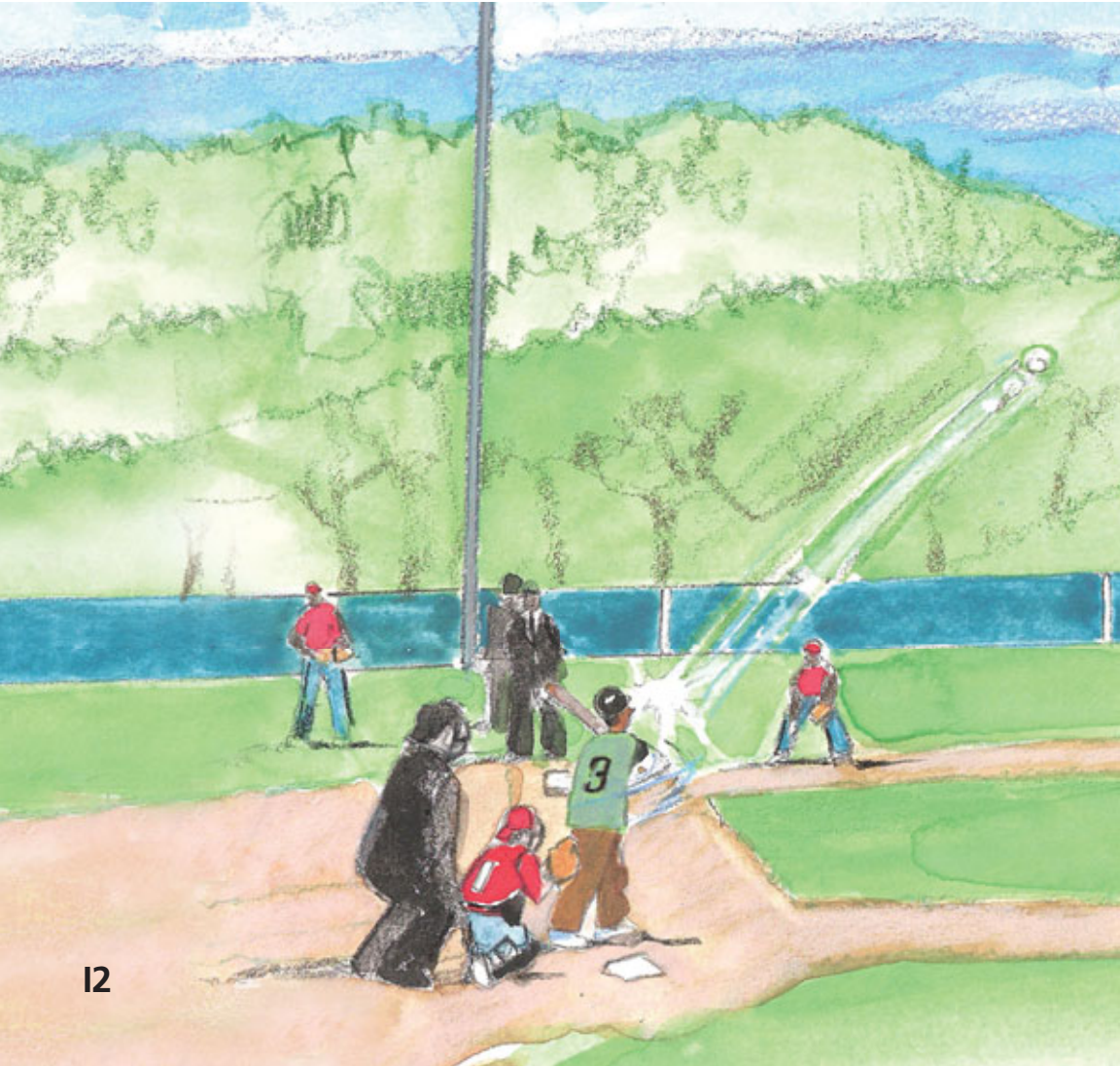
Why won't Bella play baseball?

Chapter 3

The First Big Game



Three weeks later, James's team played its first big game of the baseball season. James was a bundle of nerves. He was worried about doing well.



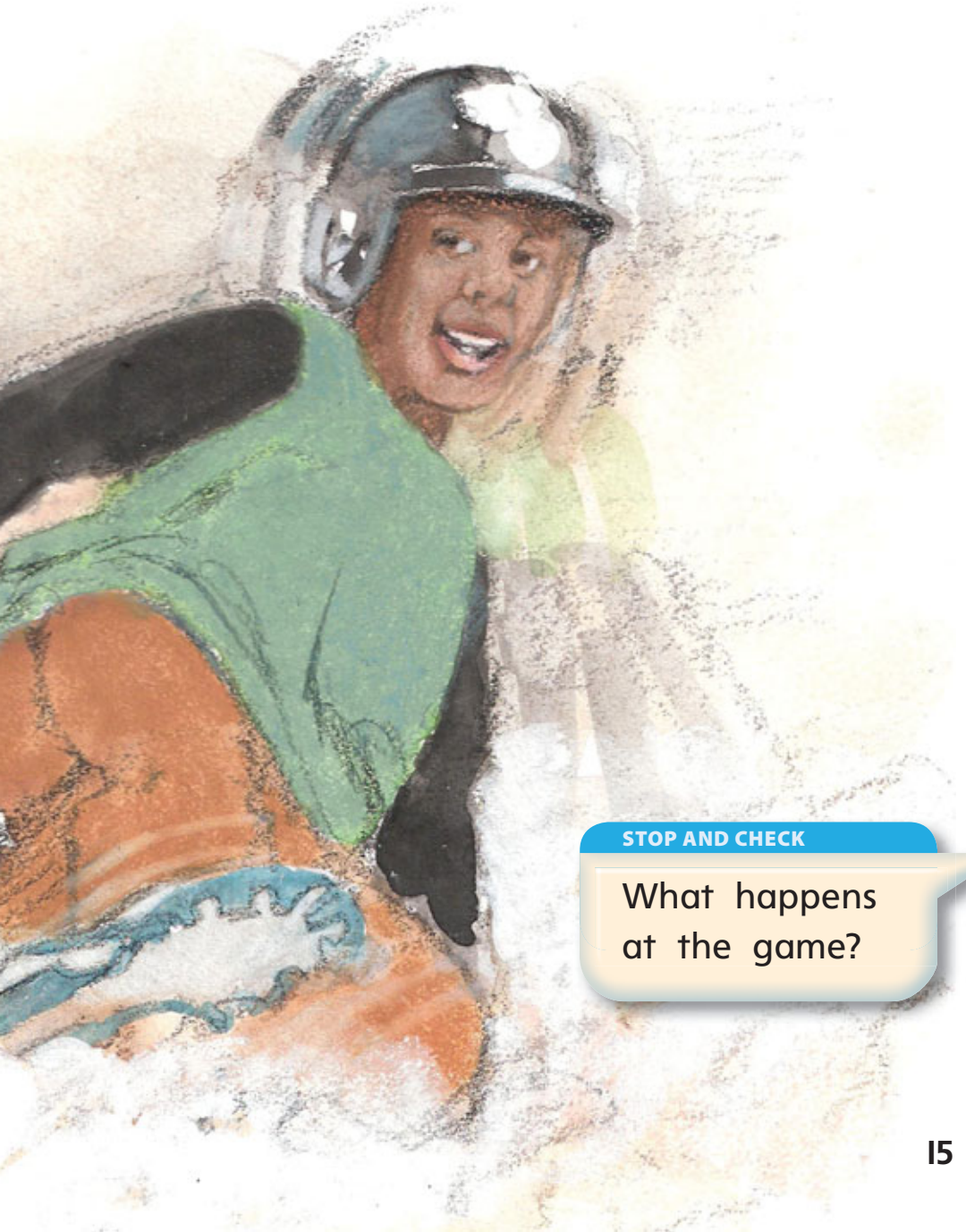
James was the third player to bat. He stepped up to the plate. He took a deep breath to steady himself. Then he glanced at Darnel Fenton and gritted his teeth. The pitcher delivered the ball. James struck it hard. It soared high into the air and sailed right across the field.



James started to run toward first base. He could hear his friends cheering from the bleachers. He could hear his teammates urging him on. James made it to first base. But he didn't stop there. He continued on to second base, and to third base.



As he slid home, he heard Bella calling out from the sidelines. She was shouting as hard as she could, "Run, Jackie! Run!"



STOP AND CHECK

What happens
at the game?

Respond to Reading

Summarize

Summarize the important events in the story. Use the Cause and Effect Chart to help you.

Character	
Setting	
Cause	→ Effect
Cause	→ Effect
Cause	→ Effect

Text Evidence

1. How do you know *On the Ball* is historical fiction? **Genre**
2. Why was James upset after the first practice? **Cause and Effect**
3. What does “bundle of nerves” mean on page 12? What clues help you figure out the meaning? **Idioms**
4. Write about the effect Bella’s help has on James. **Write About Reading**

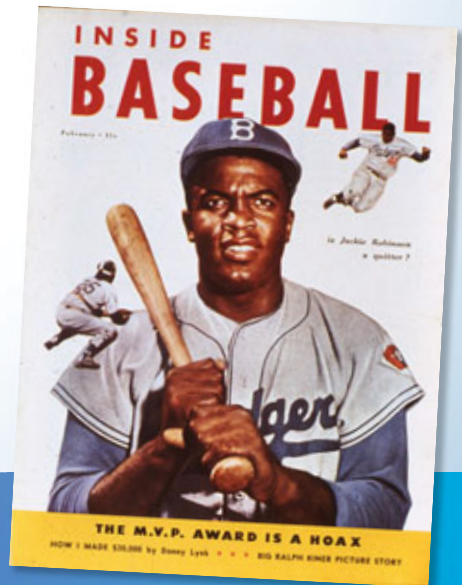
Compare Texts

Read more about Jackie Robinson's life.

Jackie Robinson

(1919–1972)

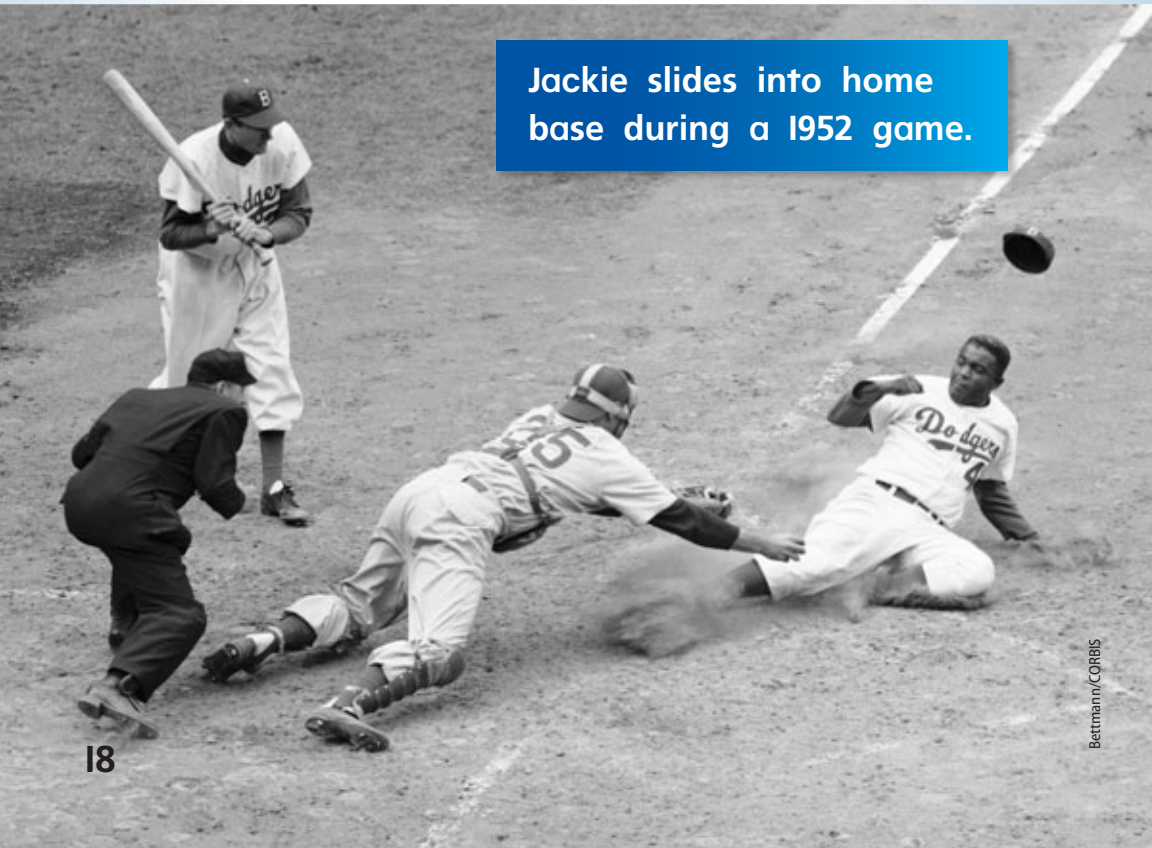
When Jackie Robinson was young, African Americans were often treated badly because of the color of their skin. They had to go to separate schools and eat in separate restaurants. They had to play in separate ball teams, too. In 1947, Jackie broke the “color barrier.” He became the first African American to play in baseball’s major leagues.



Jackie stars on the cover of a baseball magazine.

Some people were angry that Jackie was playing on the Brooklyn Dodgers. They shouted insults at him and threw things at him from the stands. Members of other teams tried to avoid playing the Dodgers. But Jackie stayed strong and never gave up.

During his 10-year career, Jackie helped the Dodgers reach the World Series six times. He was a brilliant base runner. He was also the first African American to enter the Baseball Hall of Fame.



Jackie slides into home base during a 1952 game.



Jackie signs autographs for his young fans.

When Jackie retired from baseball, he continued to fight for civil rights. Jackie Robinson proved to the world that it is a person's skills and beliefs, not their skin color, that matter. His bravery helped “open doors” for African Americans in other areas of life.



Make Connections

How did Jackie Robinson change the way some people thought? [Essential Question](#)

Why might Jackie Robinson have inspired children like James and Bella? [Text to Text](#)

Focus on Genre

Historical Fiction Historical fiction tells a story set in the past. Some details in the story come from history. Some details and characters (and the things they do or say) are made up.

Read and Find *On the Ball* takes place in the 1970s. The story is about a made-up brother and sister. But they discuss Jackie Robinson, a real person from history, so the story has some details that are true-to-life.

Your Turn

Choose a time from the past. Do some research on it. Write a story set during this time. Have your characters do things people from that time would have done.

Fiction

Thinkmark

Setting

When did the story take place?

Sequence of Events

What happened *first*, *then*, *next*, and *finally* in *On the Ball*?

Plot

What problem did James have?
How was the problem solved?

Conclusions

What conclusions can you draw after reading *On the Ball*?
In what way have you ever changed the way you think or act because of someone else's good example?