

1

Document

Report of the Commissioners for Laying Out a Park in Brooklyn, New York

Is there any pleasure which all persons find at all times in every park, and if so, what does that pleasure depend upon?

The answer unquestionably must be, that there is such a pleasure, common, constant and universal to all town parks, and that it results from the feeling of relief experienced by those entering upon them, on escaping from the cramped, confined, and controlling circumstances of the streets of the town; in other words a sense of enlarged freedom is to all, at all times, the most certain, and the most valuable gratification afforded by a park. . . .

Respectfully,
Olmsted, Vaux & Co.,
Landscape Architects

Brooklyn Daily Eagle, March 19, 1866



1 Document

Report of the Commissioners for Laying Out a Park in Brooklyn, New York

THINK ABOUT IT

- In what newspaper was this letter printed?
- Who wrote the letter?
- Was this letter written before or after the park opened? How can you tell?

WRITE IT

- According to the letter, what is the one thing about a town park that gives people the most happiness? In your own words, explain what this means.
- Write a letter to the mayor proposing a new park in your neighborhood.

Give at least three reasons why the park would benefit members of your community.

Be convincing and finish with a strong conclusion.

2

Document

Brooklyn Athletics

The parade ground at Prospect Park, Brooklyn, was used last season 900 times by baseball clubs, 150 cricket matches were played, 150 football, and 35 lacrosse games. The lawn-tennis ground on the long meadow was played on by upward of 250 regularly organized clubs. The Park Commissioners are going to erect another clubhouse on the parade ground, which will be fitted up with lockers, closets, washrooms, etc., for the ball players.

The New York Times, December 17, 1885



GLOSSARY | *cricket*: a game played with a ball and bat by two teams of 11 players. *erect*: build. *lacrosse*: a game first played by Native Americans; teams use long-handled sticks with nets at the end and a solid rubber ball.

2

Document

Brooklyn Athletics

THINK ABOUT IT

- Based on this article, what sport was most popular at the park in 1885?
 - How might this article be different if it were written today?

WRITE IT

- List three sports people played in Prospect Park in 1885.

3 Document

Lawn Tennis at Prospect Park, ca.1915



Photograph Collection, v1973.5.1721, Brooklyn Historical Society.



3

Document

Lawn Tennis at Prospect Park, ca.1915

THINK ABOUT IT

- Compare the players' clothing with the athletic clothing that people wear today.
How have styles changed? Why do styles change over time?

WRITE IT

- Look carefully at the photograph. Who is playing? List at least three words to describe the players and the playing field.

4 Document

Tennis Players in Prospect Park



Lewis Nostrand Anderson Jr., his cousin and friends in Prospect Park, ca. 1880; v1974.11.12, Anderson Collection, Brooklyn Historical Society.



4

Document

Tennis Players in Prospect Park

THINK ABOUT IT

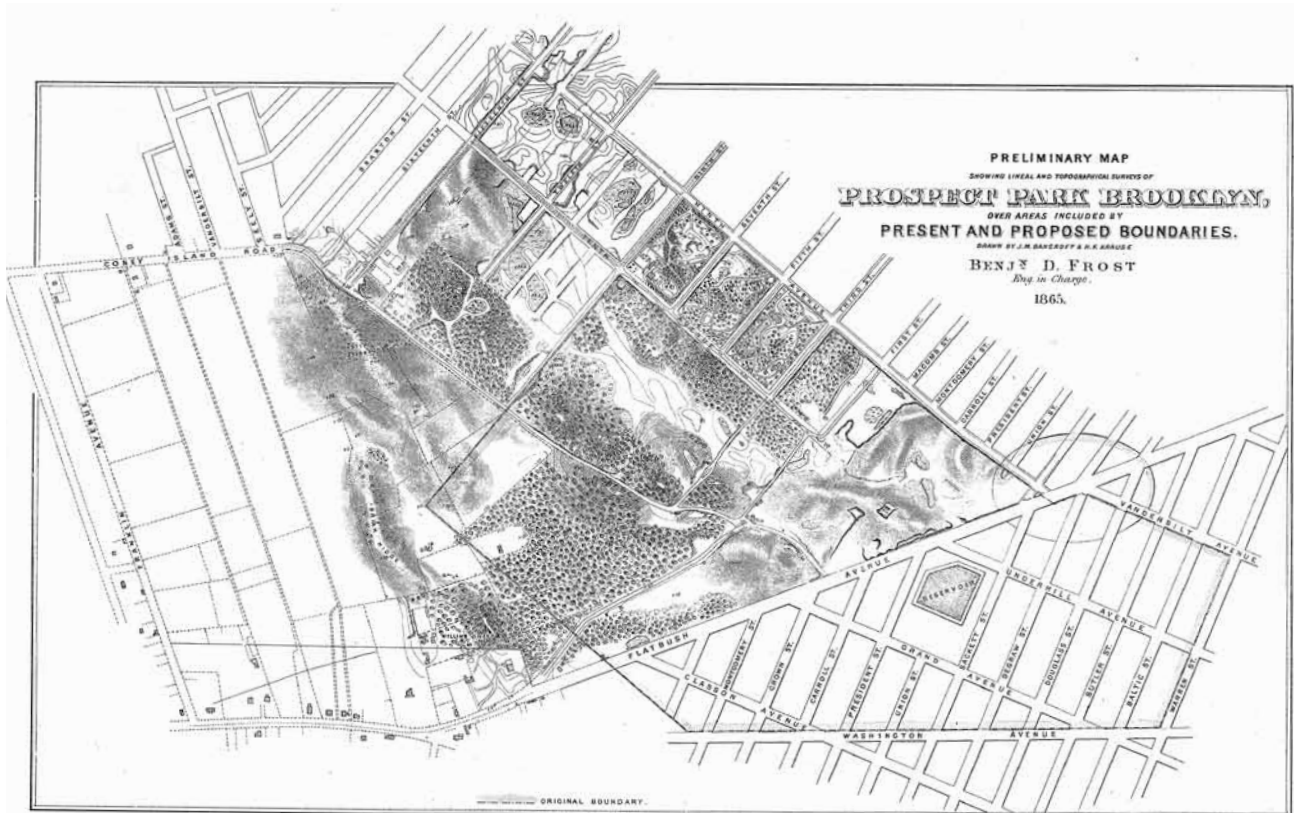
- Are the tennis players in this picture amateur or professional? How can you tell?
- What is the difference between an amateur and a professional athlete?

WRITE IT

- Compare and contrast athletic wear. Based on this photograph and your own knowledge, give three examples of how the clothing styles for men and women are the same as or different from today's.

5 Document

Historic Map of Prospect Park, 1865



Benjamin Frost, ArMs image 10388.tif, Brooklyn Historical Society.



5

Document

Historic Map of Prospect Park, 1865

THINK ABOUT IT

- When was this map created?
- Who created this map?

WRITE IT

- Look carefully at the map.

Who is most likely to use this map?

Document

Runners' Map of Prospect Park, ca. 2012



Courtesy of Prospect Park Alliance.



6

Document

Runners' Map of Prospect Park

THINK ABOUT IT

- What kind of map is this?
- Why was this map created?
- Who do you think used this map? Who might use this map today? Explain.

WRITE IT

- Look carefully at the map. Based on the map, list two reasons that people might use this map.
 - What does this map tell you about how people use the park?

7 Document

Park Rules for Cyclists

New Orders Issued for Prospect Park and the Pathway to Coney Island

Every cyclist in the metropolitan district will be interested in the new rules issued yesterday by Park Commissioner Squier, regulating the use of wheels in Prospect Park, Brooklyn, and on the new pathway to be completed in the spring. The rules are very favorable to the wheelmen, and are as follows:

No person shall ride or operate a bicycle or tricycle on the park [walking] paths in Prospect Park. Wheelmen walking upon park paths may push their wheels along the paths, but in no case shall the wheels be taken upon the turf.

Wheelmen must observe the law of the road, keeping to the right of the road, and passing vehicles in the same direction to the left wherever practicable. Coasting is forbidden. Wheelmen must keep their feet upon the pedals and have thorough control of the handle bars of their wheels at all times when riding. When riding at night wheelmen must have a lighted lamp on the front part of their machines.

Neither horses, carriages, wagons, nor pedestrians shall be allowed on the bicycle pathway. Wheelmen dismounting on the bicycle pathway must remove their wheels from the graded surface to the turf until ready to remount.

No wheelmen shall ride at a rate of speed exceeding eight miles an hour in the park, or ten miles an hour on the pathway, nor twelve miles an hour on the bicycle pathway between the park and Coney Island. Racing on the bicycle pathway is prohibited.

The New York Times, January 11, 1895



GLOSSARY | *commissioner*: a person in charge of a government department. *turf*: grass.
wheelman: a person riding a bicycle or tricycle.

7 Document

Park Rules for Cyclists

THINK ABOUT IT

- When was this article written?
- What is the purpose of this article?
- Who might want to read this article?

WRITE IT

- Based on this article, list the three rules that you feel are most important.
- Based on this article, list three groups of people affected by the new park rules.
- Imagine you're the chief of police today and it's your job to keep the parks safe for cyclists, pedestrians, and cars. What is one rule you'd create for cyclists to follow?
Explain your thinking in a short paragraph to your police officers so they will understand why the rule exists.

8 Document

Prospect Park Recreation, 2009



Photograph by Etienne Frossard, 2009, for Brooklyn Historical Society.



8

Document

Prospect Park Recreation, 2009

THINK ABOUT IT

- When was this photograph taken—recently or long ago?
How can you tell? Give three examples.

WRITE IT

- Study the photograph. List three sports or activities that you see people taking part in.

9 Document

Cycling at Grand Army Plaza, ca. 1900



Photograph Collection, v1987.41.7, Brooklyn Historical Society.



9

Document

Cycling at Grand Army Plaza, ca. 1900

THINK ABOUT IT

- When was this photograph taken?
- What clues give you an idea of when this photograph was taken?

WRITE IT

- If a photograph were taken in this same spot today, what would be different about it?
Give three examples.
- Imagine you are one of the people on a bicycle in this photograph. Send a letter to a friend describing what you saw. Use the photograph to find three specific things a cyclist at Grand Army Plaza in the year 1900 would have seen.

10

Document

New York Road Runners Brooklyn Half-Marathon Map 2011



Courtesy of New York Road Runners.



10

Document

New York Road Runners Brooklyn Half-Marathon Map 2011

THINK ABOUT IT

- What is the purpose of this map?
- Who created this map?
- Where does the half-marathon start? Where does it end?

WRITE IT

- Who might use this map? Give three examples. Explain their reasons for using the map.

11

Document

Giving a Nod to Diversity, One Ethnic Sport at a Time

This past summer, one sport prompted parties almost every Sunday afternoon on the south courts of Lincoln Terrace Park in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. Spectators from the community and neighboring East Flatbush poured onto the concrete courts to watch. The fans bought cod and Caribbean soda from food vendors, and reggae bounced from under a yellow tent.

The fanfare, however, did not surround a basketball or volleyball game. But it was all about net. A netball net.

The sport, a cross between Ultimate Frisbee and basketball, has become increasingly popular as immigrants from Commonwealth nations have reintroduced it to America, where it was invented more than 100 years ago. The Caribbean American Netball Association in Brooklyn, with about 700 players, both women and men, uses Lincoln Terrace Park as its main site for games and tournaments.

By next spring, some games may spread west to the Parade Grounds south of Prospect Park. The Parks Department is becoming increasingly accommodating to sports bolstered by different ethnic groups, and it approved plans for a \$75,000 asphalt netball court as part of a \$15 million transformation of the Parade Grounds into what Adrian Benepe, the parks commissioner, called a “sports mecca.”

The New York Times, September 28, 2003



GLOSSARY | *bolster*: to support or give a boost to. *Commonwealth*: the Commonwealth of Nations, an association of 54 independent member states that work together, most of which were at one time ruled by Britain, such as Australia, the Bahamas, Canada, Jamaica, and Kenya. *mecca*: center of activity.

11

Document

Giving a Nod to Diversity, One Ethnic Sport at a Time

THINK ABOUT IT

- What is netball?
- What does Adrian Benepe mean when he says he wants to turn the Prospect Park Parade Grounds into a “sports mecca”?

WRITE IT

- Based on this article, explain why netball has become increasingly popular in Brooklyn.
 - This article describes a sport that many New Yorkers may not be familiar with. Imagine you are a journalist and just moved to a country where nobody has heard of your favorite sport. Write an article describing the sport and explaining how it is played and what makes it so much fun.

1

Document

The Brooklyn Bridegrooms, 1889



Library of Congress.



1

Document

The Bridegrooms (photograph), 1889

THINK ABOUT IT

- When do you think this photograph was taken? How can you tell?

WRITE IT

- Study the document. Describe the players and their uniforms.

Document

2

The Brooklyn Excelsiors, 1860



New York Public Library.



2

Document

The Brooklyn Excelsiors, 1860

THINK ABOUT IT

- What kind of equipment are these players holding?
- What kind of sports team is this? How can you tell?

WRITE IT

- Study the document. Compare it with Document 1. Draw a Venn diagram or make a list to compare and contrast the documents. Imagine you are writing an encyclopedia entry on baseball. Using evidence from these two photographs, describe how baseball changed from the 1860s (Document 2) to the 1880s (Document 1).

Document

3

The Brooklyn Royal Giants, 1917



National Baseball Hall of Fame Library.



3

Document

The Brooklyn Royal Giants, 1917

THINK ABOUT IT

- How can you tell the difference between players and team managers in this photograph?

WRITE IT

- Study the document. Describe the players and their uniforms and equipment.

4 Document

Club Heads Give Views

Some Feel That Any Capable Player Should Get a Chance

Comments on the signing of Jackie Robinson, as gathered by the Associated Press, follow:

Clark Griffith, President of the [Washington] Senators—"The only question that occurs to me is whether organized baseball has the right to sign a player from the Negro league. That is a well-established league and organized baseball shouldn't take their players. The Negro league is entitled to full recognition as a full-fledged baseball organization."

Frank Shaughnessy, President of the International League—"There's no rule in baseball that says a Negro can't play with a club in organized ball. As long as any fellow's the right type and can make good and can get along with other players, he can play ball." ...

Walter White, Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People—"I am delighted that big league baseball has grown up to its name. I happen to know Jackie Robinson and I hope he'll make good. I think the overwhelming majority of baseball fans will be delighted and will approve of his being signed."

The New York Times, October 24, 1945



4

Document

Club Heads Give Views

THINK ABOUT IT

- According to Clark Griffith, what is one reason the Brooklyn Dodgers should not have signed Jackie Robinson?
- In your own words, summarize the opinions of the three people quoted in this article.

WRITE IT

- In your own words, summarize the opinions of the three people quoted in this article.

5 Document

Race Barriers Down

The exhibition baseball game between the Brooklyn Dodgers and their farm club the Montreal Royals, at Daytona Beach, Fla., Sunday was just another training camp game for most of the players. For Jackie Robinson, the Montreal second baseman, it was his first trial under fire. Robinson is a Negro. The game was the first time a Negro had appeared as such in a line-up of organized baseball since the Eighteen Eighties, when both Newark and Buffalo had Negro players. Men believed to have some Negro blood have played in recent years, but always under some such designation as "Cuban," "Mexican" or "Indian." No attempt has been made to disguise Robinson's racial heritage. On the contrary. He is the test case.

Negroes have appeared in practically all other divisions of organized games in this country. They are leading contenders on the track; Jesse Owens in his day was the greatest sprinter this country ever produced. The present heavyweight champion is a Negro, Joe Louis. Many Northern high schools, colleges, and universities have had Negro competitors in football, baseball, track, and other sports. Until Branch Rickey signed Robinson to a Montreal contract last winter, modern baseball had abided by its unwritten law.

The crowd at Daytona Beach took Robinson's first appearance in a matter-of-fact manner, according to reports. There was friendly applause and no jeers. We hope Robinson makes a success of his effort. If the crowds that watch him in Montreal and elsewhere in International League cities will accept his presence as a matter of course, as did the Daytona Beach crowd of 4,000, another racial barrier will be down.

The New York Times, March 20, 1946



BACKGROUND | This newspaper article was written after Jackie Robinson played his first game for the Brooklyn Dodgers. Before he played for the Brooklyn Dodgers, Robinson played for the Montreal Royals, a farm team for the Brooklyn Dodgers. Players get practice and experience on a farm team. If they do well, they usually move up and play with the major-league team.

5

Document

Race Barriers Down

THINK ABOUT IT

- Besides Jackie Robinson, name two African American athletes mentioned in this article.

Why are they mentioned in this article?

- In paragraph 2, the author says that until Jackie Robinson was signed, “modern baseball had abided by its unwritten law.” What was baseball’s unwritten law?

WRITE IT

- Based on this article, explain how people at the Florida game reacted to Jackie Robinson.

Based on your own prior knowledge, explain the other “racial barriers” that once existed for African Americans in the United States. Write an essay comparing these barriers to the ones faced by Jackie Robinson.

6 Document

The Brooklyn Dodgers, 1947 and 1955



Sports Ephemera Collection, Brooklyn Historical Society.



6

Document

The Brooklyn Dodgers, 1947 and 1955

THINK ABOUT IT

- Based on these two photographs, how did the Brooklyn Dodgers change between 1947, when Robinson joined the team, and 1955?

WRITE IT

- Study the photographs. List three questions that the photographs raise for you.

7 Document

Opening Game of the World Series, 1947



Collection of Brooklyn Public Library–Brooklyn Collection.



BACKGROUND | This photograph was taken before the start of Game 1 of the 1947 World Series between the Brooklyn Dodgers and the New York Yankees.

Document

Opening Game of the World Series, 1947

THINK ABOUT IT

- Study the photograph. Who are these people? What are they doing? How are they feeling?

WRITE IT

- Based on this photograph, list at least three words to describe Brooklyn Dodgers fans. Imagine you are describing this photograph to a group of seeing-impaired visitors who are experiencing it at a museum. You'll need to describe every detail in order for them to understand the picture.

You may also want to offer interpretation of what you're seeing.

In other words, what ideas or messages does this photograph convey?

Write out what you would say.

8

Document

Rookie of the Year (part 1)

Branch Rickey, the smartest man in baseball, had looked hard and waited long to find a Negro who would be his race's best foot forward, as well as a stout prop for a winning ball team. Rickey and his men scouted Robinson until they knew everything about him but what he dreamed at night. Jackie scored well on all counts. He did not smoke (his mother had asthma and cigarette fumes bothered her); he drank a quart of milk a day and didn't touch liquor; he rarely swore; he had a service record (as Army lieutenant in the 27th Cavalry) and two years of college (at U.C.L.A.). He had intelligence, patience, and willingness. . . Most important of all Robinson's qualifications, he was a natural athlete. Says Rickey: "That's what I was betting on."

Time magazine, September 22, 1947



8

Document

Rookie of the Year (part 1)

THINK ABOUT IT

- Why do you think Dodgers manager Branch Rickey felt that he needed to know everything he could about Robinson before asking him to join the Dodgers?
 - Why does the author call Rickey “the smartest man in baseball”?

WRITE IT

- Based on this article, list four facts about Jackie Robinson.

9 Document

Rookie of the Year (part 2)

Branch Rickey, who knows his fellow citizens, set out to soften them up. He organized a group of Brooklyn's leading Negro citizens, including one judge, into a formal "how-to-handle-Robinson committee" ... The Brooklyn committee drew up a list of do's and don'ts a yard long.

He could not, like other ballplayers, endorse breakfast foods (or any other product, for that matter) at the usual \$1,000 per endorsement. He could sign his name to no magazine or newspaper articles. When he got what he considered a bad decision from the umpire, he was not to object. When another player insulted him, he was to grin and bear it. He had to leave the ballpark after games by a secret exit ... There were to be no Jackie Robinson Days at Ebbets Field. He was not to accept any social invitations, from whites or blacks, and he was to stay away from night spots.

Time magazine, September 22, 1947



9

Document

Rookie of the Year (part 2)

THINK ABOUT IT

- Why did the Dodger organization make a list of things Jackie Robinson could and could not do?
Why do you think the team wanted to control Robinson's behavior and actions?
 - What does the author mean when he says that Branch Rickey tried to "soften up" the people of Brooklyn?

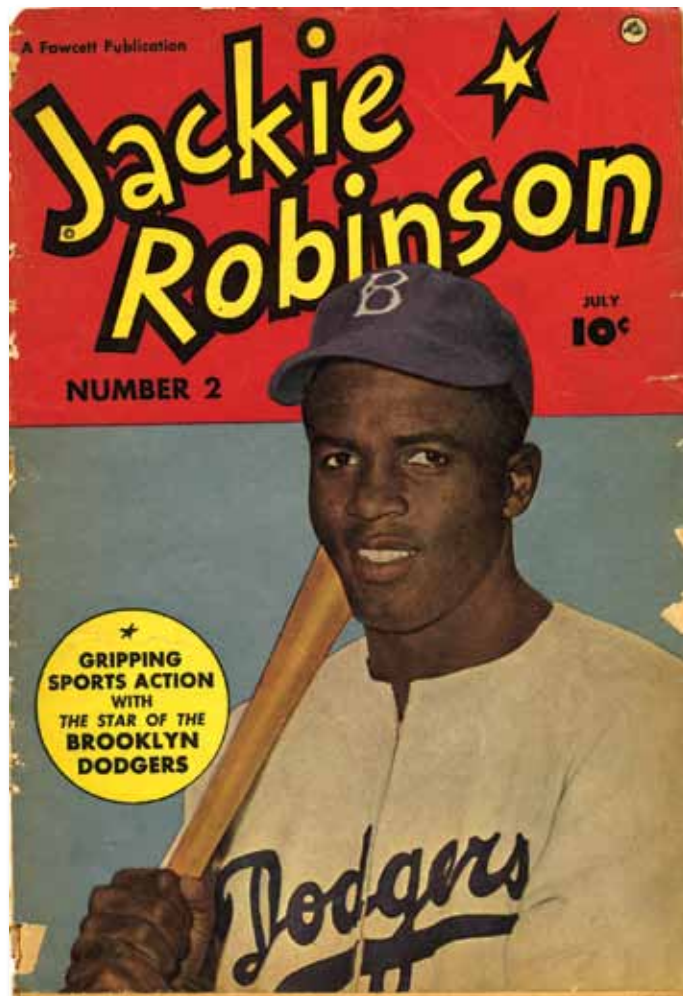
WRITE IT

- According to this article, what were two things that Jackie Robinson was not allowed to do? What kinds of rules are sports players today asked to follow off the field (in their personal lives)? Write your own magazine article about rules and codes of conduct for sports players today.

10

Document

Jackie Robinson Comic Book, 1950



Collection of Dan Schnur.



10

Document

Jackie Robinson Comic Book, 1950

THINK ABOUT IT

- According to this comic book, who is the Brooklyn Dodgers' star player?

WRITE IT

- Who might want to buy this comic book? Give two examples.
Explain their reasons for wanting to buy this comic book.

11

Document

Oral History Interview with George “Shotgun” Shuba, 2008

Running Time: 1min 52sec



George Shuba in 1948 and 1999,
Courtesy of Mike Shuba.

George “Shotgun” Shuba: Oh, Jackie Robinson! What a ballplayer! What a human being! And also his beautiful wife, Rachel. In 1946, I was in Montreal when Jackie joined us down in Daytona Beach for spring training—the first time a black fellow was coming to professional baseball. We trained at Daytona Beach, we had a little ballpark there for the Montreal Club. The Brooklyn Club, the main club, was there also but they trained at a professional minor-league field. But anyhow, while we were at Daytona Beach, we went up to Jacksonville, Florida, ninety miles away, to play another minor-league team. Jackie was with us on the bus, and John Wright, a black pitcher. Well, when we got there, there was a padlock on the door and they said, “Well, we’re not going to let you fellows play.” So we turned around and came back to Daytona Beach.

Well, Jackie had a great first game. He had four for five. He stole a couple of bases, he made the pitcher balk. He was the second batter, I was the third batter on deck. He hit a home run. Everybody was watching to see if a white guy is going to shake his hand. So of course I went up to home plate. As he was crossing home plate, I shook his hand. You know, I could care less if Jackie was Technicolor, because as professional ballplayers we’re there to beat the other team and Jackie’s our teammate. In fact, if the truth be known, he was the best ballplayer in the club, anyhow. So now Jackie, his wife, Rachel, was in the stands and I read somewhere that she was so nervous at the beginning of the game that she had to get up and walk around. But Jackie had a great game, so they both probably slept very good that night.

George Shuba, Oral History Interview, 2008, Brooklyn Historical Society.



Ask your teacher to play these recordings before you answer any questions.



BACKGROUND | George “Shotgun” Shuba was born on December 13, 1924, in Youngstown, Ohio. He joined the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1948 and played with the team until 1955. In this interview with Brooklyn Historical Society, he talks about his teammate, Jackie Robinson, the first African American person to play major-league baseball.

11

Document

Oral History Interview with George “Shotgun” Shuba, 2008

THINK ABOUT IT

- How do you think George Shuba feels about having played on a team with Jackie Robinson?
 - Why is Shuba’s story about shaking Jackie Robinson’s hand important?

WRITE IT

- What did Shuba think of Jackie Robinson as a teammate? Explain your reasons.

12

Document

Oral History Interview with Irwin Fenichel, 2010

Running Time: 1min 48sec

Irwin Fenichel: The fact that Jackie Robinson was brought in to the Dodgers drew me to them immensely and it became my whole life at that point.

Brooklyn Historical Society: Do you remember people's initial reaction to Jackie Robinson joining the league?

IF: In Brooklyn—well, I shouldn't put it that way—in Brownsville, because I didn't really get out of the area, I was ten years old at the time and unlike today, when people have cars and go all over the place, we didn't. And people in Brownsville accepted it very easily, I believe. First of all, I think they were all heavy Dodgers fans. I think they couldn't care less as long as they won. But of course the things that you heard around you, that you could hear, were terrible. I mean they were really, really pretty awful. I never heard that much of it, but I heard of it from other people. It was awful, it really was. But people in Brownsville accepted it.

BHS: So when you saw him play, which I assume you did, what was your reaction?

IF: Well, he was extremely exciting, if you've ever seen film clips of him. He brought something to the game that hadn't been there in a while before. There may have been that type of thing in the early century . . . in the early twentieth century, where people did a lot of base stealing and there were a lot of things going on. But he was amazing. He kept everybody in an uproar. He was incredibly athletic and very bright. And his instincts for the game were just amazing, they really were. It was fascinating to watch him. It really was.



Ask your teacher to play these recordings before you answer any questions.



BACKGROUND | Irwin Fenichel was born on March 13, 1937, in Brownsville, Brooklyn. He has lived in Brooklyn his entire life. In this interview with Brooklyn Historical Society, Fenichel talks about being a Brooklyn Dodgers fan in the 1940s and 1950s and describes the response to Jackie Robinson joining the Dodgers team.

12

Document

Oral History Interview with Irwin Fenichel, 2010

THINK ABOUT IT

- According to Fenichel, how did Dodgers fans react to Jackie Robinson joining the team?

WRITE IT

- What do you think Fenichel is referring to when he says, “But of course the things that you heard around you, that you could hear, were terrible. I mean they were really, really pretty awful”?

13

Document

Oral History Interview with Susan Horowitz, 2010

Running Time: 38sec

Brooklyn Historical Society: Was there any particular player or players who you really identified with?

Susan Horowitz: Jackie Robinson, because it was a big deal. I was very aware at that time that a black player was on the Dodgers, and he got so much publicity that I'm not sure I identified with him. But I looked at him, looked up to him because he was so famous and it was really a great thing that he finally broke the color barrier there.



Ask your teacher to play these recordings before you answer any questions.



BACKGROUND | Susan Horowitz was born on October 18, 1949, and grew up in Brooklyn near Ebbets Field, the home stadium for the Brooklyn Dodgers. In this interview with Brooklyn Historical Society, Horowitz talks about her favorite Dodgers player, Jackie Robinson.

13

Document

Oral History Interview with Susan Horowitz, 2010

THINK ABOUT IT

- Why was Jackie Robinson Susan Horowitz's favorite player?
- Horowitz mentions that Jackie Robinson got a lot of publicity. Why do you think this was?

WRITE IT

- Pretend you are a newspaper reporter covering Jackie Robinson.

Write a one-paragraph article about him based on what you have learned from Horowitz.

1 Document

Mary DeSaussure at a Track Meet, 1947



*Mary DeSaussure (right) at a track meet, 1947; Mary DeSaussure Sobers Collection
ArMs 2005.053, Brooklyn Historical Society*



1

Document

Mary DeSaussure at a Track Meet, 1947

THINK ABOUT IT

- Study the photograph. Look at the expressions on the girls' faces and the movement of their bodies. What thoughts might be going through the mind of Mary DeSaussure Sobers and her competitors at the time this photograph was taken?

WRITE IT

- Based on this photograph, describe how Mary felt about competing in the track meet.

2 Document

The First Girls Track Team of the Police Athletic League (PAL), ca. 1948



Mary DeSaussure Sobers Collection, 2005.053, Box 1, Folder 2, Brooklyn Historical Society.



2

Document

The First Girls Track Team of the Police Athletic League (PAL), ca. 1948

THINK ABOUT IT

- Was this photograph taken recently or long ago?
How can you tell?

WRITE IT

- What does this photograph tell you about the team?
For example, how old are the team members?
How do they feel about being on the team? Explain.

3

Document

A Golden Place in History

Mary DeSaussure Sobers has a collection of gold and silver medals from an earlier era. They represent a piece of history, growing up in Bedford-Stuyvesant and becoming the first African American girl to run in a Police Athletic League track meet at the 13th Regiment Armory in Brooklyn. She got her first chance to compete in the 40-yard dash as an 11-year-old in August of 1945 when curiosity caused her to venture into the armory. “I ran my first race in a long dress and in my sister’s small heels with galoshes over them,” Sobers said, chuckling.

Despite the outfit, her second place finish earned her the chance to run in a PAL meet at Madison Square Garden two months later, where she won a gold medal.

Mary and her twin sister Martha DeSaussure went on to win many races. In 1946, Mary and Martha also became original members of the Trailblazers, the first African American girls track club in Brooklyn.

New York Newsday, Sunday, February 13, 1994



3

Document

A Golden Place in History

THINK ABOUT IT

- What is the name of the neighborhood where Mary DeSaussure Sobers grew up?
 - How old was Sobers when she ran her first race?

WRITE IT

- Mary and her sister Martha made history in more ways than one.
List two “firsts” achieved by the DeSaussure sisters.

4

Document

PAL Girls Sweep Metropolitan A.A.U. Meet

Fifteen girls of the PAL running in the Metropolitan A.A.U. opening track meet of the season at the 22nd Regiment Armory against several of the country's greatest women track athletes swept the two women's events in a history-making debut by taking the first five places in the 75-yard dash, and in the 440-yard relay by running away with the second and third places against leading club teams of the metropolitan area.

As a result of this fine showing, the Police Athletic League has been invited to enter a special invitation 440-yard relay race for girls at the Millrose Games January 31 at Madison Square Garden. They will run against four other teams.

Although the PAL girls are only 15 and 16 years of age, A.A.U. officials expressed the belief that they will make a fine showing in the National Championships and are looked upon as possible Olympic entrants.

In the 75-yard dash, the girls finished as follows:

Mae Faggs, 15, 111th Precinct

Martha DeSaussure, 15, 79th Precinct

Dorothy Klein, 16, 62nd Precinct

Marie Taylor, 15, 79th Precinct

Gloria Moett, 15, 79th Precinct

Police Gazette, 1948



4

Document

PAL Girls Sweep Metropolitan A.A.U. Meet

THINK ABOUT IT

- According to this article, what happened as a result of the team's performance at the track meet?

WRITE IT

- Mary DeSaussure did not run in this track meet, but her sister and other teammates did.

Describe how you think Mary felt about the PAL victory at this meet.

5 Document

The Summaries, 1948

70-yard dash, Women

1. Mae Faggs, PAL (6 yards)
2. Mary DeSaussure, PAL (6 yards)
3. Dorothy Klein, PAL (6 yards)
4. Marie Taylor, PAL (6 yards)

Time— 0:08.4

440-yard relay, Women

1. Police Athletic League, Team A (Mary DeSaussure, Ruby McMahon, Marcelle Conner, Mae Faggs)
2. Police Athletic League Team B
3. Police Athletic League Team C
4. German-American A C

Time—0:50.8

From “Pearman Is First in the Deignan 600 at A.A.U. Games,” *The New York Times*, January 4, 1948



BACKGROUND | Race results shown here are for the 1948 Metropolitan Amateur Athletic Union opening track meet. Of the meet’s 21 events, only two were for women.

5 Document

The Summaries, 1948

THINK ABOUT IT

- Why were there more events for men than for women?

WRITE IT

- Name the two events that Mary DeSaussure participated in
 - Her name appears in both of the summaries.

Name one other person whose name appears in both summaries.

6

Document

Real Trail Blazers

Twins from Brooklyn Broke Color Barriers on Their Way to Finish Line

One day, walking to get bread and kerosene, Mary [DeSaussure] and her twin sister, Martha, saw a group of kids going into Brooklyn's 13th Regiment Armory. Thinking it might be a circus or some other event for children, they went up to the closed door when it suddenly opened and a man invited them inside. There was a track meet going on, he said, in answer to the girls' question.

Mary asked if she could run. She was wearing galoshes over her shoes, and a green-and-beige dress. After much of her insisting she deserved a place in the meeting, the man who had opened the door let her run.

She won three races qualifying for an all-borough event at Madison Square Garden.

Her sister Martha, who was too afraid to run, sat in the balcony where she heard spectators talking about her sister: "Where did that little black girl come from?" they were asking one another.

"There was nobody in there of my color," Mary said to *The Brooklyn Paper*.

The Brooklyn Paper, March 13, 2000



6

Document

Real Trail Blazers

THINK ABOUT IT

- Why did the author write this article about Mary DeSaussure Sobers?
- Who might be interested in this article? Why?

WRITE IT

- In your own words, explain in writing how Mary and Martha got their start as runners.
- Look at the title of this article, “Real Trail Blazers.” It has a double meaning.

Explain the two possible meanings of this title. Name two ways that the sisters were trailblazers.



Document

Team Wins Meet Third Year in Row

Championship of Police League Track Competition Captured by 79th Precinct Squad

Brooklyn's small fry athletes on the Police Athletic league 79th Precinct track team won't have to offer any alibis about their efficiency in sports as some of their older colleagues in the borough's baseball fields are inclined to do.

For the third successive year this team from the Bedford-Stuyvesant section won yesterday the annual Police Athletic League (PAL) outdoor track-and-field meet held at the Triboro Stadium, Randall's Island.

Mrs. Irene A. Peters, director, bureau of policewomen, presented the bureau's trophy to the 79th Precinct's girls team, which won the 220-yard relay. Members of this team which helped clinch the championship were Mary and Martha DeSaussure, who are twins; Mary Ballard; and Helen Platts.

The New York Times, June 22, 1947



GLOSSARY | *alibi*: an excuse. *clinch*: to assure the winning of. *colleague* (kah-leeg): people in the same line of work. *efficiency*: the ability to do something without wasting time or energy. *small fry*: a child (slang). *successive*: happening in a row; one after another.

7

Document

Team Wins Meet Third Year in Row

THINK ABOUT IT

- Why are Mary and Martha DeSaussure mentioned in this article?

WRITE IT

- Name the three years in which the 79th Precinct team won the Police Athletic League (PAL) track-and-field meet. Explain how you got your answer.

8

Document

Mary DeSaussure Sobers Letter to Mayor Dinkins, 1992

October 28, 1992
Mayor David Dinkins
Gracie Mansion
Carl Schurz Park
88 East End Avenue
New York, New York 10128

Re: Mrs. Mary DeSaussure Sobers
1st African American female to run track—1945 New York City

Your Honor,

I have an interesting story.... As you know, your honor... [in late August of 1945] the primary focus and reporting was on the war and V-J Day, nothing else was of utmost importance at the time. So my track performance was not really recognized.

The track meet was given by the Department of Parks, late August 1945, titled Olympic Sports Festival.

Your honor, I came in first in the trial heat and first in the semi finals, and won the finals, but I was given second place. There were no black officials or any other black females at this meet. I had ... no one to protest what happened there. I was a little disappointed, but I was not officially supposed to be there. Second place allowed me a spot to run in the Finals at Madison Square Garden....

Your honor, thank you for taking the time to read my letter. I just felt that what I did back then should be documented as part of the history of New York City, as well as an accurate reporting of what young blacks were doing in the forties and fifties.

Mary DeSaussure Sobers Collection, ArMs 2005.053, Box 1, Brooklyn Historical Society.



8

Document

Mary DeSaussure Sobers Letter to Mayor Dinkins, 1992

THINK ABOUT IT

- Why does Mary DeSaussure Sobers think her story should be documented as part of New York City history? Do you agree? Explain.
- According to Sobers, what is one reason her achievements did not receive more attention in 1945?

WRITE IT

- Imagine you are Mayor Dinkins. Write a letter responding to Sobers explaining why you agree that her accomplishments are an important part of New York City history and how you will document them.

9 Document

PAL 79th Precinct first track meet, 1945



McCarren Park, spring of 1945, 79th Precinct first track meet, Police Athletic League. Martha DeSaussure is center front.



9

Document

PAL 79th Precinct first track meet, 1945

THINK ABOUT IT

- What are the girls pictured in this photograph doing?

WRITE IT

- Look at this photograph closely. What emotion do you think the girls are feeling?
When have you experienced a similar feeling?

10

Document

Oral History Interview with Mary DeSaussure Sobers, 2009

Running Time: 8min 11sec

Mary DeSaussure Sobers: It was a Saturday morning, and we woke up. My mother usually had a cold stove in the kitchen and she needed some oil—kerosene oil for the little oil burner—and she gave me the money. Martha took the money. And it was a damp day. It was sort of rainy, the sidewalks were sort of damp, wet. I didn't want anybody to see me, I didn't have any shoes to go with Martha and I wanted to go, so I went in my big sister's closet. Out sticks a green pair of Cuban heel shoes, those shoes with heels about that big. And I went and got a pair of galoshes that my mother used to put over her shoes when it was raining, because I didn't want any of my friends to see me with these green shoes in February, okay? [Laughs] So I put the galoshes on and I had this jacket on and this long dress that my mother got from the thrift shop; it was beige and green.

And as we went down the block, she says, "Look, look!" I saw these buses and children getting out. I wonder what's up? So we had to go. So let's hurry up. We ran. I'm right behind her going to the store. And when we got up to the corner, we couldn't see for the buses and the children. I said, "Something's happening at the Armory." I said, "Let's go," and she was running right behind me. When I got to the door, then all of a sudden, I saw a face up there in the door, then he opened it and he said,



Ask your teacher to play these recordings before you answer any questions.



BACKGROUND | Mary DeSaussure Sobers was born on December 22, 1931, in Eutawville, South Carolina. She grew up with her parents and twin sister, Martha, in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn. Mary's entry into her first track-and-field competition was unplanned. One morning, on the way to the store, she noticed many school buses and a big group of children at the local Armory. Curious, Mary went to investigate. A man at the door told her there was a race going on. Mary asked if she could run. Though the man was hesitant, she persisted and he finally let her in. Mary was dressed in a long wool skirt and galoshes, not shorts and sneakers like the other runners, but she raced anyway. She finished first in the 40-yard dash, but when the medals were handed to the winners, Mary was given a silver medal instead of gold. This race would be the first of many for Mary.

10

Document

Oral History Interview with Mary DeSaussure Sobers, 2009

“What’s the matter?” I said, “Where are all the kids?” He said, “In here.” I said, “What’s going on?”

“They’re going to race each other.”

“Run?”

He said, “Yeah.” He opened the door wider and he shoved us in.

And when I got in there, I said, “Oooh, please, please let me run. I know I can run.” And he took one look and he looked at my feet, and he saw the galoshes. And then he looked at the dress—it was long, it was down here, it had a few little moth holes in it, and he says, “Like that?” I said, “Just like this. I’m always running like this!” I was from Gates Avenue. We run against the wind, too. When it’s windy, we try, but it pushes us back. He was laughing. Well, he comes back, grabs me up, took me over to the scale, put me in the 40-yard dash. “You’re going to run.” And I got on the line. He said, “Hurry up, little girl, give your sister your coat and your jacket or whatever.” And he said, “You come right here by me and I’ll tell you when.” He put me in the very first heat.

Well, when I got there, he said, “I’m going to say two—three things. On your mark, get set, and go.” And he said, “Little girl, you run like hell.” That’s what he said. “You run like nothing.” Well I got out there and Martha hadn’t yet got herself settled. She went upstairs—now listen to this—the balcony, she said, well, you couldn’t see. There’s all the families of the children. This one man in there was so rude. He said, “Hey.” He said, “Do I see a little black girl down there? Where’d that [expletive deleted] come from?” Like that to Martha. He didn’t say it to her. He was saying it to the men, and they all got up to look. So then Martha said she heard the yelling, and she said, “Oh my God.” And she ran, she took the can with her, and ran down where you could look over another balcony in the Armory. She said, “Oooh.” And then she said, “All I could see was your little dress.”

They were holding a sisal cord for a rope and it burned me, right there. He came, and grabbed me, and said, “You know you won?” He said, “But you got a little thing here from the rope.” He said, “I’ll tell the girls to ease up, you’re too short.” I was short, less than 4’11”, when I ran that race. So he said, “Oh my God.” He said, “You can run.” Then the semifinals come and he grabs me again. “Come up,” he says. “Go.” In the first heat of the semis. He said, “Now, anybody,” he says, “that wins the semis,” he says, “that come in first, is going to be picked to run the finals. Those three girls are going to Madison Square Garden, to represent Brooklyn.” Now he said, “Little girl, you know you’ve got to run. These girls are getting tougher and tougher.” I got out there, and when he said go, all I know [laughs]—that’s all I remember. When I got down there, the rope got me under the neck. I said, “Ohhh.” And he came over and he said, “Again you got it. You’re too



10

Document

Oral History Interview with Mary DeSaussure Sobers, 2009

short.” And he said, “Well, I don’t believe this.” He said, “You won your trials, you won your semifinal, and now you’re ready for the finals.” I said, “Yep.” He said, “Well, now this will determine,” he says, “any of the other places you’re going to go to Madison Square Garden.”

When the final came, the whole place was quiet. When I got on the line, he said, “Take the mark, get set, [claps].” I was gone. When I looked, I had another mark. And he said, “Oh shorty.” He said, “You got another mark, but you won.” He put me right there in first place, Betty second, and the other girl third. And he said, “Your parents are going to have to fill out a lot of paperwork and everything.” But he was taking too long at the table. And I figured that he must have been a little nervous, you know, because that was a rough crowd there. So he kept doing this, looking at the medal, and doing this and doing that. But I didn’t know why he was doing all that. I waited for my medal. So he finally came over and he had them all closed in a box. There was mine, there was the other girl, and there was the other girl. And he said, “Don’t forget, you have to give me this paperwork. And you got to get the proper clothes.” When I opened it, it was the silver medal.

Brooklyn Historical Society: Even though you had come in first?

MDS: I was first. And I couldn’t move, because I saw it, and I knew I was first. And everybody in there knew I was first.

BHS: But you didn’t get the gold medal.

MDS: Because I didn’t understand that it was all due to racism. And I was a lark. In other words, the two men had first thought because I was dressed, that I couldn’t run like that, you see? And all the other girls were beautifully dressed because it was a track meet that they knew about. I just stumbled on the thing. I came in and I’m sure God pushed me in the door because as I said, look, the way I had on that outfit, and my sister, we didn’t look like we were ready for a track meet. I’m sure they didn’t expect me to do anything, because they put me in the first heat. They expected me to fall down because they were Cuban heel shoes in those galoshes.

So he was probably—this is the way I feel in my own heart—saving himself, because he let me in there. And he didn’t know I was going to win. Think about it. He didn’t know I was going to win. Because that thing was set up for this girl, Betty. And she would have won, because she was second behind me. She would have won. So he figures it’s his fault because he let me in. And I could imagine they were saying some tough things to him, you know. So I ... we shoved that off. We went on, and we made it! We made it! We made it because people were decent and there were always people around who would see the good in you.



10

Document

Oral History Interview with Mary DeSaussure Sobers, 2009

In those days, the parents taught that you do not sass or say anything smart to an adult. They didn't have to worry about that—they knew that you were raised that way. And whatever they did, goes. You don't challenge. You can't lay a challenge. So I said it was racism 101, that's what it was. Not only for color, I want you to know, but for women. They did not want women in sports, they didn't want them there. They thought a woman in our day was to go to school, get an education, teach your kids, get a nice husband, and make children.

Mary DeSaussure Sobers, Oral History Interview, 2009, Brooklyn Historical Society.



10

Document

Oral History Interview with Mary DeSaussure Sobers, 2009

THINK ABOUT IT

- Why do you think the man put her in the first heat?

What does he expect will happen? What actually happens?

WRITE IT

- Pretend you were Mary DeSaussure...What would you do if the man at the door tried to turn you away? Would you convince him to let you race? How?
- In what ways can sports have a positive effect on a young person's life?
- Sobers discusses many factors that could have made it difficult for her to win the race at the Armory. In a short essay, identify these factors and give your opinion why they did not stop her from beating the other girls in the race.
- Why didn't Sobers speak up when the man gave her the second-place silver medal, even though she had come in first place? Using at least three examples from the text, write a short essay that clearly explains your answer.

11

Document

A Golden Run

Mary DeSaussure Sobers, now in her early seventies, remembers running everywhere as a kid with her twin sister, Martha.

At age eleven, the Brooklyn native walked off the street into the Olympic Sports Carnival's borough-wide contest and was permitted to run.

Nobody expected the Black girl wearing a ragged dress and galoshes to beat her white competitors in the contest's 40-yard dash....

Sobers won the trial, semifinals and finals of the contest. With the top three girls, Sobers advanced to compete in the Carnival's citywide championships to be held at Madison Square Garden.

Though Sobers nabbed first place in the borough-wide contest that day, she received the silver medal. The gold was given to the second place finisher, a white girl, heavily favored to win.



11

Document

A Golden Run

Sobers explained that because she was a walk-in and had not filled out the paperwork required to run, it would have been scandalous had she been awarded gold over the favorite.

“Not that it was right,” Sobers emphasized, recalling her 1945 victory at a time when segregation and Jim Crow were legal.

Despite the slight, Sobers went on to receive a gold at Madison Square Garden.

After her first major win, Sobers and her twin sister were asked to help form a girls track team for Brooklyn’s Police Athletic League.

Sobers and her sister Martha’s efforts helped form the league’s first sanctioned African American girls track team after World War II.

With recruiters journeying from as far as Tennessee State University to see the girls in action, Sobers and the other young women on the Trail Blazers were being groomed for the 1948 Olympics to be held in London.

New York Amsterdam News, November 2, 2005



GLOSSARY | *groomed*: to be prepared to do something in the future. *Jim Crow*: unfair laws that discriminated against African Americans. *sanctioned*: officially recognized.

11

Document

A Golden Run

THINK ABOUT IT

- According to this article, why did Sobers receive a silver medal even though she came in first in the race? Do you think this is fair?
- According to this article, in what ways did Sobers exceed people's expectations? Give examples.

WRITE IT

- Sobers explains how racism and sexism in the 1940s impacted her being awarded a silver medal, even when she beat all the other girls.
Write an essay comparing an instance of prejudice you have experienced or read about with those that Mary describes.

Use specific examples from her story and your contemporary sources to support your point.

1 Document

Emmanuel House Basketball Team, ca. 1910



Emmanuel House Collection, v1981.284.26; Brooklyn Historical Society.



BACKGROUND | Emmanuel House was located at 131 Steuben Street, near Pratt Institute, in Clinton Hill, Brooklyn. It was maintained by the Young Men's League of Emmanuel Baptist Church and contained reading rooms, game rooms, a gymnasium, and bowling alleys for boys; and free sewing and kindergarten classes for girls.

1 Document

Emmanuel House Basketball Team, ca. 1910

THINK ABOUT IT

- What is the team uniform?

How is it the same as or different from basketball team uniforms today?

WRITE IT

- Study the photograph and the other information on this page.

Answer these questions:

1. What sport did this team play? How can you tell?
2. How many people were on the team?
3. When was the photograph taken?
4. Where was the photograph taken?
5. Who played on this team?
6. Why do you think this photograph was taken?

2

Document

On Basket Ball Courts

Great Activity Wherever the Game Is Played

Basket ball, a game that has sprung into great and deserved popularity within the last year or so, is this fall claiming the attention of local athletes to an unlimited extent. The open tourney which last spring took place at the Clermont avenue rink and the previous appearance of the crack Yale team at the Thirteenth regiment armory were both instrumental in exhibiting to Brooklynites the highest development of the game. Basket ball is now being played, with untiring vigor, not only by the Young Men's Christian association throughout the country, among whose members it has always found favor, but in the gymnasiums of the great Eastern colleges and universities, which, in pursuance of Yale's example, have seriously devoted themselves to the sport. In all probability there will be during the approaching winter an inter-collegiate basket ball league established on the same lines as inter-collegiate base ball, foot ball and tennis associations. The proposed league will be formed among the students of Yale, Brown University at Providence, and possibly Dartmouth College at Hanover, N.H. When an athletic sport is, indoor or open air, is taken up by college athletes, its success is generally assured.

Brooklyn Daily Eagle, November 5, 1896.



GLOSSARY | *assured*: certain to happen; guaranteed. *crack*: very good. *tourney*: tournament. *vigor*: effort and enthusiasm.

2

Document

On Basket Ball Courts

THINK ABOUT IT

- According to the article, what were the two events that got many people in Brooklyn interested in basketball?

WRITE IT

- In your own words, explain this quote from the article:
“When an athletic sport, indoor or open air, is taken up by college athletes, its success is generally assured.”
- Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Explain.

3 Document

Basket Ball Championship

Brooklyn Leads the Way with Its Big Tournament

Lovers of basket ball have noted with satisfaction the fact that Company I, Thirteenth Regiment, has made plans for the first important basket ball tournament in the history of the game.

The story of the game of basket ball is interesting. The man to whom belongs the honor of inventing the game is James Naismith. It was his purpose to devise a sport which should combine all the good elements of rugby football and eliminate all the bad ones. The game was first played at the International Training School, Springfield, Mass., where the inventor was a physical instructor. At first the rules of the game were very crude and the goals nothing but ordinary peach baskets. This, by the way, gave the name basket ball to the game.

The new pastime soon met with favor and spread rapidly through the YMCAs of the country. Then the colleges took it up, until now many of them have their basket ball teams. It was naturally soon adopted, too, by the women's colleges, for it met the needs of the young women, who, while not prepared to indulge in the rougher game of football, felt the need of a lively, exciting game that would develop their muscles and their minds.

Brooklyn Daily Eagle, January 29, 1897



GLOSSARY | *crude*: undeveloped. *elements*: parts. *pastime*: a hobby; something that helps time pass in an enjoyable way.

3 Document

Basket Ball Championship

THINK ABOUT IT

- According to this article, who invented basketball?
- Where was the first basketball game played?

WRITE IT

- According to this article, why did basketball become popular at women's colleges?

Describe in your own words why you think basketball became popular.

4 Document

Oral History Interview with Alan Fishman, 2008

Running Time: 2min 41sec

Alan Fishman: Coming from Brooklyn I think was great, because you learned early that it doesn't matter what—if you could play. I mean, I had big, thick glasses as a kid and I was a little Jewish kid with short hair and a big nose and I walked in the school yard and I didn't exactly look like Michael Jordan. And, you know, you put your glasses down and you said, Let's play. And, you know, you played. And if you could play better than the other guy, you stayed on the court. And if you didn't, you got off the court. You learned it didn't matter what the guy looked like if he could play, or not play. And if he plays fair or not fair. Or if he's dirty or not dirty. There's a lot of lessons you learn from sports.

I tell this story all the time because it's absolutely true, and my wife cringes every time I tell the story. In Erasmus Hall High School ... in the locker room at Erasmus Hall High School, the windows had mesh ... had wire mesh grates, so that you couldn't rob, you couldn't break in. And we used to stick our shirts ... our



Ask your teacher to play these recordings before you answer any questions.



BACKGROUND | Alan Fishman is a Brooklyn native. Born in 1946, he grew up on Washington Avenue, just across the street from the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens, and played basketball at Erasmus Hall High School, in Flatbush. “In those days,” says Fishman, “[it] was one of the greatest basketball high schools in the country.” After graduating from Brown University, Fishman went on to a very successful career in banking and finance. Brooklyn Historical Society interviewed him in 2008. During the interview, Fishman shared the life lessons he has learned from sports.

4

Document

Oral History Interview with Alan Fishman, 2008

practice shirts in the wire mesh grates, so they would dry out, because we didn't have laundries or anything, you know. But every night we'd come in from playing, and after a while, the stuff would smell so bad that you had to take it home. But in the meanwhile, here are ten shirts on the wall, stuck in it. And every day you come in and grab another one. You didn't grab yours, you just grabbed one. They all looked the same. You'd forget it, you came early, it didn't matter. You took one. So here you are, it's five white guys, three Irish, one's Jewish, whatever it is. You have two white guys, two Italians, two Jews, four black guys, one Latino guy. And you're all wearing each other's T-shirts. And you would stink the same. I mean, you would all stink. You would literally, physically stink. You know, that's the way you grew up. We all stunk... And I say that because it's really an amazing metaphor for what Brooklyn was in those days, and New York, probably, as well. But certainly my growing up in Brooklyn.

*Alan Fishman, Oral History Interview, 2008, Brooklyn Historical Society and
Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation.*



4

Document

Oral History Interview with Alan Fishman, 2008

THINK ABOUT IT

- What lessons can you learn from sports?
- According to Alan Fishman, what are two things a basketball player must do?

WRITE IT

- How has Fishman's experience as a basketball player helped him in his career?
 - Why did Fishman share the story about his team sharing shirts?

5 Document

Bringing Some Order to Games City Students Play

With the last class complete at P.S. 308 in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, so many basketball players have filled the school's tiny gymnasium that there is barely space to bounce a ball. Boys and girls swarm a floor roughly half the size of a regulation court.

Soon, P.S. 308's boys basketball team will begin a spirited practice, the players' shouts radiating beyond the gym walls—sounds of life in cheerless streets enveloping the school on a cold December afternoon.

"If there were no sports, people would be in the neighborhood causing nothing but trouble," James Fernandez, an eighth grader who is one of the team's captains, said afterward. "I don't know what we'd do without our sports."

Even though the boys team practices three days a week, it has not played an organized league game against another school for two years. That hardly makes Public School 308 unusual; the majority of New York City's nearly 1,000 middle and elementary schools have not had formal interschool athletic play for two decades.

That is about to change, leaders of the city's Department of Education say. They intend to create a new framework for competitive athletics in middle and elementary schools, and they hope the city will be at the forefront of an athletics renaissance, offering more supervision and, in some cases, financing for teams.

The New York Times, December 26, 2004



GLOSSARY | *financing*: money raised or provided. *forefront*: the first or most important place. *interschool*: between two or more schools. *league*: a group of teams that regularly play one another. *renaissance* (ren-uh-sonts): revival; rebirth.

5 Document

Bringing Some Order to Games City Students Play

THINK ABOUT IT

- According to James Fernandez, what is one benefit of playing sports?

WRITE IT

- Based on this article, state two things that the city's department of education hopes will happen as a result of interschool athletics.
 - Imagine you are the New York City Schools chancellor.

Write an open letter to all parents describing how you intend to improve interschool athletics and why. Cite examples from the newspaper article and use persuasive language to convince your readers that your ideas will result in major improvements in the lives of public school students.

6

Document

Brooklyn a Haven for USBL Hoop Dreamers

None of the Brooklyn Kings were picked in the NBA draft Wednesday, but that did not stop them from hoping they would play in the NBA some day.

That is mostly what the Kings, players in the United States Basketball League, do: hope. Maybe a few will be invited to try out for a pro team. Some will go overseas to play and others will go about their day jobs until the next USBL season, when they will try again ...

“This is where you get to work on your game,” said Corey Williams, a 23-year-old guard for the Kings who averaged 22 points. “It’s not the NBA, but it’s a couple of steps away from the NBA” ...

None of the Kings can look very far into the future, and none know when or if they might get to the NBA.

They just keep playing, waiting for their chance ...

USBL players earn about \$350 a week in an eight-week season. Teams travel by bus and train, rarely by plane. The Kings have changed hands three times in three years and are in the process of being sold again.

The Kings, who finished the season 12-17, averaged about 100 fans at the Medgar Evers College gym.

The New York Times, July 1, 2001



6

Document

Brooklyn a Haven for USBL Hoop Dreamers

THINK ABOUT IT

- What does USBL stand for?
- What is the name of Brooklyn's USBL team?
- Based on this article, what do you think is Corey Williams's dream? Explain.

WRITE IT

- Look at the title of this story: "Brooklyn a Haven for USBL Hoop Dreamers."
In your own words, explain what this means.

7 Document

Ditmas Park Basketball Players, 2010



Lorna Keuning.



7 Document

Ditmas Park Basketball Players, 2010

THINK ABOUT IT

- Where do you think the players are?
- Why are they playing in this location?

WRITE IT

- This sport is being played outdoors.

Write a list of three sports you can play outdoors.

- Imagine you are one of the boys sitting down in this photograph.

Send a letter to a friend describing what you saw.

Use the photograph to find three specific things a kid might see at a community basketball court in Brooklyn today.

8 Document

Brooklyn Crosses Bridge Back into the Big Time

Until now, basketball in Brooklyn mostly meant schoolyard courts or the high school gyms where teenagers learned to shoot and pass, to dunk and defend. You could dream about playing for the Knicks at the Garden, but if you had big-time talent, you had to go away to college out there in the sticks where you knew you would feel like a stranger.

But now, with the developer Bruce C. Ratner having purchased the Nets for \$300 million and proposing to move [the team] to an arena in a \$2.5 billion commercial and residential project in downtown Brooklyn, the borough has a sports identity for the first time since the Dodgers departed for Los Angeles after the 1957 baseball season.

“It’s eerie,” Bernard King, one of Brooklyn’s best athletes, was saying yesterday. “The arena site at Flatbush and Atlantic Avenues has been sitting there waiting for this moment in time ever since [Brooklyn Dodgers owner] Walter O’Malley wanted it for a Dodger ballpark that would have replaced Ebbets Field.”

The New York Times, January 22, 2004



BACKGROUND | The Barclays Center opened in fall 2012 with a performance by Jay-Z, who is part owner of the Brooklyn Nets (formerly the New Jersey Nets), the NBA team that will be calling the arena home at the start of the basketball season. The venue will seat 18,000 for basketball games and up to 19,000 for concerts.

8

Document

Brooklyn Crosses Bridge Back into the Big Time

THINK ABOUT IT

- According to this article, what change can Brooklyn basketball players look forward to?
 - What city did the Brooklyn Dodgers move to in 1957?

WRITE IT

- What is the site, or location, of the new arena? Name the two avenues.

9

Document

Oral History Interview with Albert King, 2009

Running Time: 3min 13sec

Albert King: I played basketball growing up in Brooklyn—Fort Greene, Brooklyn. I started playing basketball when I was probably ten years old. My whole family played basketball. I went to P.S. 67 Elementary School. I played basketball there. I went to Sands Junior High School, it was called back then. And I played junior high school basketball. And basketball really took off for me starting in high school. I attended Fort Hamilton High School, in Bay Ridge. And then I attended the University of Maryland on a basketball scholarship. I was drafted by the New Jersey Nets back in 1981. And that's when a dream came true about playing professional basketball.

Growing up in Fort Greene, right there on the playground, we played basketball—after our homework, of course—every weekend. Even on the weekdays, we'd try to sneak out. Our parents let us go downstairs and play for a little while. Everyone just gathered around the basketball court and watched everyone play. You win, you stay on the court. You lose, you lose. You have to get in line for the next game.

It was very competitive. Sometimes, it was a little bit too competitive. But the big thing was, everyone wanted to fulfill that dream of playing professional basketball. Growing up in the inner city, of course, you're poor, you don't have a lot. And you, looking on TV, you're seeing Dr. J. You're seeing Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. You're seeing Wilt Chamberlain. You're seeing Walt ["Clyde"] Frazier. You're seeing all these professional players.



Ask your teacher to play these recordings before you answer any questions.



9

Document

Oral History Interview with Albert King, 2009

And when you're on the court, you become someone. I became Dr. J. Someone else was Clyde Frazier. It was a dream of saying that, "Wow. We're on the court playing skins and shirts on this pavement. But maybe one day we'll be able to play at Madison Square Garden, or the Nassau Coliseum," back then.

I have a brother. He was pretty good. That's a joke. He was great. My brother, Bernard King, he became a professional basketball player, mostly with that other team, the Knicks. He's three years older than I am. We didn't play against each other, because when—you can imagine—when you're 12, and your brother's 15, you don't play against your older brother. He doesn't want to be around you. There's nothing like playing basketball in the neighborhood. You make money playing professional basketball, but my memories of playing basketball in the neighborhood, in Fort Greene, throughout Brooklyn, it doesn't get any better than that. You play basketball professionally, it's a business, and you do it for the love of the game. But the love started right there along the pavement.

Albert King, Oral History Interview, 2009, Brooklyn Historical Society.



9 Document

Oral History Interview with Albert King, 2009

THINK ABOUT IT

- What role did basketball play in Albert King's life?

In your own words, explain the game's importance to King.

WRITE IT

- King discusses turning his love of a sport into a career.

What is something you love to do in your free time? Imagine that became your full-time job.

Write an opinion piece for your school newspaper explaining the pros and cons of turning your free-time activity into a career. Cite examples from King's story as well as from your own life.

10

Document

Oral History Interview with Albert Vann, 2008

Running Time: 1min 22sec

Albert Vann: Early on, I was attracted to sports—to basketball in particular—so that became a very important activity for me. It sort of helped me to direct the course of my life, because of my active interest in sports and basketball in particular. And of course, friendships and relationships developed from that activity. Even today, there's always a camaraderie between guys who played ball through the years. Probably kept me out of trouble to some extent, to a great extent, because I had this positive activity that I was into, and the fact that my parents—you know, well, my mother, really raised us—tried to make sure that we stayed on the right path, which was typical, again, of that time in our community, and most of our friends, everybody was trying to do the right thing.

Albert Vann, Oral History Interview, 2008, Brooklyn Historical Society and Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation.



Ask your teacher to play these recordings before you answer any questions.



BACKGROUND | Albert Vann was born and raised in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn. He graduated from Franklin K. Lane High School, on Jamaica Avenue, and went on to work in schools as both a teacher and an administrator. From 1974 to 2001, Vann represented Bedford-Stuyvesant in the New York State Assembly. In 2001, he was elected to serve on the New York City Council, where as of 2012 he continues to represent Bedford-Stuyvesant and Crown Heights. In this 2008 interview with the Brooklyn Historical Society, Vann shares that his first love was basketball. He began playing in middle school and went on to attend Toledo University on a basketball scholarship. After graduating and returning to Brooklyn to work as a teacher at Junior High School 35, which he had attended, he played in a community league called the St. John's Flashers.

10

Document

Oral History Interview with Albert Vann, 2008

THINK ABOUT IT

- According to Albert Vann, why was sports an important part of his life?

WRITE IT

- What does Vann mean when he says that there is “a camaraderie between guys who played ball through the years”? Explain in your own words.

11

Document

A Court Ruled by Women

With Netball, Immigrants from Caribbean Turn a Derelict Brooklyn Park into a Haven

Just a few years ago, Lincoln Terrace Park, a green expanse on the edge of Crown Heights, was overrun with weeds.

But these days, the 18-acre park is crowded on summer weekends as thousands of people flock there to watch their favorite players pass, shoot, and score.

They are not gathering to watch basketball, though, or even soccer. The lure is netball, a game similar to basketball that is played almost exclusively by women. The sport is unknown to most New Yorkers, but is extremely popular in the West Indies.

“Netball brings people together,” said Patricia Gray, president of the United States Netball Association, which was formed about six years ago. “These are folks who want to keep their culture strong.”

The emergence of netball is another small sign of the wave of diversity—propelled by the arrival of more than one million immigrants in the last two decades—that has transformed the city’s landscape, even down to the games New Yorkers play. Immigrant soccer leagues thrive throughout the city, Korean volleyball teams play in Flushing Meadows, Queens, and Pakistani cricketers compete in Marine Park, Brooklyn.

The New York Times, August 3, 1998



11

Document

A Court Ruled by Women

THINK ABOUT IT

- According to this article, why has netball become popular in Brooklyn? Explain.
- How do sports help immigrants keep their culture strong?

WRITE IT

- According to Patricia Gray, who is quoted in paragraph 4, “Netball brings people together.”

Explain what she means.

- This article describes a sport that many New Yorkers may not be familiar with.

Imagine you are a journalist and just moved to a country where nobody has heard of your favorite sport. Write an article describing the sport and explaining how it is played and what makes it so much fun.