

## The Greatest Negro Leagues Pitcher in Fort Smith

*The below excerpts are from pages 107-113*

**RI.7.1:** Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

**W.7.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

**IE.6.AAH.2:** Examine the various influences of African Americans on social change using *primary* and *secondary sources* from multiple perspectives (e.g., migration, feminism, military, social organizations)

1. In the 1930's and 40's, baseball was such a popular sport that cities and towns across the country organized community leagues, semi-pro teams, and in larger cities, pro teams. Because Jim Crow Laws prevented racial integration, teams were segregated into white and black organizations. The black teams had many outstanding players, and their teams **barnstormed** around the country playing each other in memorable games that drew huge crowds. These **exhibitions** often featured local baseball stars competing with nationally recognized Negro League players. These were the "pros" who joined together to continue playing after their regular teams' short season was over. This helped to spread their fame and, just as importantly, **supplemented** their income.

Discuss: What was different about society 30 to 50 years ago that would make baseball so popular? What did people not have for entertainment then that we have now?

2. One memorable star of the Negro Leagues was Satchel Paige, a pitcher for the Kansas City Monarchs. His baseball talent is legendary, but he, like many other players of his **caliber**, was also a witty entertainer. It was common for the superior Negro League players to resort to comic antics on the field to entertain the fans. They often allowed the out-classed home team to establish a lead while they

amused the crowd. But once the game became a real contest, the pro's would play better and close the gap.

**Barnstorm: V.** [**bahrn**-stawrm] To conduct a tour by making many brief stops in rural cities and/or towns. EX. *The candidates barnstormed the state trying to win votes.*

What famous basketball team does this paragraph remind you of?

**Exhibition: N.** [**ek-suh-bish-uh**] The showing or presentation of a skill, art, or ability to others. EX. *The students' exhibition of their art work at the fair drew a large crowd.*

**Supplement: V.** [**suhp**-luh-ment] The act of adding to, completing, or extending something. EX. *Doctors often prescribe vitamins to supplement babies' food.*

**Caliber: N.** [**kal-uh-ber**] A degree of ability, excellence, or quality. EX: *Maria's dedication and high caliber of work earned her a promotion.*

3. Most players on community teams, black or white, never became big names in the sport. But if they played well against players like Satchel Paige, Josh Gibson, Jackie Robinson and other Negro League greats, they gained a regional reputation. Such was the case with Louis "Teddy" McGill, a left-handed pitcher from Fort Smith who played in the 30s and 40s.

4. Although he never got to see his father play baseball, Arkansas State Representative George McGill, recalls stories he has heard from his father and family and friends about his dad's pitching. Below, he tells about the time the Kansas City Monarchs, with their legendary pitcher, Satchel Paige, came to play against McGill's father's team in Fort Smith.

5. "My dad said that when the Monarchs played the exhibition game over at Andrews Field, people came from everywhere to see it. He said his team was ahead until it hit about the fifth inning. They were really playing good ball. Dad said they got ahead because the Monarchs were clowning around. The game was tight before the Monarchs started to get serious. That's when Dad saw what made Satchel Paige a legend."

How would it feel to be playing hard against a team that was "clowning around"?

6. "He said it was unbelievable. We're talking about fast balls that Dad said his guys couldn't put a bat on. He said

Why do you think the Monarchs clowning around and waited so long to get serious about the game? How would their "antics" make the game more interesting overall?

most of them couldn't even start their turn (to swing the bat) before the ball was past them. It was such a **velocity!** And his curve balls looked like they were falling off a table."

**Legendary ADJ.** [lej-uh n-der-ee] Having the quality of a legend such as being famous past one's own time. *Because he took the first step on the moon, Neil Armstrong is legendary today.*

**Velocity N.** [vuh-los-i-tee] The rate of speed at which something happens.  
Ex. The velocity of brakeless car was slow enough to prevent much damage.

7. "The crowd was in awe. Satchel Paige became larger than life on the mound. Dad said he thought he was a pretty good pitcher, but that day he said he discovered what made Satchel Paige great."

8. Amazingly enough, McGill says his dad's team didn't lose. "People tell me that my dad picked a guy off first base and ended the game with the Monarchs having two outs and runners on first and third. I wasn't there. I don't know this for a fact. But that's what people who say they were there tell me."

Discuss in your small group:

Style:

1. What details in paragraph 6 make Satchel Paige's pitching vivid for the reader? Underline the phrases or words that make that paragraph "come alive" for you.
2. Discuss the last sentence of paragraph 6. How does this description help you understand what a great curve ball should do?

Narration:

1. What does Rep. McGill say in the final paragraph that makes him a trustworthy narrator?

Extending meaning:

1. This story is taken from the anthology *African-American Athletes in Arkansas*. Why are facts important in history?

2. Sometimes historians use interesting stories about people that they cannot document, or prove to be true. When would it be all right to do this? Do you think historians have an obligation to point out that the story is just that, a story, and not a confirmed fact?
3. Do some quick research on Jim Crow Laws. Why were they called by that name? How did the laws affect black people, especially those who needed to travel to different cities—such as the baseball players mentioned in this story?

Writing and Research:

### Goose and Geese

The Harlem Globetrotters began in the 1920s and has been a popular exhibition basketball team ever since. The team now plays games in cities around the world. It started as a serious team, but in 1941 began to add comedy to its performance, thanks to south Arkansas native Reese “Goose” Tatum. Another famous Globetrotter with Arkansas connections is Hubert “Geese” Ausbie. Both men had tremendous athleticism, but they were also accomplished and popular entertainers who were much loved for their humor.

Do some quick research on these two athletes in the online [Encyclopedia of Arkansas](#). If time permits go to YouTube.com and search on the following phrases for two well-made biographical highlight clips:

1. “Goose Tatum Career Retrospective”
2. “Harlem Globetrotters Honor Geese Ausbie”

Another recommended source is the following article which originally published in the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette's Sync* weekly:

<http://www.bestofarkansasports.com/when-goose-met-geese-the-story-of-arkansas-finest-globetrotters/>

Write a summary paragraph of what you learned about each man to share with someone (a relative or friend) that you think will be

interested in their lives. (If you are working with a partner, you may divide the assignment between you.)