

Roberto Clemente

Teacher's Guide

Roberto Clemente offers insights into social studies topics including the history of Puerto Rico, immigration, baseball, activism, segregation, the civil rights movement, media treatment of minorities, American culture in the Sixties and Seventies, and more. Use the program in your classroom, or delve into the rich resources available on this Web site.

This teacher's guide includes three elements:

- Comprehension Section for use with the programs
- Classroom Activities
- Suggestions for completing the classroom activities

Teachers are encouraged to adapt the guide to meet their own learning objectives for their students.

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Comprehension Section

Answer the following questions as you view the film.

1. Where was Clemente born? What was his father's job?
2. When and why did Clemente become interested in baseball?
3. When Clemente was growing up, how did Puerto Rico differ from the United States in its attitudes toward race?
4. When did Clemente first sign with a Major League Baseball team? Which team was it? Which team shortly drafted him away from that organization?
5. What obstacle did Clemente face as a rookie in spring training?
6. What obstacle did Clemente face when the Pirates' regular season began in Pittsburgh?
7. How did language create a barrier between Clemente and the public?
8. In what year did fans around the country first notice Clemente? Why?
9. What team did the Pirates defeat in the 1960 World Series? Why was this a surprise?
10. How did the people of Puerto Rico react to Clemente's success?
11. What did Clemente blame for his failure to win the 1960 Most Valuable Player award?
12. What happened to Latino immigration during the 1960s? How did this affect Major League Baseball?
13. Whom did Clemente see himself as representing when he played baseball?
14. How did Clemente react to the civil rights movement?
15. In what year did the Pirates return to the World Series? How old was Clemente? Whom did they play, and who won?
16. What did Clemente do when interviewed in the clubhouse after the World Series? Why was this symbolically important?
17. What baseball milestone did Clemente reach in 1972?
18. What disaster occurred in Nicaragua in December 1972? How did Clemente respond?
19. Why did Clemente decide to go to Nicaragua?
20. How did Clemente die?

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Classroom Activities

Activity 1. A Hall of Fame career

Clemente's wide-ranging baseball accomplishments, described in many newspaper accounts, made him one of the greatest players in history. But just how good was he? Working with one or two partners, research one aspect of Clemente's career -- such as his 3,000 hits or his 12 consecutive Gold Gloves -- and see how he compares to other baseball greats, especially other outfielders. Or, if you have a favorite Hall of Famer, you might prefer to compare his career to Clemente's across a range of measures, from career batting average to world championships.

To present your findings, imagine that you are attending Clemente's induction ceremony into the Hall of Fame and design a poster that illustrates Clemente's accomplishment. Hang the completed posters around the room and compare them as a class. What do you think was Clemente's greatest single accomplishment?

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Activity 2. Defining a role model

As both Clemente's family and friends recall, Clemente was a role model -- not just for Puerto Ricans or baseball fans, but for people throughout the United States and Latin America. Do role models like Clemente exist in sports today? Select the italicized statement below that best describes your view, then do the activity connected with that statement.

Role models like Clemente don't exist in sports anymore.

Write a 500-word essay describing the qualities that made Clemente a role model and suggesting reasons why such people don't exist today.

Role models like Clemente do exist today.

Write a 500-word essay describing how one or more present-day sports stars have the same qualities Clemente showed.

Athletes cannot, or should not, be role models.

Write a 500-word essay explaining why you believe we should not look to athletes as role models.

See which of the three statements received the most "votes," and ask volunteers to read their essays to the class. How much (or how little) do the members of the class agree on this issue?

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Activity 3. The story of Puerto Rico

Shaped by his upbringing in Puerto Rico, Clemente went on to become one of the island's best-known and most-admired citizens. To help students learn more about Puerto Rico, divide the following questions among the members of the class to research.

1. Where is Puerto Rico located? How big is it? How many people live there?
2. What group of people were living on the island when Europeans first arrived?
3. Who was the first European explorer to reach Puerto Rico, and when did he arrive?
4. What European country took control of Puerto Rico, and how did it do this? What happened to the native peoples?
5. When and why were African slaves first brought to Puerto Rico?
6. What were the main economic activities in Puerto Rico while it was a colony?
7. When and why did the United States invade Puerto Rico?
8. When and how did the United States gain formal control of Puerto Rico?
9. When and how did Puerto Ricans gain U.S. citizenship?
10. When did Puerto Ricans gain the right to elect their governor?
11. When did a group of Puerto Ricans launch a violent revolt against U.S. control? What was the outcome?
12. When did Puerto Rico gain its own constitution?
13. What is Puerto Rico's current legal relationship to the United States? Can Puerto Ricans vote in U.S. election?
14. When did Puerto Ricans vote most recently on whether to change their relationship to the United States, and what was the outcome?

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15. How many Puerto Ricans live in the 50 United States, and what areas have the largest Puerto Rican communities?

Have students answer their assigned question and report their answer to the class. Then, use the information they obtained to prepare a timeline of the last five centuries of Puerto Rican history.

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Activity 4. Not just a national pastime

One way to see how much more diverse Major League Baseball has become since Clemente's era is to see how often Latino players are mentioned in media reports of games. Divide the class into two groups -- one for the American League, the other for the National League -- and have each group, over several days, track the coverage of its assigned league's games by a national media organization such as the Associated Press or ESPN.

Roughly what share of the players mentioned in the game highlights are Latino? Now compare these results to the newspaper accounts of some of Clemente's biggest games. Even if you didn't recognize the names of any of the players, could you tell which media reports came from which era simply because of how many Latino names appeared?

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5. Athlete activism

Clemente wasn't the only star athlete of his era who fought injustice or sought to make the world a better place. Divide the class into four groups and have each group research one of the following examples of "athlete activism" during the 1960s and 1970s.

- Muhammad Ali refuses to enter the U.S. Army when drafted.
- U.S. athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos make the "black power" salute on the medal stand at the 1968 Olympics.
- Tennis star Arthur Ashe protests South Africa's apartheid system.
- Billie Jean King accepts Bobby Riggs's challenge to a "battle of the sexes" tennis match.

Have each group report to the class on (a) what the athlete(s) did, (b) what the action was meant to accomplish, (c) what the outcome was, and (d) whether the group approves of the action and why.

After groups have made their presentations, discuss as a class how these examples help you understand Clemente's character and legacy. What similarities and differences do you see between Clemente and these athletes? Are there different ways athletes can try to improve the world, and do you think some ways are more effective than others? Close by asking students if they can name some more recent examples of athlete activism. What sorts of recent issues have athletes taken on?

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Suggestions for Classroom Activities

Activity 1. A Hall of Fame career: Students may want to consult the Hall of Fame's official web page on Clemente's career, which contains his batting statistics. Major League Baseball also provides a web page listing all-time leaders in various categories.

Activity 2. Defining a role model: Before doing this activity, you might briefly discuss the concept of "role model" as a class. What is a role model? Is it important for people to have a role model? If so, why -- and are role models important for all people, or only some? Interested students may want to watch this famous commercial the basketball star Charles Barkley made on the subject of athletes and role models.

Activity 3. The story of Puerto Rico: You may want to ask interested students to prepare a list of well-known Puerto Ricans from the past and present.

Activity 4. Not just a national pastime: As an additional (or alternative) activity, students may want to review the winners of individual awards such as the Most Valuable Player or Cy Young award over the past several decades to see how Latinos have become some of baseball's most accomplished players. Interested students may also want to read this press release from Major League Baseball listing the members of its Latino Legends Team -- the greatest Latino players of all time, as selected by baseball fans.

5. Athlete activism: You might also draw students' attention to the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the threat of protests there in response to China's policies toward Sudan and/or Tibet.

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