

# BATS, BALLS, NETS+ HOOPS



STORIES OF SPORTS  
IN BROOKLYN



BROOKLYN  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY





*Dodgers Fans, Opening Game of the World Series, Collection of the Brooklyn Public Library–Brooklyn Collection. Call #: DODG 0002, Negative #: 1998-159.*



## About Brooklyn Historical Society

Brooklyn Historical Society connects the past to the present and makes the vibrant history of Brooklyn tangible, relevant, and meaningful for today's diverse communities and for generations to come.

Founded in 1863, Brooklyn Historical Society is a nationally recognized urban history center dedicated to preserving and encouraging the study of Brooklyn's extraordinary 400-year history. Located in Brooklyn Heights and housed in a magnificent landmark building designed by George Post and opened in 1881, today's BHS is a cultural hub for civic dialogue, thoughtful engagement, and community outreach.

*ON THE COVER: Background photo (detail) Brooklyn Bridegrooms base ball team 1889, courtesy of Library of Congress; Mary DeSaussure Sobers, ca. 1940; Jackie Robinson, 1954; Albert King, ca. 1980.*

*Bats, Balls, Nets & Hoops: Stories of Sports in Brooklyn* was created by the Education Department of Brooklyn Historical Society:

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# Dear Teacher,

*Bats, Balls, Nets & Hoops: Stories of Sports in Brooklyn* is the latest in a series of educational curriculum kits from Brooklyn Historical Society (BHS). Organized around four **Case Studies**, the kit includes:

- **Primary and secondary materials from BHS collections** and other archives, including photographs, newspaper and magazine articles, and oral history transcripts and audio.
- **An Oral History CD** to allow students to hear firsthand from people who are a part of Brooklyn's unique history.
- **A Demonstration Folder** that enables you to practice with students before they work on their own with primary and secondary materials contained in the four Case Study Folders.
- **Critical-thinking questions (Think About It) and structured writing exercises (Write It)** to help students observe, question, analyze, and interpret the material.
- **This Teacher's Guide**, with lesson plans, historical background information, time lines, teaching ideas, guiding questions, extension activities, and reproducible activity sheets.

Like all BHS curriculum kits, *Bats, Balls, Nets & Hoops* is designed with a dual purpose: to help students understand the ways in which local people, places, and events connect to national history and to their own lives, and to engage them in a fun, thought-provoking exploration of key themes in social studies, including history, economics, government, and civics. Other topics that emerge naturally from this curriculum are urbanization, immigration, civil rights, gender equality, health and nutrition, sports marketing, and character development.

We hope that you and your students enjoy using the material in this curriculum kit, and we hope to see you soon at the Brooklyn Historical Society.

Sincerely,



Andrea Del Valle  
Director of Education

## Connections to Standards



Designed for students in grades 4 through 12, *Bats, Balls, Nets & Hoops: Stories of Sports in Brooklyn* addresses New York State Social Studies Common Core Curriculum: English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. It also covers several thematic strands identified by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), including Culture; Individual Development & Identity; Individuals, Groups & Institutions; and Time, Continuity & Change. To support students in meeting the expectations of Common Core State Standards (CCSS), each section contains several opportunities for students to write thoughtful responses to short nonfiction texts. Additionally, suggestions for Performance Tasks that build on preliminary writing provide a scaffolded structure for students to succeed in completing a CCSS-assessable task.

*Ralph Rose, hammer-throwing, Y.M.C.A., Brooklyn, 1908. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.*



## WHY STUDY SPORTS?

Sports are a fundamental part of the human experience. The urge to play, organize, make rules, compete, and push the limits of the mind and body are age-old, which makes the study of sports a compelling way to engage young people in the study of history. Indeed, the primary sources included in the *Bats, Balls, Nets & Hoops* curriculum provide a fascinating window through which to view New York City and U.S. history.

## THE CURRICULUM AND CASE STUDIES

The curriculum is made up of four Case Studies. The first is an exploration of **Prospect Park**, which allows students to view this vast urban oasis in new and different ways, to imagine Brooklyn before the park was created, and to learn about the public parks movement that stirred Prospect Park's development. Using the documents in the kit, students will be able to picture the people who came before them and to examine change over time as it relates to how the space was used, by whom, and for what purpose. Students, who may have visited Prospect Park for weekend soccer games and Little League practice or to fly kites and toss Frisbees, will be surprised to see photographs of the park's great lawn lined with tennis nets and dotted with the genteel nineteenth-century athletes in their elaborate clothing.

The second Case Study focuses on baseball legend **Jackie Robinson**. Students unfamiliar with Robinson will learn about his struggles against racism and his impressive sports career as the first African American athlete to play major-league baseball in the twentieth century. Of course, no study of Robinson would be complete without a look at the development of Negro League baseball and Brooklyn's earliest baseball teams and playing fields. These fascinating pieces of history are included as well.

**Mary DeSaussure Sobers** is the subject of the third Case Study. Sobers, who was raised in Bedford-Stuyvesant, is an everyday citizen of Brooklyn with a special story to tell. As a child, she became one of the first African American girls to run track with the Police Athletic League (PAL). Later, she helped found Brooklyn's first all-black, all-female track team, competed for a place on the U.S. Olympic team, and eventually went on to establish the Queens Trail Blazers, a track club for girls, in the 1970s. Sobers's role in advancing girls' and women's roles in athletics in Brooklyn is a powerful one and one that is sure to inspire many students.

Finally, the fourth Case Study is all about **basketball**, from the introduction of the sport in Brooklyn in the late 1800s—with games at local YMCA chapters and at Pratt Institute, in Clinton Hill—to the twenty-first-century effort to bring an NBA team to the borough. This Case Study also looks at the role of women in the sport, and the game of netball, which is played in Brooklyn's Caribbean communities.



At BHS, our goal with each curriculum kit is to help students  
**Learn** to think and work like historians.  
**Explore** the rich history of Brooklyn.  
**Connect** to their community's past, and envision their place in its future.

Jackie Robinson comic book cover, ca. 1951, Collection of Dan Schnur.

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*Clockwise, from top left: Steve Evans, Brooklyn Federal League baseball player, 1915, Library of Congress (LOC), LOT 11147-1; Albert King playing basketball for the New Jersey Nets ca. 1985, courtesy of Albert King; Miss E. Pickhardt swinging golf club, ca. 1910, LOC, LOT 11146-16; Irving Brokaw ice skating, ca. 1910, LOC, LOT 11146-16*

## Tell Us What You Think!

Please visit the BHS website at [brooklynhistory.org/education/feedback.html](http://brooklynhistory.org/education/feedback.html) to complete a feedback form. Your responses will help to shape how we develop the use of our curriculum materials.

# Introduction

*Bats, Balls, Nets & Hoops* is easy to teach. Use the lesson plans included in this **Teacher's Guide**, along with the documents in the Demonstration Folder, to introduce students to the study of sports in Brooklyn. Then break the class into four teams and give each group one of the four Case Study Folders to study collaboratively. As students research and explore the material, they will become the “experts” on their subject and how it connects to national history. To demonstrate their understanding, students will use their prior knowledge of American history and new information gleaned from each Case Study to create a presentation, write an essay in response to a guiding question, or both. All of this can be accomplished in six class sessions:

## Warm-Up Activities

Lesson 1: Sports 101  
Lesson 2: Straight to the Source  
Lesson 3: On the Case

## Research and Presentations

Lesson 4: Digging In  
Lesson 5: Learning to Present  
Lesson 6: Putting It All Together

Can't fit the curriculum into the six-day plan? This versatile program can easily be adapted to your schedule and your needs. Introduce the study of sports in Brooklyn by using the suggested lesson plans. Then, instead of exploring the complete set of Case Studies, photocopy materials from a selected Case Study to use for whole-class or small-group guided instruction. It's a great way to get students acquainted with primary source materials and to help prepare them for the critical-thinking and document-based questions in the Case Studies section of this guide.



Look for this Common Core symbol for writing activities that will challenge your students to respond to nonfiction texts with structured writing activities. You could also make your class study last longer, with the optional **mini lessons** and **learning extensions** found throughout this Teacher's Guide. **Activity sheets** included in the back of this guide can be photocopied and used for in-class exercises, test practice, or homework.

## EXTEND LEARNING

*Bats, Balls, Nets & Hoops* presents countless teaching opportunities. Here are some project ideas for students:

- Sort and categorize primary source materials by type (letter, newspaper article, photograph, oral history interview, etc.).
- Create a mock TV news broadcast based on a newspaper article.
- Make a museum exhibit with materials from the kit.
- Document Brooklyn history by starting a collection of sports-related primary source materials.
- Examine sports websites, magazines, or newspapers and share with the class one sports story that they find.

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### Teaching Tip

Be sure to read through all of the material in the Teacher's Guide before distributing the materials to students. Background information, time lines, teaching extensions, and other tips and suggested activities included in the guide will give you the tools you need to effectively teach this exciting curriculum.

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**Please Note:** Some source material has been edited due to space constraints.

# Lesson Plans

## Warm-Up Activities

Use these lessons to build background before students work independently with the Case Studies.

## Lesson 1: Sports 101

**Time Required:** 50 minutes

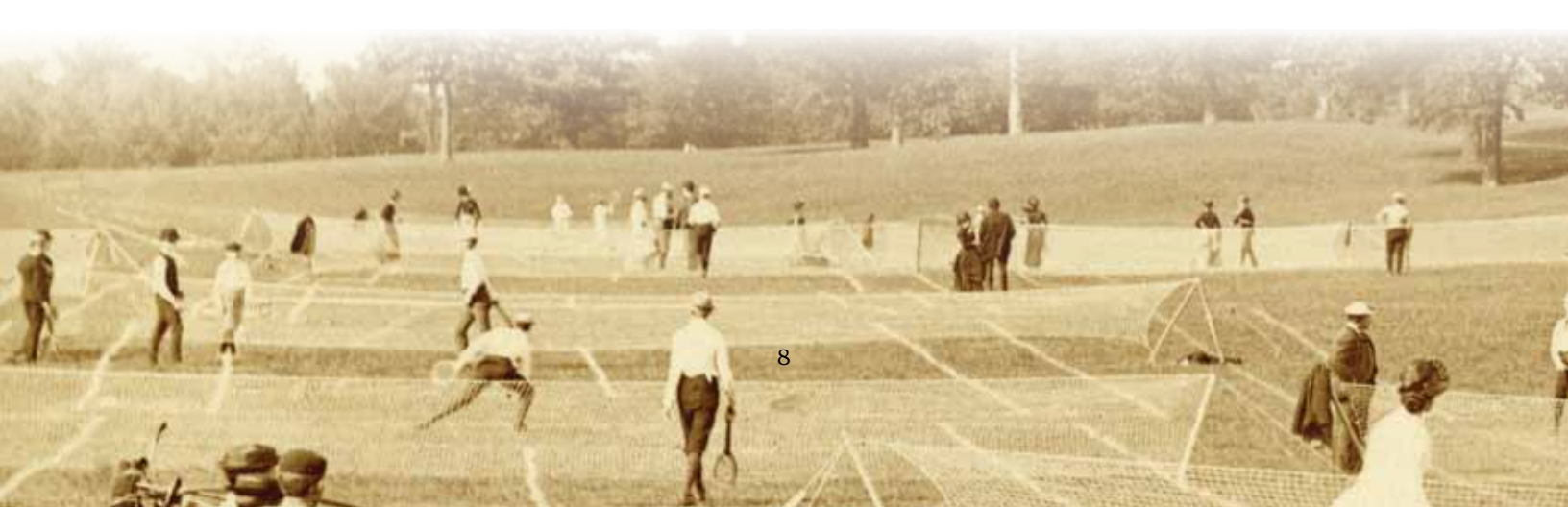
**Learning Objective:** Start a discussion about the fundamentals of sports.

**Materials:** Chart paper, markers. Optional: The Oral History CD, a CD player or computer

**Preparation:** None

1. Have students brainstorm a list of sports. Keep it open to anything. Encourage students to think far and wide. Record their responses on chart paper or on the board. (5 minutes)
2. Next, ask a series of questions to help students begin to think critically about sports fundamentals. Use a graphic organizer, such as a cluster chart, with the word “sports“ written and circled in the center, to record their responses on the board. (20 minutes)
  - Why do people play sports?
  - Do you need any special equipment to play sports? Like what?
  - Where do people play? Do you need to have a special place to play? Explain, and give some examples.
  - Do all sports have teams, or can individuals compete? Give examples for both.
  - Do all sports have professional leagues or associations?
  - What sports do you see on television? What sports don't you see on television?
  - All sports have rules. Why is that? What can happen if you don't follow the rules?
  - What can you learn by playing sports or being on a team?
  - What might be some benefits of playing sports?
3. Have students draw pictures that show their idea of what athletes look like. Have them share their work with the class. Discuss the images that emerge. Be prepared to address physical or racial stereotypes and gender bias (e.g., athletes must be tall or most athletes are boys). (10-15 minutes)
4. Wrap up the lesson. Ask: What, if anything, do all sports have in common? Add responses to the graphic organizer. (5 minutes)

**Extend Learning:** Play and discuss the Oral History Interview with Albert Vann (Track 7 from the Oral History CD). Ask: What does he mean when he talks about the camaraderie of sports? (5-10 minutes)



## MINI LESSON: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

How do historians know what happened in the past? They use direct evidence of eyewitness accounts of past events—primary sources—including newspaper articles, photographs, drawings, diaries, and interviews. With the **Oral History CD**, students can listen closely to first-person accounts of the past and learn about changes in their community and how these milestones played a role in national events. Use this mini lesson to begin your study of oral histories.

**Time Required:** 20 minutes

**Learning Objective:** Give students experience with oral histories.

**Materials:** Document 5 from the Demonstration Folder, the Oral History CD, a CD player or computer

**Preparation:** Photocopy Document 5 from the Demonstration Folder.

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### Teaching Tip

Usually it is better to listen to oral history recordings before reading the transcript, but for this activity, try reading the transcript first. Discuss how oral histories are different from written sources. Oral histories include people's memories as well as their reflections on those memories and jump forward and backward in time, so students should be prepared to be very careful listeners.

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1. Ask: Has anyone ever heard the term *oral history*? What does it mean?

Explain to students that oral history is a historical method that uses recorded interviews to preserve firsthand memories, accounts, and interpretations of a person's life, an event, a place, a way of life, or a time period.

2. Distribute Document 5 from the Demonstration Folder. Give students a few minutes to read it, then have them answer the following questions:

- Who was George "Shotgun" Shuba?
- Who was Jackie Robinson?
- What was the relationship between Shuba and Robinson?
- What was Shuba's attitude toward Robinson? Did everyone feel the same way about Robinson as Shuba did? Explain.

3. Next, play for students the interview with Shuba (Oral History CD, Track 1), then ask:

- How is listening to the CD of the interview different than reading the transcript, or the written interview?
- What types of questions does the interviewer ask Shuba? Which questions are open-ended, or cannot be answered with a yes or no?
- Which questions are follow-up questions, intended to get a richer, more in-depth picture of the subject matter?
- What kinds of questions get the most interesting responses? Why?



*Lawn Tennis at Prospect Park, ca. 1915, v1973-5-1721,  
Brooklyn Historical Society.*

## Lesson 2: Straight to the Source

**Time Required:** 45 minutes

**Learning Objective:** Students will learn to identify and work with primary source materials.

**Materials:** Document 1 (“Brooklyn Athletics”) and Document 2 (*Tennis Players in Prospect Park*) from the Demonstration Folder; “Learning to Look” worksheet from page 41 of the Teacher’s Guide.

**Preparation:** Photocopy Documents 1 and 2 from the Demonstration Folder (half the class gets copies of Document 1, half gets Document 2), and the “Learning to Look” worksheet (one per student). Or display the documents on a projector.

1. Present students with this scenario: Imagine that twenty years from now a famous author wants to write a biography about you. How will the author learn all there is to know about your life? What sources will the author use to write her book? Have students brainstorm a list of sources that the author might use. (Possible answers include journal entries, letters, e-mail messages, personal blogs, social media posts, family photos, school photos, report cards, a birth certificate, and interviews with me, my friends, my family members, and other people I know.) (5 minutes)
2. Review the list. Point out that primary sources are firsthand sources. Tell students: The book the author is working on is a secondary source. She will use primary source material to learn about your life, but the book will be her interpretation. If you wrote the book, it would be an autobiography, and therefore a primary source, since it would be from your perspective. (5 minutes)
3. Tell students that you are going to share with them two primary source materials. Half of the class will get one document. Half of the class will get the other. Students will also receive a worksheet to complete. Pass out the materials and give students time to study them and complete the “Learning to Look” worksheet. (10 minutes)
4. Review students’ completed work. Ask them the following questions. (20 minutes)
  - What kind of primary source materials are these? (*newspaper article or photograph*)

**Newspaper Article:**

  - What is the article about?
  - When was it published?
  - In what newspaper did the article appear?
  - What is the purpose of the article?
  - Who do you think might be interested in the article?

**Photograph:**

  - Is this a recent photograph, or was it taken a long time ago?
  - How can you tell?
  - What do you see in the photograph?
  - What does the photograph tell you about life in Brooklyn at the time it was taken?
  - How might the photograph look different if it were taken today?
5. Explain to students that historians use materials like these to learn about what life was like for people in the past. Tell them they will soon be examining more materials to learn about sports in Brooklyn. (5 minutes)

**Extend Learning:** For homework, have students bring in at least one primary source for the imaginary author to help her learn more about them. Have students exchange and explore source materials in class and explain what the author might learn by studying these materials.

## Lesson 3: On the Case

**Time Required:** 45 minutes

**Learning Objective:** Students will learn how to work with the materials in each Case Study and how to present information to their classmates.

**Materials:** Document 3 Police Athletic League (PAL) Girls Track Team, ca. 1948 and Document 4 (“On Basket Ball Courts: Great Activity Wherever the Game Is Played”) from the Demonstration Folder.

**Preparation:** Photocopy Documents 3 and 4 from the Demonstration Folder.

1. Explain to students that in the future they will be working on their own the same way they have been working together in the Demonstration Folder. When they work on their own, each Case Study includes several types of primary source materials, including photographs, newspaper articles, and oral history interviews. In small groups, they will be responsible for studying the materials. **Think About It** questions and/or **Write It** activities are included with each Case Study to help students stay focused and explore the material in depth. (5 minutes)
2. Focus on Document 3. Give students time to study the image, then ask them to describe what they see. (10 minutes)
3. Pass out photocopies of Document 4. Ask students to read the newspaper article and report the *who, what, where, when, why, and how* of the article. (15 minutes)
4. Draw students' attention to the Think About It questions that come with the article. Use these questions to start a discussion. (15 minutes)

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### MINI LESSON: NAME THAT SOURCE

**Time Required:** 20 minutes

**Learning Objective:** Students will learn to distinguish between primary and secondary source materials.

1. Tell students that they are going to play a game called Name That Source. Explain that you will give examples and they will decide which one is the primary source.
2. For each set, ask: Which is the primary source?
 

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. A handwritten letter from George Washington</li> <li>B. A biography of Washington published this year (Answer: A)</li> <li>A. A movie about the life of Helen Keller</li> <li>B. A photograph of Helen Keller and her teacher (Answer: B)</li> <li>A. The Gettysburg Address, a speech given by Abraham Lincoln in 1863</li> <li>B. An encyclopedia entry about Lincoln (Answer: A)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SUGGESTED READING:</b> A</li> <li>• <i>People's History of Sports in</i></li> <li>• <i>the United States: 250 Years of</i></li> <li>• <i>Politics, Protest, People, and Play</i></li> <li>• By Dave Zirin (New Press,</li> <li>• 2008) A thought-provoking</li> <li>• look at American sports and</li> <li>• sports culture with a preface by</li> <li>• historian Howard Zinn.</li> </ul>
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3. Encourage students to come up with their own questions for Name That Source.
4. Reinforce the lesson by having students complete the “Name That Source” worksheet on page 42 of this guide. They can also complete it for homework.

**Extend Learning:** Tell students to make two-sided cards with “A” on one side and “B” on the other. As you read the examples aloud, have students raise the cards to show which document, A or B, is a primary source.

Encourage students to brainstorm their own list of primary and secondary sources.

## Research and Presentations

### Lesson 4: Digging In

**Time Required:** 45 minutes

**Learning Objective:** Students will work collaboratively in a small-group research session to explore the Case Studies included in the curriculum kit; they will take notes and organize material.

**Materials:** Case Study Folders, chart paper, markers, pencils, blank sheets of notebook paper, “Putting It All Together” graphic organizer on page 43 of this guide

**Preparation:** Photocopy the “Putting It All Together” graphic organizer (one for each group). Divide the class into four small groups. Within each group, designate one student as the **Organizer** and another as the **Record Keeper**. Tell students that they will be working in small groups. Everyone in the group has an important role to play in completing the assignment. Two people in the group will be assigned special jobs to help the group. The Organizer will pass out and collect materials, and the Record Keeper will write the group’s observations on chart paper.

1. Explain that each group will receive a Case Study Folder. Each folder is a study of a person, place, or sport in Brooklyn and includes up to 12 documents that students will share. Each document comes with questions and activities to help students focus their observations. Students will use a blank piece of paper to take notes about these documents and answer the questions posed. Tell students that after they’ve had some time to work, you will pass out a graphic organizer for each of them to complete. (5 minutes)
2. Assign students to their groups and pass out the Case Study Folders to the group Organizers. Tell students that they will have about 15 minutes to explore the documents. In a class of 20 to 30, the four groups will each contain 5 to 8 students. You may advise students to each look closely at two or three documents and then they can then “present” to their group mates to bring the whole group up to speed. As students work, move about the room to monitor their progress and to keep them on task. (15 minutes)
3. While students are still in their groups, take a brief pause to deliver the next set of instructions. Tell students that you will now pass out graphic organizers and that they will have 10 minutes to complete them individually. Explain that you will also give each group’s Record Keeper a marker and a sheet of chart paper. The Record Keeper should copy the blank graphic organizer onto the chart paper, changing each *I* to *we*. For example, “I wondered” and “I was surprised by” will change to “We wondered” and “We were surprised by.” Pass out the materials and have students get started. (15 minutes)
4. Next, tell students that it is time to stop and move on to the next part of the assignment, which is to fill out the group graphic organizer “Putting It All Together” with the information and questions that they feel are most important for others to know. Students will use what they’ve written on their individual graphic organizers to help accomplish this task as a group, and the group’s Record Keeper will record their responses on the chart. In the following lessons, students will use this graphic organizer to make final presentations to the class. (10 minutes)



*Biller, at high-jump, Y.M.C.A. Brooklyn ca. 1908, Courtesy of the Library of Congress*

## Lesson 5: Learning to Present

**Time Required:** 45 minutes

**Learning Objective:** Students develop a presentation that teaches the class about the person, place, or sport they studied in their Case Study Folders.

**Materials:** Chart paper, markers, paper clips, completed “Putting It All Together” group graphic organizers

**Preparation:** Complete Lesson 4

1. Start a discussion: What makes a good group presentation? (Answers may include: The presenter engages the audience with pictures, charts, and interesting information; the presenter speaks clearly and looks at the audience; the presenter answers audience questions and provides additional information when asked.) What do you find interesting when a person presents information to you? What could you do in your presentation to make it interesting for the class? Record responses on chart paper. (20 minutes)
2. Have students return to their research groups to plan their presentations. The requirements are that (a) students present the information collected on their group graphic organizer and (b) students select four or five documents from their Case Studies to share with the class. (Documents should be saved for later use by paper-clipping them together and placing them in the Case Study Folder.) Students should decide how they will do the presentation, including (a) who will be responsible for sharing the information in each section of the graphic organizer, and (b) who will present and talk about each of the selected documents. (25 minutes)

## Lesson 6: Putting It All Together

**Time Required:** 45 minutes (about 10 minutes per group)

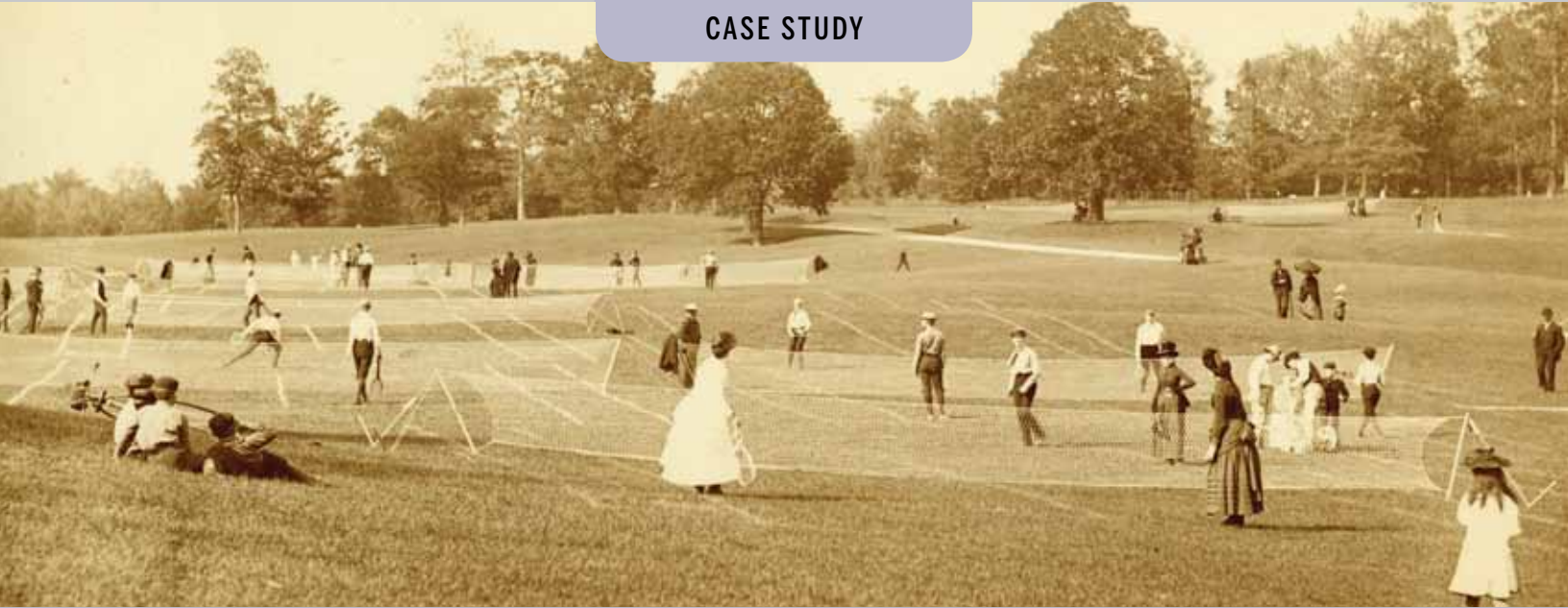
**Learning Objective:** Students will work collaboratively in groups to make a final presentation; they will gain experience organizing their thoughts, speaking before an audience, and developing listening skills.

**Materials:** Chart paper, markers, completed “Putting It All Together” group graphic organizers, selected documents from the Case Study Folders

**Preparation:** Complete Lessons 4 and 5

1. Explain to students that they will now present their Case Study to the class. Students should stand before the class alongside their group’s graphic organizer. The Organizer will tell the class the name of the person, place, or sport his or her group studied. Students will take turns telling the group about each part of the graphic organizer. Here is the suggested order of presentation. (6 minutes)
  - This topic is important because . . .
  - Five important facts about this topic are . . .
  - We wondered . . .
  - We were surprised that . . .
2. Students share with the class their selected documents and explain why they chose these documents. (2 minutes)
3. Finally, give the class time to ask the group questions. Share any relevant or interesting information about the group’s topic from the Teacher’s Guide. (2 minutes)

## CASE STUDY



*Lawn Tennis at Prospect Park, ca. 1915; v1973.5.1721, Brooklyn Historical Society.*

Case Study 1  
**PROSPECT PARK:**  
 A PLACE TO PLAY

**Curriculum Topics**

IMMIGRATION

NEW YORK CITY HISTORY

URBANIZATION

## Historical Background

The Lenape Indians were the first people to live on the land we now know as Brooklyn. European settlers arrived in the early 1600s. They lived amongst the native people, establishing farms worked by indentured servants and enslaved African people. By 1636, much of the land in Brooklyn was controlled by European settlers.

Ten years later, the **Town of Breuckelen** was chartered by the Dutch in the area known today as Brooklyn Heights. By the early 1660s, the area that is now the borough was made up of six townships (Brooklyn, Bushwick, Flatbush, Flatlands, Gravesend, and New Utrecht). The area was—and is—geographically a part of Long Island. (In fact, the Brooklyn Historical Society, which was founded in 1863, was originally called the Long Island Historical Society.)

Breuckelen’s population grew steadily over time. **The City of Brooklyn** was chartered in 1834, and by 1868 it was the country’s **third most populous city**. Waves of European **immigrants** had settled in Brooklyn, and rapid industrial growth and urbanization encroached on farmland and other open spaces. As their Manhattan counterparts had done with the creation of Central Park, Brooklyn business and civic leaders wanted to carve out their own urban oasis.

A park “would become a favorite resort for all classes of our community, enabling thousands to enjoy pure air, with healthful exercise, at all seasons of the year,” said local businessman James Stranahan. A park would not only enhance people’s well-being, but it would also pad the city’s pocketbook, attracting wealthier residents to Brooklyn with its

beauty. In 1861, landscape architects Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, the same team behind Central Park, submitted plans for **Prospect Park**. But construction was delayed for five years, due to the start of the Civil War. When Prospect Park opened to the public in 1867, it quickly became known as “Brooklyn’s Jewel,” and along with Central Park, piqued nationwide interest in the role of public parks in America’s urban centers. Today, this 585-acre gem, with its rolling fields, meandering streams, tranquil lake, and lush woodlands, is visited by more than 8 million people a year.

### TEACHING IDEAS

- Have students find Prospect Park on a map of Brooklyn. Ask them to identify the surrounding neighborhood and where your school is in relation to the park.
- Tell students to close their eyes and visualize Prospect Park or another park that they have been to. Ask: What are you doing at the park? Are you on the playground? Are you hanging out with your friends? Then tell students to imagine that people at the park are playing sports and being active. Ask students to share examples of what they imagine people doing. Record responses on chart paper. Possible answers include jogging, swimming, ice skating, horseback riding, or riding bicycles; or playing soccer, basketball, Frisbee, or cricket.
- Build anticipation by having students share experiences in Prospect Park or another public park. Encourage them to think about what the park looks like, what it feels like to be there, who uses the park, and what activities people participate in there.

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### *Fast Fact*

Many **baseball professionals** got their start at the Prospect Park Parade Grounds. Brooklyn Dodgers pitcher **Sandy Koufax** and former New York Yankee manager **Joe Torre** are among the greats.

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### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How does Prospect Park benefit the people of Brooklyn?
- Why do we have parks? What purposes do they serve?
- How would life in New York City be different without public parks?
- How are parks maintained? Who cleans or takes care of parks?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Research and investigate a local park. You might try visiting the website [nycgovparks.org](http://nycgovparks.org). Focus first on the history of the park (When did it open? Who or what is the park named after?). Then take a field trip. Challenge students to observe the condition of park facilities and to take note of how people use the park to keep healthy and fit.
- Take digital photos of the park and create a class website to share information.
- Design a park of the future for Brooklyn. Begin by brainstorming: Why do people go to parks? What do people do at parks? What should a city park look like? How should it make people feel?

### Resources

#### **brooklynhistory.org**

From the navigation bar on the left, go to Library & Collections and select Search the Collection from the drop-down menu. Scroll down to the Prospect Park Collection and click the link to view selected images from the Brooklyn Historical Society.

#### **Civilizing American Cities: Writings on City Landscapes**

By Frederick Law Olmsted; edited by S.B. Sutton (Da Capo Press, 1997)

A collection of essays by Olmsted, including his plans for both Central Park and Prospect Park.

#### **Park Slope Neighborhood & Architectural History Guide**

By Francis Morrone (Brooklyn Historical Society, 2008)

Pages 13 to 26 of this guide explore the history and architecture of Prospect Park.

#### **ppba.info**

The Prospect Park Baseball Association is one of the country’s largest coed baseball and girls softball leagues.

#### **prospectpark.org**

Click About on the navigation bar, then select Park History on the left to learn more about Prospect Park.

Case Study 1  
DOCUMENTS

**DOCUMENT 1**

Report of the Commissioners for Laying Out a Park in Brooklyn, New York, 1866 (newspaper article)

**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.

**DOCUMENT 2**

Brooklyn Athletics, 1885 (newspaper article)

**Think About It**

- Based on this article, what sport do you think 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.

**DOCUMENT 3**

Lawn Tennis at Prospect Park, ca. 1915 (photograph)

**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.

**DOCUMENT 4**

Tennis Players in Prospect Park, ca. 1880 (photograph)

**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.

**DOCUMENT 5**

Historic Map of Prospect Park, 1865 (map)

**Think About It**

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



*Dr. Wade and His Cousin Dr. L. N. Anderson in Prospect Park, ca. 1880; v1974.11.12, Brooklyn Historical Society.*

#### Write It

- Look carefully at the map. Who is most likely to use this map?

#### DOCUMENT 6

##### Runners' Map of Prospect Park, ca. 2010 (map)

#### 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. List two reasons why people might use this map.
- What does this map tell you about how people use the park?

#### DOCUMENT 7

##### Park Rules for Cyclists, 1895 (newspaper article)

#### 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.

Case Study 1  
DOCUMENTS

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**DOCUMENT 8****Prospect Park Recreation, 2009 (photograph)****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.

**DOCUMENT 9****Cycling at Grand Army Plaza, ca. 1900 (photograph)****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.

**DOCUMENT 10****New York Road Runners Brooklyn Half-Marathon Map, 2011 (map)****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 examples. Explain their reasons for using the map.

**DOCUMENT 11****Giving a Nod to Diversity, One Ethnic Sport at a Time, 2003 (newspaper article)****Think About It**

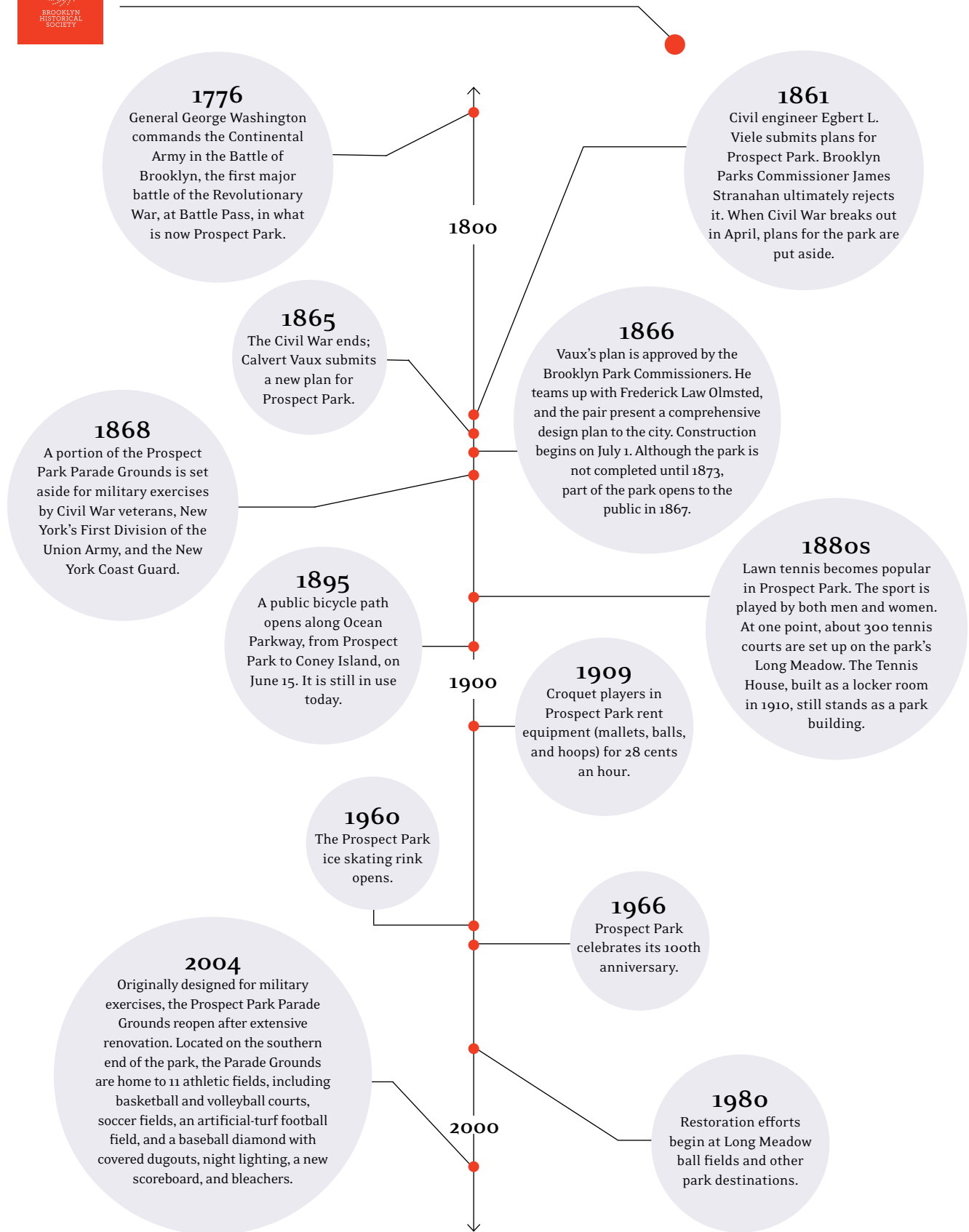
- What is netball?
- What does Adrian Benepe mean when he says he wants to turn the Prospect Park Parade Grounds into a “sports mecca”?

**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. Explain how it is played and what makes it so much fun.



## Prospect Park Time Line



## CASE STUDY



Jackie Robinson, in Brooklyn Dodgers Uniform, 1954; Look Magazine Photographs Collection Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-L9-54-3566.

Case Study 2  
**CROSSING THE COLOR LINE:**  
 JACKIE ROBINSON JOINS  
 THE DODGERS

**Curriculum Topics**

BLACK HISTORY  
 CIVIL RIGHTS

## Historical Background

Baseball has long been popular in Brooklyn. One of its first teams, the **Excelsiors**, was founded in 1854. They played at the Excelsior Grounds, near present-day Carroll Park, in Carroll Gardens. Other teams soon formed, including the **Atlantics**, who were hugely popular with Brooklyn’s Irish-American community. The **Eckfords**, founded by Greenpoint shipyard workers, were baseball’s national champions in 1862 and 1863. The team currently known as the Los Angeles Dodgers was formed in Brooklyn in 1883, and was known as the **Grays**, the **Grooms**, the **Bridegrooms**, the **Superbas**, and the **Robins**, before being officially named the **Brooklyn Dodgers** in 1932.

In 1920, Andrew “Rube” Foster organized the **Negro National League**, in Kansas City, Missouri. Eventually, other leagues were formed for African American players, including the **Negro American League** and the **Eastern Colored League**, of which the **Brooklyn Royal Giants** was a part. Negro league teams usually played before or after white teams, often in twilight or night games. The leagues produced many baseball legends, including Satchel Paige and Josh Gibson, who was nicknamed “the black Babe Ruth.”

Meanwhile, echoing the desires of many baseball executives and league officials, Brooklyn Dodgers manager **Branch Rickey** was looking for ways to expand the game into new markets and to attract fans to the stadiums. One way to do that was to integrate baseball with African American players. (Talented Latino players had been involved with baseball since the mid-nineteenth century.) **Jackie Robinson**, of the Negro National League’s **Kansas City Monarchs**, was an exciting prospect for Rickey, and on **August 28, 1945**, in an office on Montague Street, in downtown Brooklyn, Rickey

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### Teaching Tip

Explain to students that the terms negro and colored were commonly used as descriptive rather than offensive terms in the first half of the twentieth century in such institutions as The New York Times and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). However, they do signify a highly segregated era in U.S. history.

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signed Robinson to the Dodgers organization. Robinson played first for Rickey's minor-league Montreal Royals and on April 15, 1947, he made his debut as a Brooklyn Dodger at Ebbets Field.

Many Americans praised Rickey and Robinson for breaking baseball's color line. But some fans and players were not ready to integrate. On-field and off, Robinson endured taunts, racial slurs, and, sometimes, threats. Through it all, he stayed strong and played hard. He opened the door for African American players such as Roy Campanella and Don Newcombe to join the big leagues. Many of the best players left the Negro Leagues in the years that followed. By 1949, the Negro National League had closed. The Negro American League closed in 1962.

#### TEACHING IDEAS

- Tell students that the title of this Case Study is "Crossing the Color Line: Jackie Robinson Joins the Dodgers." Ask: What is the "color line"? What does it mean to cross this line? Have students make predictions about what they'll learn in this Case Study based on its title. Point out to older students that the color line was not a static object, but was a barrier to equality that was constantly shifting and changing. In baseball, African Americans were discriminated against, but Latinos were used to test the limits of racial tolerance and the so-called color line.
- Start a discussion about the economics of sports. Tell students that Dodgers manager Branch Rickey wanted to recruit black players to major-league baseball. At the same time, he wanted the Dodgers to be financially successful. Ask: What effect, positive or negative, do you think Jackie Robinson had on ticket sales? Do you think the Dodgers made money or lost money when Robinson joined the team? Explain.

#### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Why did some people want baseball to remain segregated?
  - How have Brooklyn and the United States changed since Jackie Robinson joined the Dodgers? How has baseball changed? In what ways did Robinson contribute to that change?
  - How has the U.S., and baseball, stayed the same since Jackie Robinson joined the Dodgers?
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### Put It in Perspective

Modern-day Brooklyn is home to a diverse group of people. According to U.S. Census Bureau estimates, the borough's population of 2.5 million is 43.7% white, 34.8% black, 19.7% Latino, and 9.1% Asian. The breakdown wasn't the same during Jackie Robinson's time, however. Here are the statistics.

Census Year	Brooklyn's Total Population	Total African American	% African American
1940	2,698,285	107,263	4.2%
1950	2,738,175	208,478	7.6%
1960	2,627,319	371,405	14.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ([census.gov](http://census.gov)); University of Virginia Library, Historical Census Browser ([mapserver.lib.virginia.edu](http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu))

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Case Study 2  
**CROSSING THE COLOR LINE**  
**JACKIE ROBINSON JOINS**  
**THE DODGERS**

**EXTENSION ACTIVITIES**

- Tell students that some Dodgers fans and players were not ready for an integrated team, and that Robinson had to endure taunts, racial slurs, and sometimes, threats. In spite of this, Robinson remained focused on the game. Based on this information and what they've learned in the Case Study, have students make a list of character traits to describe Jackie Robinson.
- Encourage students to create a drawing or comic strip to share what they learned about Jackie Robinson.
- Have small groups of students stage a talk show, taking on the roles of people responding to news that Robinson has joined the Brooklyn Dodgers. Possible roles include a white baseball player from a rival team, an African American community leader, and a Latino baseball fan.
- Challenge students to write journal entries from the perspective of Jackie Robinson. Possible writing prompts include:
  - You're about to sign a contract with the Brooklyn Dodgers, which will make you the first African American in the twentieth century to play Major League Baseball. What are you thinking? How are you feeling?
  - It is the night before your first game at Ebbets Field. How do you feel?
  - Your first game at Ebbets Field is finally over. You are home with your family. What was the game like? How did it feel to play at Ebbets Field?

**Resources****brooklyncyclones.com**

Minor League Baseball's Brooklyn Cyclones play at MCU Park, in Coney Island. Check the team's website for game dates.

**Jackie Robinson: A Biography**

By Arnold Rampersad  
(Ballantine Books, 1998)

A comprehensive biography for adult readers.

**Jackie Robinson Foundation and Museum**

75 Varick Street  
New York, NY 10013  
jackierobinson.org

A project of the Jackie Robinson Foundation, this state-of-the-art history center will celebrate Robinson's achievements as well as some of the pioneers who helped change the nation.

**memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/robinson**

Part of the American Memory series from the Library of Congress, "Baseball and Jackie Robinson" uses primary source materials to shed light on the history of the sport and Robinson's role as an agent of change.

**nlbm.com**

The online home of the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, in Kansas City, Missouri. On the left, click on Education/Programs, then Education Resource Links to find lesson plans and other useful materials.

**Promises to Keep: How Jackie Robinson Changed America**

By Sharon Robinson  
(Scholastic, 2004)

Written by Robinson's daughter, this engrossing biography for young readers is a blend of family and social history. Primary source documents, including archival and family photographs, newspaper and magazine articles, and personal letters are woven throughout the text. Recommended for readers in grades 6 through 9.

Case Study 2  
DOCUMENTS

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**DOCUMENT 1**

The Brooklyn Bridegrooms, 1889 (photograph)

**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 (photograph)

**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 (photograph)

**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.

**DOCUMENT 4**

Club Heads Give Views, 1945 (newspaper article)

**Think About It**

- According to Clark Griffith, what is one reason the Brooklyn Dodgers should not have signed Jackie Robinson?

**Write It**

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

**DOCUMENT 5**


Race Barriers Down, 1946 (newspaper article)

**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.

Case Study 2  
DOCUMENTS

**DOCUMENT 6****The Brooklyn Dodgers, 1947 and 1955 (photographs)****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. Write three questions that the photographs raise for you.

**DOCUMENT 7****Opening Game of the World Series, 1947 (photograph)****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.

**DOCUMENT 8****Rookie of the Year (part 1), 1947 (magazine article)****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.

**DOCUMENT 9****Rookie of the Year (part 2), 1947 (magazine article)****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.

**DOCUMENT 10****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.

**DOCUMENT 11****Oral History Interview with George "Shotgun" Shuba, 2008 (oral history and photographs)****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.

**DOCUMENT 12****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**

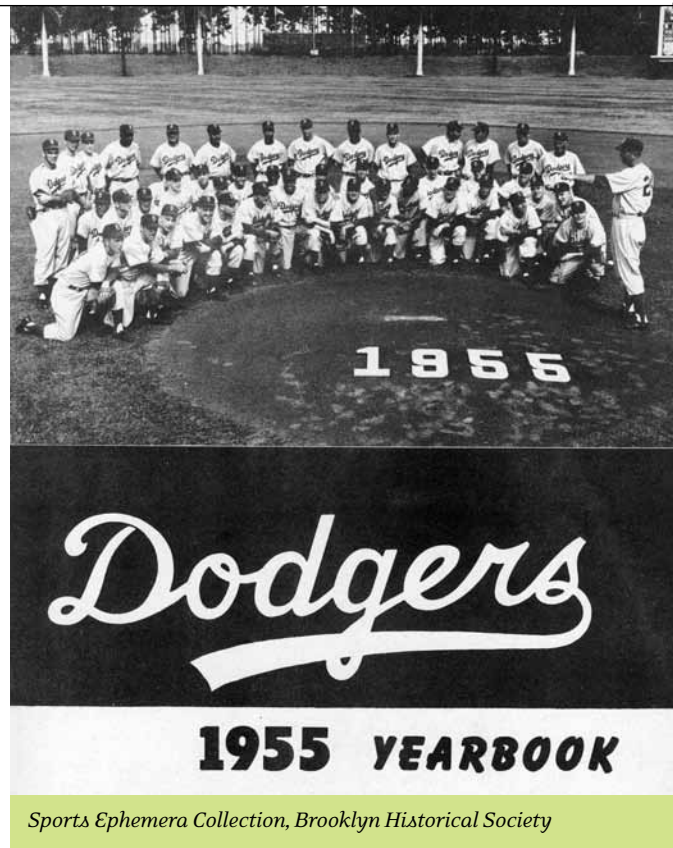
- What do you think Fenichel is referring to when he says, "But of course the things that you heard around you, that you could hear, were terrible. I mean they were really, really pretty awful"?

**DOCUMENT 13****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?

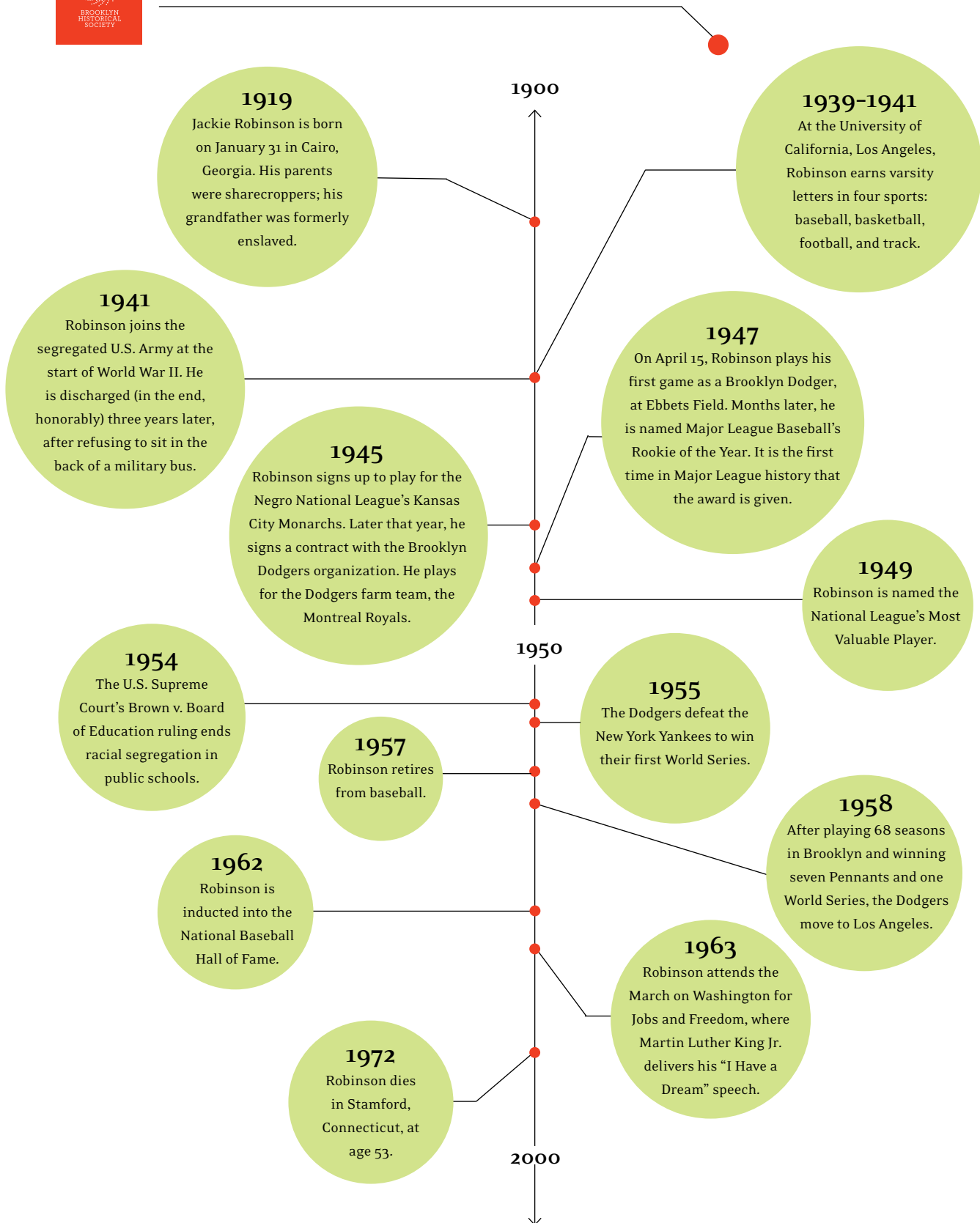
**Write It**

- Pretend you are a newspaper reporter covering Jackie Robinson. Write a one-paragraph article about him based on what you have learned from Horowitz.

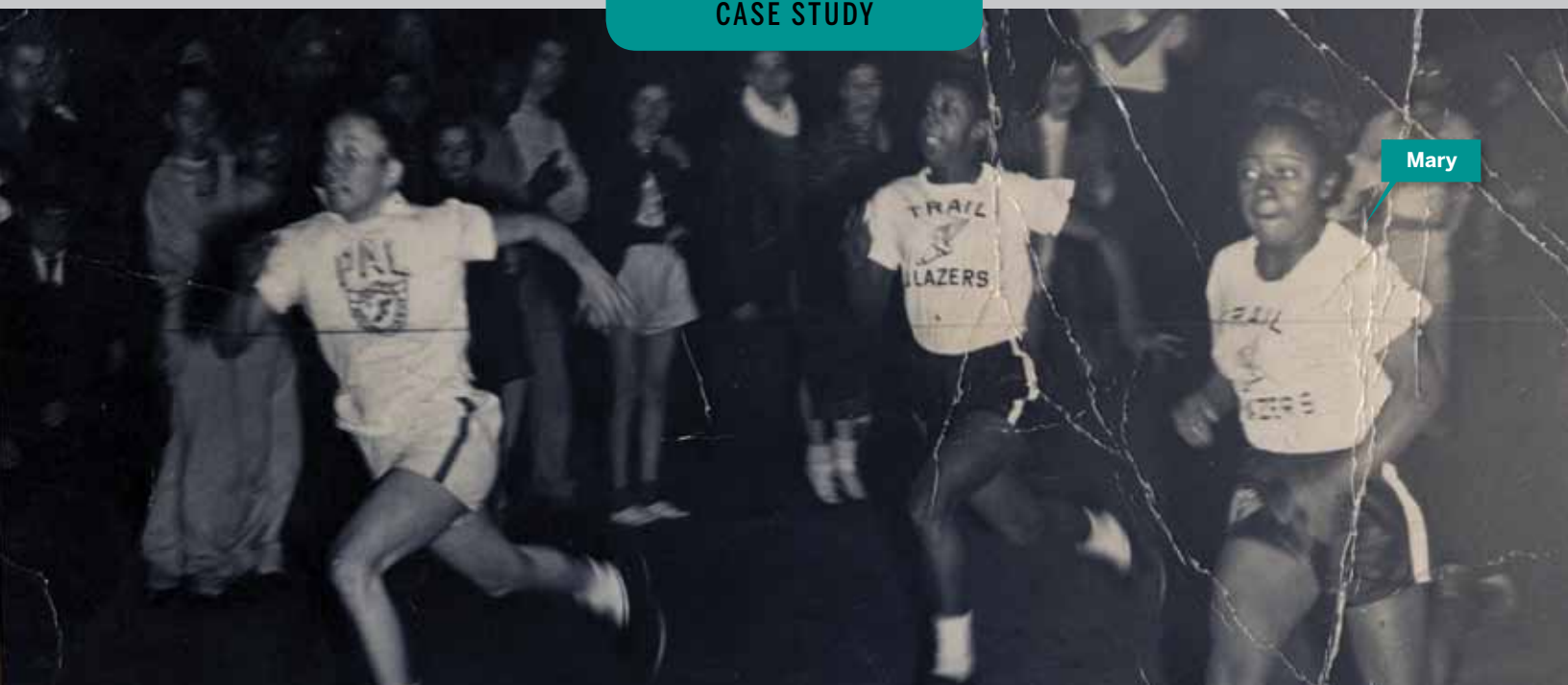




## Jackie Robinson Time Line



## CASE STUDY



Mary DeSaussure Sobers at a track meet, 1947; Mary DeSaussure Sobers Collection, ArMs 2005.053, Brooklyn Historical Society.

### Case Study 3

LIGHTNING SPEED:  
TRACK STAR  
MARY DESAUSSURE SOBERS

#### Curriculum Topics

BLACK HISTORY  
CIVIL RIGHTS  
WOMEN'S HISTORY

## Historical Background

Today, thanks to Title IX, schools offer numerous opportunities for girls and women to participate in organized sports. In the past, however, those opportunities were often limited. So-called “women’s sports” included tennis, archery, and croquet. Some high schools, colleges, and universities did not allow women’s teams or encourage competition. New York City’s Public School Athletic League was open only to boys. In the face of such discrimination, countless girls and women found other venues and organizations in which to excel. One of those girls was **Mary DeSaussure Sobers**. Beginning in the 1940s, she competed in **track-and-field** events organized by New York City’s Police Athletic League (PAL).

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. Sobers’s entry into her first track-and-field competition was unplanned. One morning, on the way to the store, she noticed a big group of children at the local Armory. Curious, she 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. She was dressed in a long wool skirt and galoshes,

Case Study 3  
**LIGHTNING SPEED**  
**TRACK STAR**  
**MARY DESAUSSURE SOBERS**

not shorts and sneakers like the other runners, but she raced anyway. She finished first in the 40-yard dash, but was given a silver medal. This race would be the first of many for Sobers.

Sponsored by the PAL, the race at the 13th Regiment Armory, at Sumner and Jefferson Avenues, was open to boys and girls. Except for one spectator (her sister), Sobers says she was the only black person in attendance. At the time, Bedford-Stuyvesant was a predominantly white neighborhood. In 1940, African Americans made up 25% of the area's population. Sobers was the first African American girl to take part in a PAL track-and-field competition. Her sister Martha also ran in PAL track-and-field competitions. Later, the twins became founding members of New York City's first track club for African American girls, the Trail Blazers.

#### TEACHING IDEA

- Write the word trailblazer on the board. Ask students to explain what the word means. Tell students that the subject of this Case Study is a woman named Mary DeSaussure Sobers, and that she has been described as a trailblazer. Ask: Based on that description, what kind of person do you expect Sobers to be? After exploring the Case Study, revisit students' predictions.

#### GUIDING QUESTION

- How did Sobers help pave the way for women and African American athletes in New York City today?

#### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Sobers got her start in sports with the Police Athletic League. Have students research the PAL to learn about its role in the community, its history, its current programs, and its plans for the future.
- When Sobers participated in her first track meet, she was the only African American athlete in the entire group. How do you think she might have felt? Have students write journal entries from the perspective of Sobers before and after her first track-and-field competition.
- According to *Running Against the Wind* (see Resources), the children's book based on her life, Sobers was not concerned about proper nutrition when she was young and often ate unhealthy foods. Start a discussion about good nutrition. What is it, and how does it differ for athletes? For example, do athletes need more calories than the average person? Do athletes have any special dietary needs? Give examples.
- Have students collect advertisements for sports drinks and foods marketed specifically to athletes. Bring sample products to class, then read and compare nutrition labels and ingredients. Notice how the packaging and the messages on it are meant to appeal to athletes. What do they have in common? What makes a product stand out?

#### Resources

##### **palnyc.org**

The official site of the Police Athletic League of New York City, the organization that gave Mary DeSaussure Sobers her start.

##### **nycgovparks.org/befitnyc**

Search the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation site to find out where to run and to play bocce, lacrosse, soccer, volleyball, and other sports in the city.

##### **nyrr.org**

On the left side of the New York Road Runners site, under Resources, click Classes, to find City Sports for Kids, a track-and-field program.

##### **Running Against the Wind**

By Inge Auerbacher  
 (Royal Fireworks Publishing Company, 1999)

A biographical novel about Mary DeSaussure Sobers and her sister Martha. (For ages 9 to 12).

**Case Study 3**  
DOCUMENTS

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**DOCUMENT 1****Mary DeSaussure Sobers at a Track Meet, 1947 (photograph)****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 Sobers and her competitors at the time this photograph was taken?

**Write It**

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

**DOCUMENT 2****The First Team of the Police Athletic League's Amateur Girls Track Team, ca. 1948 (photograph)****Think About It**

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

**DOCUMENT 3****A Golden Place in History, 1994 (newspaper article)****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.

**DOCUMENT 4****PAL Girls Sweep Metropolitan A.A.U. Meet, 1948 (newspaper article)****Think About It**

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

**Write It**

- Mary 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.

**DOCUMENT 5****The Summaries, 1948 (newspaper article)****Think About It**

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

**Write It**

- Name the two events that Mary DeSaussure Sobers participated in.
- Her name appears in both of these summaries. Name one other person whose name appears in both.

**DOCUMENT 6****Real Trail Blazers, 2000 (newspaper article)****Think About It**

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

Case Study 3  
DOCUMENTS

**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 7****Team Wins Meet Third Year in Row, 1947 (newspaper article)****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.

**DOCUMENT 8****Letter from Mary DeSaussure Sobers to Mayor David Dinkins, 1992 (letter)****Think About It**

- Why does 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.

**DOCUMENT 9****PAL 79th Precinct first track meet, 1945 (photograph)****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?

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### *Teaching Tip*

Have students listen to the Mary DeSaussure Sobers interview before reading the transcript. Discuss how oral histories are different from written sources. Oral histories include people’s memories, as well as their reflections on those memories, and jump forward and backward in time, so students should be prepared to be very careful listeners.

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79th Pct. Track Team at City Hall, 1947. Capt. Kiernan receives Mayor's Trophy from Mayor O'Dwyer; Mary DeSaussure Sobers Collection, ArMA 2005.053; Brooklyn Historical Society.

#### DOCUMENT 10

##### Oral History Interview with Mary DeSaussure Sobers, 2009 (oral history)

###### 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 are Sobers. 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.

#### DOCUMENT 11

##### A Golden Run, 2005 (newspaper article)

###### Think About It

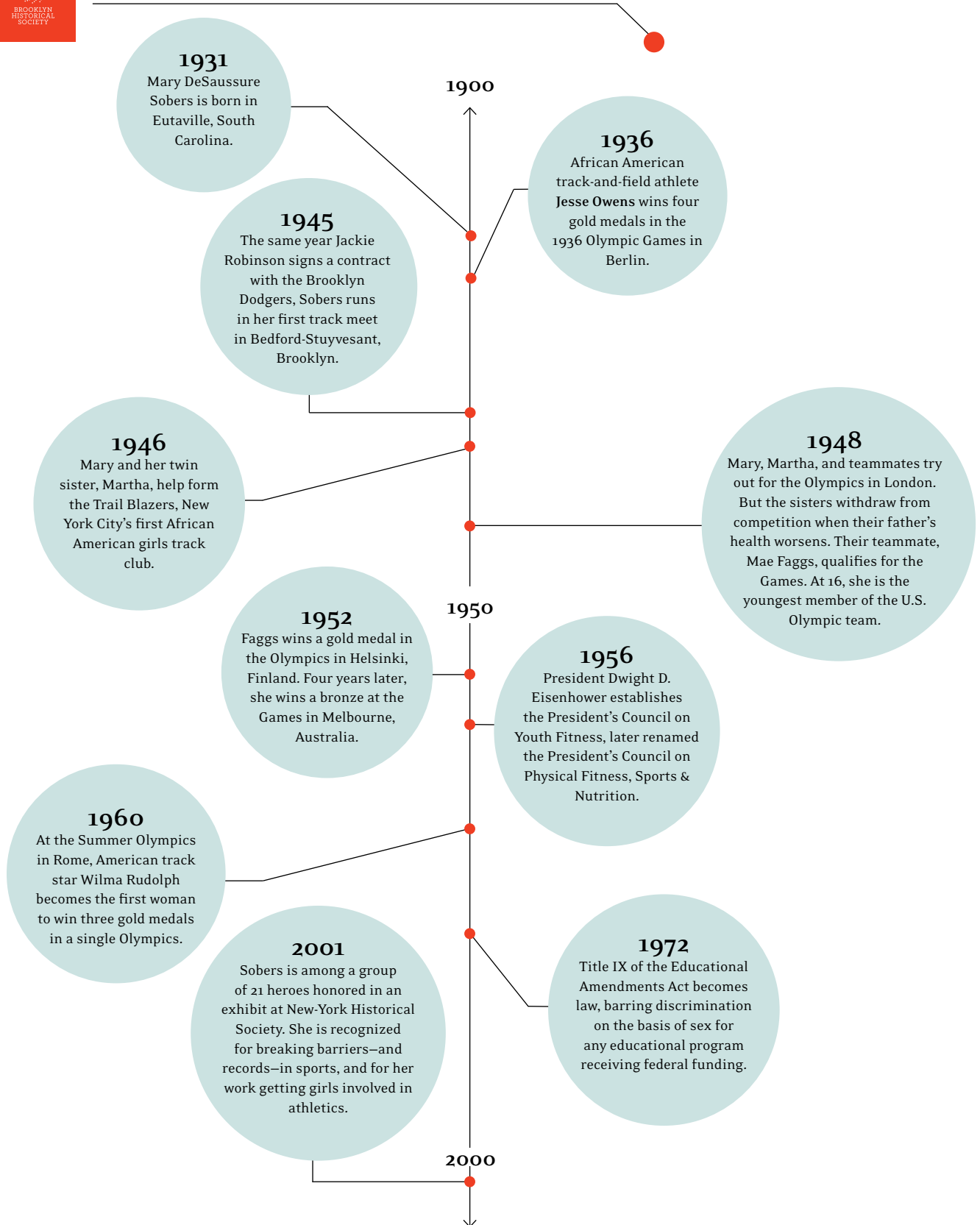
- According to this article, why did Sobers receive a silver medal even though she came in first in the race?
- According to this article, in what ways did Sobers exceed people's expectations? Give examples.

###### Write It

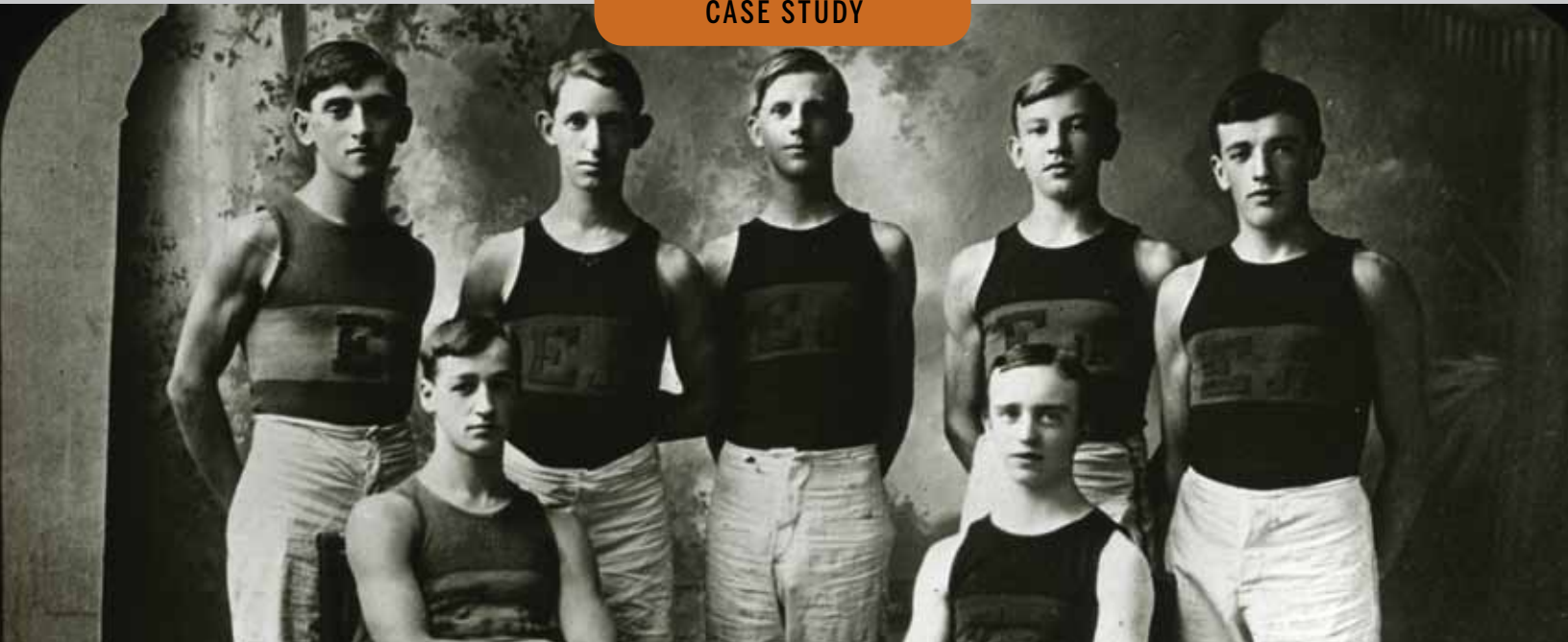
- 🍎 Sobers explains how racism and sexism in the 1940s impacted her being awarded a silver medal, even when she beat all the other girls. Write an essay comparing an instance of prejudice you have experienced or read about with those that Mary describes. Use specific examples from her story and your contemporary sources to support your point.



## Mary DeSaussure Sobers Time Line



## CASE STUDY



*Emmanuel House Basketball Team, ca. 1910, Emmanuel House Collection; Brooklyn Historical Society.*

**Case Study 4**  
**GOT GAME?**  
 SHOOTING HOOPS  
 IN BROOKLYN

**Curriculum Topics**

ECONOMICS  
 IMMIGRATION  
 WOMEN'S HISTORY

## Historical Background

**B**asketball has a long history in Brooklyn. The game first became popular in the United States in the late 1890s. In Brooklyn, college basketball tournaments attracted big crowds. **Pratt Institute** and **Adelphi Academy** competed regularly in spirited games. Adelphi's athletic director, H.S. Pettit, believed basketball provided players more exercise than football. An 1897 article in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* noted that the sport was also becoming popular at **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."

Basketball is still one of Brooklyn's favorite sports. Now, netball is too. A cross between Ultimate Frisbee and basketball, the sport is especially popular among **Caribbean American women** in Brooklyn. The game was invented in the United States more than 100 years ago, and immigrants have recently reintroduced the game here.

Many professional basketball players were born in Brooklyn, including National Basketball Association superstars **Michael Jordan** and **Stephon Marbury**, yet despite the enormous talent that grows here, Brooklyn never had a professional team. Until now. **The Brooklyn Nets** started their first season in Brooklyn in fall 2012. Efforts to

Case Study 4  
**GOT GAME?**  
 SHOOTING HOOPS  
 IN BROOKLYN

move the **New Jersey Nets** to Brooklyn were met with mixed reactions, due primarily to the proposed location of a new stadium and residential complex in downtown Brooklyn. Supporters believe that having an NBA team in Brooklyn will create jobs and boost the local economy. Opponents object to the use of eminent domain, the taking of private property by the government for public use. In this case, opponents believe that private land is being taken for private development of the arena, *without* benefit to the public. Other concerns include traffic congestion, overcrowding, and a strain on local resources. The site of the new arena (at Atlantic and Flatbush Avenues) is surprisingly close to the location Brooklyn Dodger president Walter O'Malley proposed before the team left the borough for Los Angeles after the 1957 season.

#### TEACHING IDEAS

- Ask students what they know about basketball. For example: Who are some of your favorite players? Why? What equipment is used to play the game? What are the rules of the game? How many points does a player score when he or she makes a basket? What kind of uniforms do basketball players wear?
- Give students 30 seconds to make a list of words they associate with basketball. Then ask volunteers to share the two words they feel are most important and explain why.

#### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How do sports help build community?
- What impact do sports have on individuals as children and as adults?

#### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Start a discussion about the role of sports in school. (Focus on your school first, then widen the lens.) Ask: Should schools encourage students to participate in sports? Why or why not? How do students benefit from sports?
- Have students write articles about school or community sporting events. They may also write profiles of student athletes and school or community league coaches. Organize students' stories into a class newspaper, complete with photographs.
- Debate the issue of athletes as role models. Begin by asking students what it means to be a role model. Then pose this debate question: Are professional athletes good role models for young people?
- Encourage students to create a "Brooklyn Sports" scrapbook, with newspaper articles, souvenirs, advertisements, and other primary source materials related to sporting events in the borough.
- What's the difference between basketball and netball? Have students research this question and make posters to explain similarities and differences between the two games.
- The Caribbean American Netball Association's motto is Discipline, Dedication, Determination. Ask: Why do some teams have mottoes, or special sayings? Is CANA's motto a good one? Have students create a class motto.

#### Resources

##### **78youthsports.org**

Brooklyn's 78th Precinct Youth Council organizes coed and girls basketball teams. Check out the website to learn more.

##### **nba.com/nets**

Check out the official Nets website to learn about the team. At the bottom of the page, click on Barclays Center to learn about the team's move to Brooklyn.

**Case Study 4**  
**DOCUMENTS**

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**DOCUMENT 1****Emmanuel House Basketball Team, ca. 1910 (photograph)****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?

**DOCUMENT 2****On Basket Ball Courts: Great Activity Wherever the Game Is Played, 1896 (newspaper article)****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.

**DOCUMENT 3****Basket Ball Championship: Brooklyn Leads the Way with Its Big Tournament, 1897 (newspaper article)****Think About It**

- According to the 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.

**DOCUMENT 4****Oral History Interview with Alan Fishman, 2008 (oral history)****Think About It**

- What lessons can you learn from sports?
- According to 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?

**Case Study 4**  
DOCUMENTS

**DOCUMENT 5****Bringing Some Order to Games City Students Play, 2004 (newspaper article)****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 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.

**DOCUMENT 6****Brooklyn a Haven for USBL Hoop Dreamers, 2001 (newspaper article)****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.

**DOCUMENT 7****Ditmas Park Basketball Players, 2010 (photograph)****Think About It**

- Where do you think the players are?
- Why are they playing at 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.

**DOCUMENT 8****Brooklyn Crosses Bridge Back into the Big Time, 2004 (newspaper article)****Think About It**

- According to this article, what change can Brooklyn basketball players look forward to?

**Write It**

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


**DOCUMENT 9**

Oral History Interview with Albert King, 2009 (oral history)

**Think About It**

- What role did basketball play in King's life? In your own words, explain the game's importance to him.

**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.



*New Jersey Net Albert King, 1980; courtesy of King.*

**DOCUMENT 10**

Oral History Interview with Albert Vann, 2008 (oral history)

**Think About It**

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


**DOCUMENT 11**

A Court Ruled by Women: With Netball, Immigrants from Caribbean Turn a Derelict Brooklyn Park into a Haven, 1998 (newspaper article)

**Think About It**

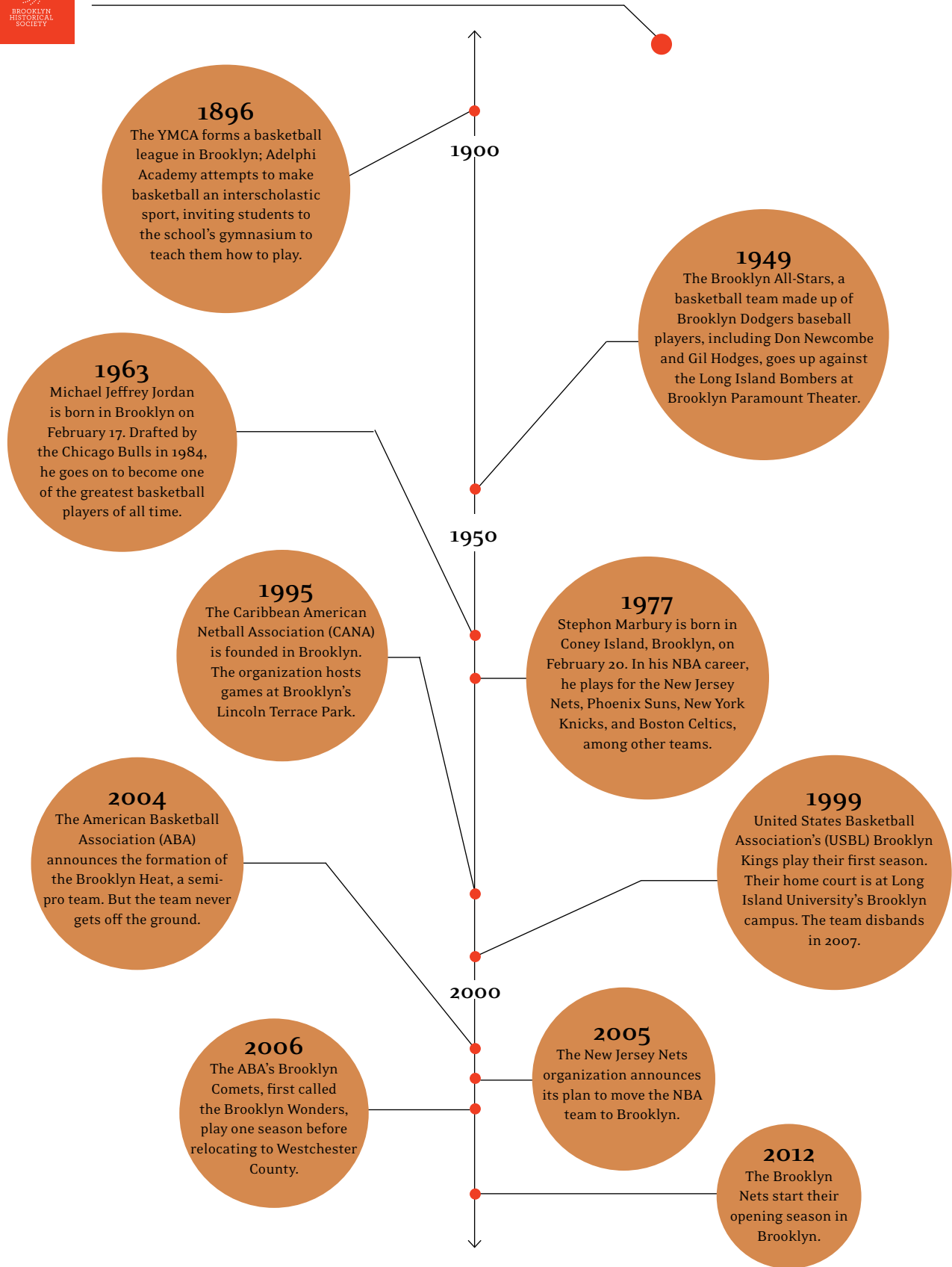
- According to this article, why has netball become popular in Brooklyn? Explain.
- How do sports help immigrants keep their culture strong?

**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.



## Basketball Time Line



## Learning Extensions

Dig deeper. Have students research, discuss, and debate current issues in sports. Topics include:

- ➔ **Steroids** What are steroids? How do they affect people? Why are they banned in sports? Players found guilty of steroid use have had awards and medals taken away, they've been prohibited from competition, fined and even imprisoned. Are these punishments fair? Explain.
- ➔ **Salary Caps** Professional athletes today earn salaries in the millions. Salary caps limit the amount of money a team can spend on a player. What are the possible positive or negative effects of salary caps?
- ➔ **Technology** High-tech swimsuits help athletes gain an advantage in the water. Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps says the Speedo LZR Racer suit allows him to move through the water faster. Rocket scientists at NASA developed special fabric for the swimsuit. Should athletes be allowed to wear these suits? Are the suits fair? How do these suits compare with special sneakers for runners? What are some other examples of special clothing or equipment that helps athletes improve their game?
- ➔ **Character** Former National Football League Coach Tony Dungy says that when he picks team players he's not just looking for talent and skill. He cares about what kind of person you are. To Dungy, character counts. Not all NFL coaches feel the same way. They want the best players no matter what. Do you agree or disagree with Coach Dungy's approach? Explain. Describe the kind of person you think Dungy might want for his team, and the kind of player he would probably exclude.

Comments? Questions? Suggestions? We love to hear from you! E-mail us at [education@brooklynhistory.org](mailto:education@brooklynhistory.org).

## Activity Sheets →

Use these activity sheets to support students' exploration of the primary and secondary source material in the *Bats, Balls, Nets & Hoops* curriculum kit.



Library of Congress. Women compete in a low-hurdle race, Washington, D.C., ca. 1920; Library of Congress, Lot 12344-9.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Learning to Look

Study a primary source from the BHS curriculum kit *Bats, Balls, Nets & Hoops: Stories of Sports in Brooklyn*. Use this worksheet to help you focus on the details.

What kind of primary source is this? Check one.

Newspaper Article

Oral History

Photograph

Letter

Map

Cartoon

Diary Entry

Other

Advertisement

1. When was this primary source created?

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2. Who was it created by, and for what purpose?

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3. Describe this primary source. What does it say or show?

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4. What does this primary source tell you about the time period in which it was created?

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Name That Source

Primary sources tell us about life in the past. Secondary sources also help us learn about the past. But there is a difference between the two. Primary sources, such as photographs, letters, and newspaper articles, were created in the past. Secondary sources are made many years later in order to explain what happened long ago. Look at the sources below. If it is a primary source, write *P* in the box. If it is a secondary source, write *S*.

 <p>Gold medal saved by the winner of a 1945 track meet</p> <p style="text-align: right;"> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>  <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </p>	 <p>Brooklyn Dodgers baseball team from 1955</p> <p style="text-align: right;"> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>  <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </p>	 <p>Book about Brooklyn in the 1800s, published in 2009</p> <p style="text-align: right;"> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>  <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </p>
 <p>Photograph of tennis players in Prospect Park, taken in 1880</p> <p style="text-align: right;"> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>  <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </p>	 <p>Prospect Park website, which explains the history of the park</p> <p style="text-align: right;"> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>  <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </p>	 <p>Photograph of the Brooklyn Bridegrooms, 1889</p> <p style="text-align: right;"> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>  <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </p>

Make an Inference: What do these primary sources tell you about sports in Brooklyn that secondary sources may not?

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**BONUS:** Find a primary source from your school or community that has to do with sports. Bring it to school to share. On the back of this page, explain what this primary source tells people about sports in Brooklyn.

*Top Row, from left: Mary Sobers Collection, 1989.053 Box 1; Brooklyn Dodgers, 1955, Library of Congress; Book, published by Brooklyn Historical Society, 1989; Bottom Row, from left: Brooklyn Historical Society; Prospect Park homepage, [www.prospectpark.org](http://www.prospectpark.org); Brooklyn Bridegrooms, 1889, Library of Congress.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



# Putting It All Together

Topic (Person, place or sport I am studying) \_\_\_\_\_

This topic is important because . . .

Five important facts about this topic are . . .

I wondered . . .

I was surprised by . . .

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## A Piece of the Past

The photograph below shows a shirt worn by a fan of the Brooklyn Dodgers baseball team. She sat near the dugout at each game and collected players' signatures on her shirt. Later, she followed the lines and stitched the names in colorful thread. Study the photograph, then answer the questions.



*Shirt autographed by Brooklyn Dodgers; Collection Brooklyn Historical Society, 1944.*

1. Describe the shirt.

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2. True or false: This shirt is a primary source. How can you tell?

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3. Based on the shirt, what character traits would you use to describe this fan? Explain your answer.

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4. Based on the shirt, how do you think the Brooklyn Dodgers felt about their fans? Explain your answer.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Fan Mail

The letters below are between a boy named Roddie Rose and Walter O'Malley. O'Malley was president of the Brooklyn Dodgers baseball team. The Dodgers played in Brooklyn from 1890 to 1957. They moved to Los Angeles after the 1957 season.

Roddie Rose  
1104 Hyman Ave.  
Bay Shore, NY

Dear Mr. O'Malley,  
I'm only 12 years old but I've been a Dodger fan for three years and there are a lot of my friends that are Dodger fans. And we don't want the Dodgers to move from Brooklyn. If you need a new park, why don't you move out on Long Island? Please write back.

Roddie Rose

November 30, 1954

Dear Roddie:  
The Dodgers are not seriously considering moving to the coast. We have shown some interest in various sites on Long Island as well as a new site in Brooklyn. These problems are not easy to solve, but we do want to give our fans a new ballpark if at all possible. Enclosed are some figures that you can have some fun with when Giants fans start boasting.

Yours truly,  
Walter F. O'Malley,

1. How old was Roddie Rose when he wrote this letter?

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2. Why did Roddie write to Walter O'Malley?

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3. In your own words, explain what O'Malley told Roddie.

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4. Three years after this letter was written, the Dodgers left Brooklyn. The team moved to Los Angeles. What effect do you think this had on Roddie and other Brooklyn Dodgers fans? Explain.

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**BONUS:** Write a letter to a person in your community about an issue that matters to you. On the back of this page, write a draft about what you will say.

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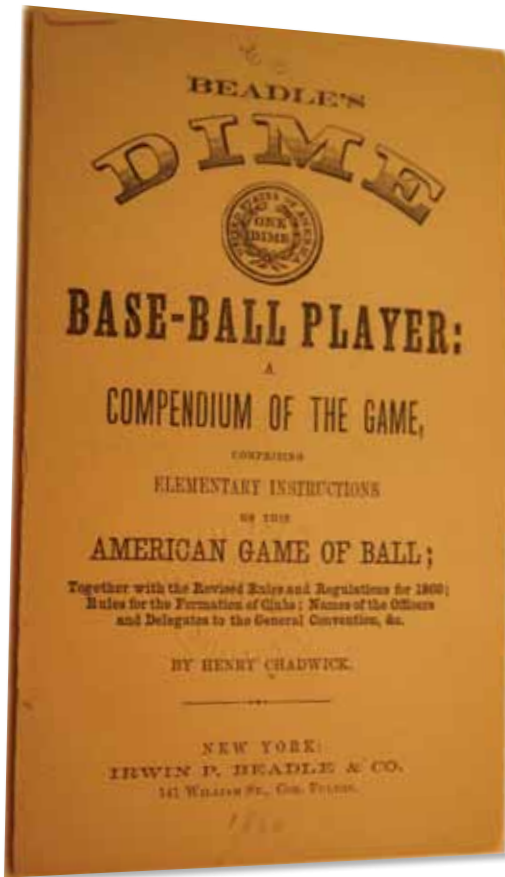
Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Be a History Detective

Detectives look for clues to help solve cases. Historians look for clues to help them learn about life long ago. You can practice being a history detective. Study the book below. Then answer the questions.



*Beadle's Dime Book; R/A B3585;  
Brooklyn Historical Society.*

1. What is the book about?

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2. Who is the author?

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3. What will readers learn from the book? Be specific.

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5. How do you think baseball has changed since this book was published? Give three examples.

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6. Explain the possible reasons for the changes.

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*U.S. women's golf star Katherine Harley won the national golf championships at Chevy Chase, Maryland, 1908; courtesy of Library of Congress.*