

Off the Field

In December 1972, a plane carrying earthquake relief supplies to Nicaragua crashed shortly after takeoff from Puerto Rico. All five men aboard were killed. One of these men was Roberto Clemente, famous baseball player and renowned humanitarian.

The world mourned Roberto. Only a few months after his death he was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. A Major League Baseball award for sportsmanship and community service was renamed in his honor.

Roberto hadn't always been such a revered public figure. For many years he was mocked and discriminated against because of his Latino heritage. Roberto was proud of his culture and stayed true to himself and his background. He fought for equality and transformed the landscape of baseball for Latino players.

Roberto Clemente grew up in Puerto Rico. He came to New York in 1954 to play for the minor league team of the Brooklyn Dodgers. The following year he joined the major leagues with the Pittsburgh Pirates. Roberto played for the Pirates for eighteen years, winning twelve Golden Glove awards and hitting over 3,000 base hits.

Roberto was a hero in Puerto Rico. But the public in Pittsburgh was not kind to him. They made fun of his Spanish accent. They tried to call him Bob

or Bobby. Eventually he won over the public opinion with the strength of his play and the strength of his convictions. “My greatest satisfaction comes from helping to erase the old opinion about Latin Americans,” Roberto said.

Roberto was not only a star player and a champion of equality, he was also service minded. He gave his time and energy to help others and especially enjoyed helping young baseball players in Puerto Rico. He spent the winters in his hometown, visiting his family, playing winter baseball in the Puerto Rican League, and teaching young players baseball skills.

In the winter of 1972 there was a terrible earthquake in Nicaragua. Wanting to help as always, Roberto left home to offer his aid to the victims of the quake. When the plane crashed, Roberto died doing what he loved – helping others. He was a hero on and off the field.



This page has been intentionally left blank.

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. Roberto Clemente was born in:
 - a. New York
 - b. Puerto Rico
 - c. Pittsburgh
 - d. Nicaragua

2. Which honor did Roberto NOT win?
 - a. Induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame
 - b. The Golden Glove Award
 - c. The Silver Slugger Award
 - d. Namesake honor for the Major League Baseball community service award

3. Why do you think Roberto did not want to be called Bob or Bobby?
 - a. He was proud of his Latino heritage
 - b. There was someone else on his team called Bob
 - c. He didn't care about his fans
 - d. He didn't think Bob went with his last name

4. Why do you think the Major League Baseball service award was renamed for Roberto?
 - a. Because he wanted fame
 - b. Because he died in a tragic plane crash
 - c. Because he stood up for Latino baseball players
 - d. Because he liked to help others

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

1. Roberto Clemente was born in:
 - a. New York
 - b. Puerto Rico**
 - c. Pittsburgh
 - d. Nicaragua
2. Which honor did Roberto NOT win?
 - a. Induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame
 - b. The Golden Glove Award
 - c. The Silver Slugger Award**
 - d. Namesake honor for the Major League Baseball community service award
3. Why do you think Roberto did not want to be called Bob or Bobby?
 - a. He was proud of his Latino heritage**
 - b. There was someone else on his team called Bob
 - c. He didn't care about his fans
 - d. He didn't think Bob went with his last name
4. Why do you think the Major League Baseball service award was renamed for Roberto?
 - a. Because he wanted fame
 - b. Because he died in a tragic plane crash
 - c. Because he stood up for Latino baseball players
 - d. Because he liked to help others**