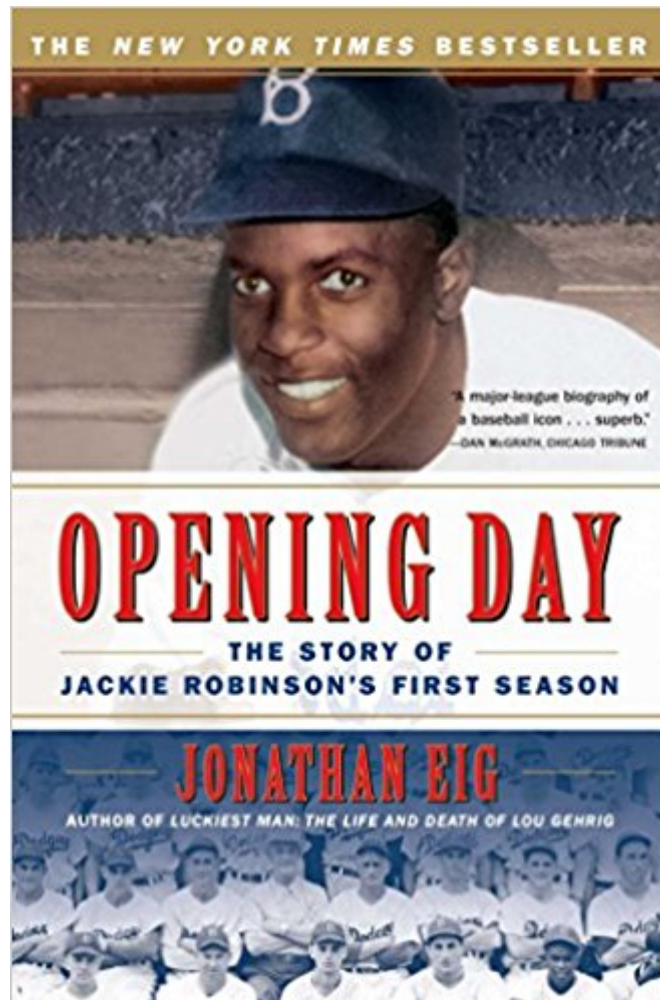




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Opening Day: The Story Of Jackie Robinson's First Season



Synopsis

This bestselling account of the most important season in baseball history, 1947, tells the dramatic story of how Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier and changed baseball forever. April 15, 1947, marked the most important opening day in baseball history. When Jackie Robinson stepped onto the diamond that afternoon at Ebbets Field, he became the first black man to break into major-league baseball in the twentieth century. World War II had just ended. Democracy had triumphed. Now Americans were beginning to press for justice on the home front—and Robinson had a chance to lead the way. In *Opening Day*, Jonathan Eig tells the true story behind the national pastime's most sacred myth. He offers new insights into events of sixty years ago and punctures some familiar legends. Was it true that the St. Louis Cardinals plotted to boycott their first home game against the Brooklyn Dodgers? Was Pee Wee Reese really Robinson's closest ally on the team? Was Dixie Walker his greatest foe? How did Robinson handle the extraordinary stress of being the only black man in baseball and still manage to perform so well on the field? *Opening Day* is also the story of a team of underdogs that came together against tremendous odds to capture the pennant. Facing the powerful New York Yankees, Robinson and the Dodgers battled to the seventh game in one of the most thrilling World Series competitions of all time. Drawing on interviews with surviving players, sportswriters, and eyewitnesses, as well as newly discovered material from archives around the country, Jonathan Eig presents a fresh portrait of a ferocious competitor who embodied integration's promise and helped launch the modern civil-rights era. Full of new details and thrilling action, *Opening Day* brings to life baseball's ultimate story.

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Customer Reviews

The author of the acclaimed *Luckiest Man* (2005) a biography of Lou Gehrig, turns here to another great American sportsman, Jackie Robinson. So elegant in its logic is Eig's angle--chronicling Robinson's first major-league season (1947) with the Brooklyn Dodgers--it's a wonder no one thought of it before. From Robinson's preseason call-up by Brooklyn's legendary GM, Branch Rickey, to the 1947 World Series, in which the Dodgers took the Yankees to a seventh game (Brooklyn lost), Eig details the dynamics of Robinson's hard-earned acceptance by teammates, the well-chronicled abuse Robinson took from opposing fans and players, the response of local and out-of-town press, and the impact the season had on Robinson's family and on African Americans. Eig also shows what a flat-out great player Robinson was that season. If Eig's workmanlike writing style doesn't necessarily pull the reader along, his account of the Dodgers' dramatic 1947 pennant race will. Even Dodger haters--and they are legion--will cheer on the Bums in this fine account. Alan Moores

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"Allen gives this chronicle...a measured and dignified reading, conveying both the excitement of the on-field action and the tense drama of Robinson's journey into the previously all-white world of pro baseball." ---Booklist --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is my third Jackie Robinson biography (not including the one assigned to us in fourth grade), and it is my favorite. It turns out that not some but much of what is accepted as fact is in reality open to debate. (I won't say which facts, so as not to spoil the fun of finding out.) Eig is quite clear on what is established, what is believed to have happened but not proven, and what vignettes probably did not happen but have avoided scrutiny over the last 65 years, mostly because we want to believe they happened. As a result you can read *Opening Day* knowing that nothing is assumed, the author took no shortcuts and if something is in here and isn't otherwise qualified, it happened. This approach creates a very human dimension to the story missing in previous biographies. Almost everyone involved in this season is portrayed in shades of gray, even Branch Rickey. I came away thinking -- and Eig does very little moralizing so you figure this out on your own -- that Robinson became indeed as important a figure in civil rights as anyone, simply by quietly doing his job. This whole story is about people quietly doing their jobs, and by learning to act in their own best interests to do their jobs better, advancing civil rights as much if not more in one year than in the any of the 10-15 subsequent years.

By telling the story of Jackie Robinson, Jonathan Eig is tackling a story that has been told many times through different mediums, ranging from children's books like *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson* to books like *Baseball's Great Experiment* and films like *The Jackie Robinson Story*. This can be very daunting in the 21st century, as most readers will know so much about Robinson that it is important for the writer to try and dig even further into the story of the 1947 season. In his second book, Eig does a great job combining primary sources and oral histories while also presenting his own interpretations of events. Eig also does good work examining apocryphal stories, like Pee Wee Reese putting his arm around Robinson in Cincinnati during the 1947 season, pouring through game stories not only to find out that there wasn't any coverage of the event in 1947, but also to provide an alternate idea of when this story actually took place. By not only examining the events on the baseball diamond, but also the stories of people living at the time and how the integration of Major League Baseball affected people, Eig is expanding the story of the 1947 season beyond just Jackie Robinson. And by looking at the 1947 season through the point of view of people ranging from Mike Royko to Malcolm X, the readers are truly able to understand the effect of Robinson on all of society, instead of just focusing on his impact on baseball.

Jackie Robinson is one of the most legendary figures in the history of sports. In 1947, Jack Roosevelt Robinson broke the color barrier becoming the first African-American in Major League Baseball. Years before Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr., number 42 for the Brooklyn Dodgers stepped onto the baseball diamond at Ebbets Field and forever changed America. The road was definitely not easy for Jackie. On the field he was taunted, teased, and provoked all season long. Off the field he rarely could sleep in the same hotel or eat in the same restaurant as his teammates, typically he would be forced to the segregated parts of the community during road trips. Yet despite the challenges from inside and out, Jackie Robinson was a force to be reckoned with. He accepted the challenge to not only be a role model to African-Americans, but also an incredible ball player. Easily the MVP of his team, Jackie led a mediocre Brooklyn Dodger ball club to the World Series. Unfortunately, Jackie's historical first year ended with the much hated Yankees winning it all. Nevertheless, 1947 would go down in history as one of the most influential years in professional sports. Jackie Robinson is a legend. He was given a seemingly impossible task and he succeeded unbelievably. Jackie Robinson was a humble man with a strong competitive spirit. His passion to win made him a great ball player, but his passion for equality and justice made him a great man. *Opening Day* is not just about Jackie Robinson and his journey through his inaugural season, it

is about America in 1947. Jackie's presence changed the nation: professional sports, politics, business, black culture, white culture, newsprint, entertainment, etc. For the first time, all Americans were forced to examine their prejudices. If you are a student of baseball history or American history or the civil rights movement, this book gives the reader a wonderful, unbiased snapshot of the world during the 1947 baseball season.

In my own experience, I have found it difficult to read books about baseball. Not because I don't like baseball, mind you, but mostly because it is hard to follow play-by-plays in a story when I don't quite know how to play baseball. So when a book is filled with baseball game language and only rarely touches on a story I get bored. It is safe to say that *Opening Day* was a wonderful read. I was able to understand the storyline and history, and even when Eig discussed a game he still backed it up with additional thematic elements for me to understand the point of the game dialogue being put in. Eig has a great ability to put you in someone else's shoes. He tells Jackie Robinson's story as if he were an actual ghostwriter living alongside Robinson and dictating everything he has experienced. It is a great and easy read one time through, and a wonderful historical reference for a second or third time through.

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