

Name _____ Date _____

Roberto Clemente

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. b'

Roberto Clemente grew up in Puerto Rico, where he spent his free time playing baseball with his brothers and friends. The young baseball players couldn't afford store-bought equipment, but they didn't let this stand as a barrier. Instead, they made their own gear. They carved baseball bats from tree branches and made baseballs from crushed cans. They also crafted baseballs by wrapping string around old socks or rags, which they then enclosed in cloth. As for baseball gloves, the players fashioned them from whatever materials they could find, including cardboard and coffee sacks.

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2. b'

At age 20, Roberto Clemente relocated from Carolina, Puerto Rico, to the mainland United States, determined to fulfill his dream of playing major league baseball. The move was not easy, however. Clemente had to adjust to a new culture, a new language, and new rules. Some of these rules were unfair and unethical, particularly in the American south. During annual spring training in Florida, Clemente came face-to-face with Jim Crow laws, which shocked and disheartened him. These discriminatory regulations allowed the enforcement of segregation. Year after year, Clemente and the other Black and Latino players were barred from beaches, swimming pools, golf courses, and restaurants White players enjoyed. They weren't even allowed to stay at the team's hotel; instead, they had to find their own lodging by renting rooms in people's homes. Things were better in Pennsylvania, where the Pittsburgh Pirates were based, but even there, Clemente faced race and language discrimination.

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3. b'

When the Pittsburgh Pirates drafted Roberto Clemente in 1954, they were far from a top team. In fact, they had recently finished last in the National League and their performance continued to be uninspiring for the next few years. But then things started to turn around. In 1960, the Pirates won the National League championship, making them eligible for the World Series for the first time in 33 years.

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Their World Series opponent was the New York Yankees, who had played in eight of the last ten World Series championships. Many people expected the Yankees to win. But after six games, the Pirates and the Yankees were tied with three wins each. The seventh game would decide it all.

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By the time the Pirates took their turn at bat in the bottom of the ninth inning, the score was 9-9. Clemente's teammate Bill Mazeroski hit a walk-off homerun, delivering the Pirates their first World Series victory since 1925. This major upset was a watershed moment in baseball history.

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4. b'

Roberto Clemente was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame shortly after his death. Speaking on his behalf, his wife Vera Zabala announced, "This is Roberto's final honor." But Zabala went on to ensure that Clemente's biggest dream was honored as well.

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Proud of his Puerto Rican heritage and devoted to youth mentorship, Clemente had dreamed of creating a youth sports center in Puerto Rico. In the wake of his death, Zabala took on this goal herself. In 1976, she established the Ciudad Deportiva Roberto Clemente (Roberto Clemente Sports City) in Carolina, Puerto Rico. "I felt the responsibility to give children the opportunity not just to become stars but good citizens," she recounted to the New York Times years later.

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