

Teaching Guide for *Miles & The Monarchs*

Language Arts and Newspaper Connections

The Language Arts and Newspaper Connections sections of this guide are divided into chapters, as the words and questions are specific to a chapter. Activities in the other disciplines may be used at any time during the story's run.

Chapter One

Vocabulary: Use context clues or a dictionary to find the meaning of these words:

Sandlot

Incredible

Separate

Reading Comprehension:

Describe in your own words the scenery Miles was seeing.

What sentence gave you the clue to answer this question?

Discussion Question:

What do you think the author meant when she wrote about Miles trying to imagine watching a baseball game with people who looked like him?

Writing Activity:

Miles and his father are dressed in their Sunday best. Write a descriptive sentence about their attire.

Newspaper Connections:

Read stories in your local newspaper about baseball games and create a comic strip depicting a parent and child at one of those games.

Chapter Two

Vocabulary: Use context clues or a dictionary to find the meaning of these words:

Husk

Barnstorming

Competitive

Reading Comprehension:

Describe in your own words how the Negro National League was organized.

What paragraph gave you the clue to answer this question?

Discussion Question:

What do you think the author meant when she wrote that Miles and his father needed to find the right place to get gas?

Writing Activity:

The author uses several adjectives when Miles' father talks about how the play in a Negro National League game is a little different. Rewrite that sentence with different adjectives to convey what he was describing.

Newspaper Connections:

Miles' dad talks about "barnstorming." Find a picture of a place in your local paper that isn't a baseball field and explain how you could play baseball there.

Chapter Three

Vocabulary: Use context clues or a dictionary to find the meaning of these words:

Spectator

Statistics

Formidable

Reading Comprehension:

How far is it said that Josh Gibson hit a baseball? There are two possible answers to this question. What sentence gave you the clue to the answer you chose?

Discussion Question:

Why do you think the gas station attendant pumped the gas?

Writing Activity:

Miles thinks about what it would be like to be pulled out of the stands to play. Write a short paragraph about that happening.

Newspaper Connections:

Miles' dad tells him about some of the great Negro League players. Use your local newspaper to make a list of great athletes in your community, from any or all levels.

Chapter Four

Vocabulary: Use context clues or a dictionary to find the meaning of these words:

Canteen

Chortled

Shortcut

Reading Comprehension:

Describe in your own words how Martin Dihigo learned to hit the curveball.

What sentence gave you the clue to answer this question?

Discussion Question:

Why do you think that Miles' dad stopped in the woods for a restroom break rather than going into town?

Writing Activity:

When the father and son stopped in the woods it was quiet except for the chatter of some birds. Rewrite that paragraph with how you would describe the woods.

Newspaper Connections:

Fast and curve balls are mentioned in this chapter. Search your local newspaper for uses of the word ball and make a list of these.

Chapter Five

Vocabulary: Use context clues or a dictionary to find the meaning of these words:

Matter-of-factly

Marked

Journeys

Reading Comprehension:

Why does Miles' father use a map?

What sentence or sentences gave you the clue to answer this question?

Discussion Question:

Why do you think Miles' dad sighed when asked about why they could not go into a town for a restroom stop?

Writing Activity:

Write a paragraph about how you would feel using an old map to drive somewhere.

Newspaper Connections:

Look for maps in your local newspaper and notice the symbols used. Use these maps as an example to draw what you imagine Miles' dad's map looked like.

Chapter Six

Vocabulary: Use context clues or a dictionary to find the meaning of these words:

Urban

Landscape

Reputation

Reading Comprehension:

How did Miles feel when they arrived at the stadium?

What sentence or paragraph gave you the clue to answer this question?

Discussion Question:

Do you think it's possible to switch off a light and jump into bed before the light goes out? Why or why not?

Writing Activity:

Write a few scenarios where the Discussion Question above could occur.

Newspaper Connections:

Honest and kind are character words. What character words do you find in your local newspaper?

Chapter Seven

Vocabulary: Use context clues or a dictionary to find the meaning of these words:

Behemoth

Enthusiasm

Accuracy

Reading Comprehension:

Describe Shibe Park.

What sentence or paragraph gave you the clue to answer this question?

Discussion Question:

Why did Miles feel the atmosphere at this game was different than what he was used to?

Writing Activity:

Rewrite the sentence that describes the reaction of the crowd to Satchel Paige's appearance in the dugout.

Newspaper Connections:

Satchel Paige's pitches were very controlled. Find words in your local newspaper that mean control.

Chapter Eight

Vocabulary: Use context clues or a dictionary to find the meaning of these words:

Reminisced

Stammered

Loping

Reading Comprehension:

What kind of person is Buck O'Neil?

What sentence gave you the clue to answer this question?

Discussion Question:

Miles' dad described many of the players as good people off the field. Why do you think the author felt it important to add that information in the story?

Writing Activity:

Write a short paragraph about who you would pretend to be while playing a sport, instrument or acting.

Newspaper Connections:

Write a newspaper style story that includes the 5 W's and 1 H about a player giving a ball to a child.

Social Studies

Learning Objectives: Students will

1. understand that maps contain symbols that represent real places
2. will display map reading skills
3. conduct research, using a variety of resources
4. synthesize information from multiple sources to explore an idea
5. recognize that synthesis takes place at every step of the research and writing process
6. identify a variety of laws and historical events that influenced the treatment of Black people
7. create a timeline of events in the history of baseball

Activity One – Map Symbols

Miles' father uses a map that his father made notes on to ensure safe travel for his family. There was a book issued every year between 1936 - 1964 by Victor Hugo Green. It was commonly called the Green Book, after the author, but was actually titled The Negro Motorist Green Book. This guidebook for Black travelers had lists of places that were welcoming to Blacks. Gas stations, restaurants, restrooms and even private residences where black travelers could stay safely during the Jim Crow Era were listed. Mr. Green was a mail man in Harlem and included information that he and fellow members of his postal union knew first-hand about New York in his early books. Later books included information mailed to him by post men, travelers and businesspeople, making it an early crowd sourced effort.

The Kansas City Monarchs obviously had to travel to Philadelphia for the 1942 Negro League World Series and would have faced the restrictions of the Jim Crow era which included White's only facilities and sundown towns. These are communities that posted signs on the outskirts of

town stating all people of color had to be out of the town by sundown. Black travelers relied on the guidebook to be safe.

Materials Needed: internet access or reference books, writing utensils, maps

Directions:

Use the internet or reference materials to research the Green Book to find listings.

Decide on how each type of listing will be symbolized on your map; a gas station might have a gas pump, or a restroom symbol might be an outhouse or toilet. Using maps, either old or present day, to plan a route that the Kansas City Monarchs could have taken to Philadelphia. Place your symbols on the map to give the team safe options in their journey.

Add a legend to your map that includes all of the symbols used.

Activity Two – Black Players in Major League Baseball

Everyone knows that Jackie Robinson was the first Black Major League Baseball player. But was he the first Black professional baseball player to play on a White team?

Materials Needed: internet access or reference books, writing utensils

Directions:

Have your students research baseball and race in the late 1800s and specifically Moses Fleetwood Walker.

Next have your students research what Jackie Robinson experienced in becoming the first Black Major League Baseball player in the modern era.

Once research is complete, write a short story or play about what Moses Fleetwood Walker must have experienced in that earlier time period.

Activity Three – Baseball Card Hallway Museum

Miles and his dad talked about quite a few famous Black baseball players; Satchel Paige, Josh Gibson, Cool Papa Bell, Rube Foster and Martin Dihigo to name a few.

Directions:

Task your students with creating poster sized baseball cards for those players as well as others they find interesting. Each card should include a picture, the person's full name, any nicknames, birth and death places and dates, teams played on and at least two other facts about the person.

Assign each student a player to portray. Using the information on the baseball cards, students should portray that person in a hallway museum by wearing a uniform, making a mask out of a

printed picture or a creation of their own design. They should also prepare a speech to be given in character about their player, so further research may be required.

Invite other classes to visit and learn from the Baseball Card Hallway Museum.

STEM – Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics

Learning Objectives: Students will

1. be able to write and solve simple addition and multiplication equations
2. perform independent research
3. analyze and graph information collected

Activity One – Home Run Math

As Miles' father said, statistics in the Negro League were hard to keep. On June 3, 1937, Josh Gibson is said to have hit a 580-foot home run out of Yankee Stadium although there is no way to verify this. Using the stadium's dimensions, your students will do some calculations.

The stadium's dimensions in 1937 were:

Left Field – 318 feet (97 m)

Left-Center – 399 feet (122 m)

Center Field – 408 feet (124 m)

Deepest Center Field – 461 feet (141 m)

Right-Center – 385 feet (117 m)

Right Field – 314 feet (96 m)

Backstop – 84 feet (26 m)

Materials Needed: pencil and paper or calculators

Directions:

Subtract each of these distances from 580 to see how far out of the stadium the ball would have gone, if hit along each line.

Convert each of those results to metric by multiplying the foot value by 0.3048 or dividing by 3.280839895.

Activity Two – Legendary Home Runs

Materials Needed: internet access or reference books, chart and graph paper, colored pencils

Directions:

Research and make a chart of the longest home runs, with columns for stadium, hitter, distance and direction or line on which it was hit.

The above lesson gives the dimensions of the Yankee Stadium field, which will be used in this activity also.

Using graph paper, create a diagram of the field with home plate at the bottom. Make sure to extend the boundaries for legendary length homers.

Add the bases and pitching mound. The bases are 90 feet apart and the pitching mound is 60 feet, 6 inches from the rear corner of home plate.

Graph where each ball would have landed if Josh Gibson had hit his legendary home run along each line.

Using different colors for each batter, graph the home runs from your chart.

Do you see patterns in the graph, either in general or by certain hitters?

Activity Three – Momentum and a 100 MPH Pitch

There were no radar guns during the Negro League era to record the speed of a pitched ball. There are now though and quite a few pitchers can throw a baseball over 100 mph because of a physics principal called momentum. Momentum is defined as “mass in motion.” The momentum of an object depends on both its speed and mass.

Pitchers begin the process of building momentum by leaning back to transfer weight onto their back leg. As they thrust forward the large mass of their legs and hips are carrying momentum, which is transferred up through the torso, down the arm, and into the fingers as the ball is pitched. Fingers do not have much mass, so to throw a ball fast requires involving the whole body and building up from the large mass first.

Materials Needed: internet access or reference books, paper and pencil, tape measure

Research the mass of a major league baseball and the velocity of a 100-mph fastball. Calculate the momentum with this equation

Momentum = mass x velocity

Build some momentum of your own. Draw a line on the ground. Stand with your toes on the line and throw a baseball with just your arm and hand. Record the distance.

Now, step forward while throwing and record the distance. Did the ball go farther?

Put your weight on your back leg and thrust forward while throwing the ball. Record the distance. Did it go even farther? Were you surprised at how building momentum up through the large muscle mass improves the distance?