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Dad, Jackie, And Me



Synopsis

IT IS THE SUMMER OF 1947 and a highly charged baseball season is underway in New York. Jackie Robinson is the new first baseman for the Brooklyn Dodgers--and the first black player in Major League Baseball. A young boy shares the excitement of Robinson's rookie season with his deaf father. Each day he listens eagerly to the Brooklyn Dodgers games on the radio. When his father arrives home from work, the boy uses sign language to tell him about the Dodgers. His father begins to keep a scrapbook, clipping photos and articles about Jackie. Finally one day the father delivers some big news: they are going to Ebbets Field to watch Jackie play in person! Author Myron Uhlberg offers a nostalgic look back at 1947, and pays tribute to Jackie Robinson, the legendary athlete and hero who brought a father and son--and an entire New York community--together for one magical summer. Illustrator Colin Bootman's realistic, full-color illustrations capture the details of the period and the excitement of an entire city as Robinson helps the Dodgers win the long-awaited pennant.

Book Information

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Age Range: 6 - 9 years

Grade Level: 1 - 4

Customer Reviews

Grade 2-5
Like The Printer (Peachtree, 2003), this story is based on Uhlberg's experiences growing up as a hearing child of deaf parents. The tale is set in Brooklyn in 1947,

where a young Dodger fan eagerly anticipates the much-heralded addition of Jackie Robinson to his team's lineup. Surprisingly, the narrator's deaf father is interested too; he has recognized his own struggle for respect and acceptance mirrored in Robinson's triumph. The two begin attending games and keep a scrapbook of newspaper clippings about the first baseman. Though baseball and Robinson are at the heart of this story, its strength lies in its depiction of the bond between father and son. It is evident that their relationship is characterized by respect and tenderness, though, at the ballpark, the boy is at first embarrassed when his father's awkward cheer causes other fans to stare. The page design resembles a scrapbook, with actual newspaper clippings on the endpapers. Bootman's lovely watercolor paintings add detail and wistful nostalgia. Baseball fans may be disappointed with the narrative's slow pace and the fact that Robinson is little more than an iconic figure, but others will appreciate the story's insightful treatment of deafness as viewed through the eyes of a child. --Marilyn Taniguchi, Beverly Hills Public Library, CA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Gr. 2--4, younger for reading aloud. Following in the tradition of Bette Bao Lord's *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson* (1984), about a young Chinese immigrant to Brooklyn in 1947 who identifies with the travails of the rookie Dodger first baseman, Uhlberg tells another story of an outsider who feels a bond with Robinson. This outsider, though, is a real-life figure, the author's deaf father, who saw in the African American Robinson's stoic endurance of prejudice on and off the field a parallel to his own experience as a deaf man. It takes the young Uhlberg, narrator of the story, a while to overcome his embarrassment at his father's attempts to cheer for Robinson ("AH-GEE, AH-GEE," the deaf man yells from the Ebbetts Fields grandstand, attempting to say Jackie), but eventually Dad's devotion wins the day in a moving finale. Colin Bootman, who earned a Coretta Scott Honor Award for *Almost to Freedom* (2003), uses evocative watercolors rich in soft browns and lush greens to capture both the feel of the 1940s (fedora-wearing fans) and the electricity of Robinson's play. Bill OttCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

The story is a good one, and, if the afterword is to be believed, true to the author's life. His deaf father feels a personal connection to Jackie Robinson because of discrimination and prejudice, and goes to all the games he can, learns as much about baseball as possible (the afterword explained that his father hadn't learned baseball at the residential school he attended as a child as it was

considered a "waste of time" to teach deaf kids to play sports), and when the Dodgers win the World Series, our narrator's father is thrown a ball from his hero, so it's this triumph for him as well. It's a good story. Of course, the afterword is where the meat is. In the story itself, we're told that "The Giants hated Jackie Robinson", but no detail is given. The innocent reader might come away with the impression that the Giants disliked him simply because he was a good ball player! The afterword explains how our author's father told him to look out for all the unfair treatment Robinson would receive from the other team, all the petty bits of discrimination - this isn't mentioned in the book proper. The afterword explains why the author's father was so interested in Jackie Robinson (and why he knew so little about baseball prior to that, up to being unable to catch a ball) and also explains that his father told him about the first deaf man to play in the Major Leagues, well before this time. All of this information could have been integrated into the book, and it would have made the book a better read. I could understand leaving out some information for younger readers, but this book is written on an advanced enough level that I don't think that could apply here. Given how important the context of discrimination and prejudice and differences is for understanding the book, I think it should have been included in the main text. I also am not a fan of the illustrations. Many of them create the appearance of having been posed rather than of real people. For example, in the scene where our author's dad first shows up with a pair of tickets to a game and shows them to his son, their expressions and posture look so forced that I keep wondering if there's supposed to be a hidden camera in the room! There are two minor notes I want to make about language as well. First, the book does mention that Jackie Robinson was the first Negro signed onto the Major Leagues, this shouldn't be a problem. It was the acceptable word back then and is totally appropriate in the context. A construction such as African-American would sound very strange! The second is how the father and son talk. The father's speech (unless he's specifically using his voice) is always referred to as signing - "My father signed this" or "My father signed that". This makes sense, his father uses ASL to communicate and we're told his speech is unclear. But when the son speaks to his father, the verb is "said". This forms the weird picture in my mind that the father is signing but his son is speaking English to him and expecting him to lipread. Given that we see the boy signing in many pictures of him with his dad, this seems unlikely (not to mention inefficient!) These two comments are very minor, and shouldn't cause problems for any reader, but I thought I'd mention them.

I bought this for classroom I volunteered. Kids love the stories

Fabulous book

Great special needs book--loved how it didn't show deafness as a loss--but rather as an important aspect to his life

We have both in our family, so this book has been a big hit. I particularly like how the father-son relationship plays out in this book - it sets such a good example for the boys and men in our family.

Wonderful story for any age group about a father, his son, and baseball. My 5-year old grandson loves this book!

You know, I got a little teary-eyed reading this book with my kids. For one thing, there is Jackie Robinson's dignity and excellent play. For another thing, there is the father so enthusiastic that he learns all about Jackie's stats and takes his son to watch the games, sometimes embarrassing the child because of his disability. Great, great illustrations -- the watercolors show so much more than you expect of people's expressions and emotions.

This is my new favorite book. Myron Uhlberg's beautiful picture book connects the plight of suffering racial discrimination with being subjected to prejudice for having a disability. It connects the famous with the common. It will tear at your heart, and hopefully open it to know that change is possible; although often slow and painful. The inside cover is filled with primary resource news clippings from Jackie Robinson's career, making the historical piece all the more tangible to grasp. The author's note at the back of the book pulls it all together, and reveals why this was a book that had to be written. I recommend it for ages 8 to 108.

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