



Satchel

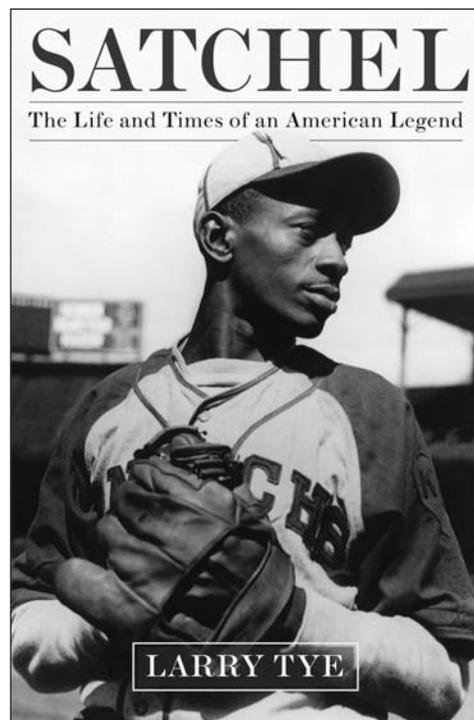
The Life and Times of an American Legend

Written by Larry Tye

- A 2009 *New York Times* Notable Book
- A 2009 CHOICE Outstanding Academic Title

Random House | Hardcover
978-1-4000-6651-3 | 416 pp | \$26.00/\$30.00 Can.

Reading Level: 8th Grade



“It takes nothing away from Jackie Robinson to note, as Larry Tye does in this important new book, that Satchel Paige—he of a fastball of historic proportions—is an overlooked pioneer in the integration of baseball, and of America itself. This engaging biography sheds light not only on Paige but on the game and the country he helped change forever.”

—Jon Meacham, Pulitzer-Prize winning author of *American Lion*

• about this guide •

Satchel is a story of triumph along with tragedy. Leroy “Satchel” Paige pitched baseballs so hard and fast that his catchers had to cushion their gloves with beefsteaks, with control so pinpoint he could toss nine of 10 pitches directly over a matchbook placed on home plate. Yet Satchel was born in 1906 in Alabama, a time and place where his skin color prevented him from fully participating in society or the game he played. Banished like all blacks then from the all-white Major Leagues, he spent his prime pitching in the shadow world of the Negro Leagues.

This book, then, is a biography of two American icons—Satchel Paige and Jim Crow. It tells the story of Jim Crow racial segregation through the story of strikeout king Satchel Paige, whose career and life were shaped by an insidious system that separated the races everywhere from schoolyards to buses to ball fields. Those stories start when Satchel did, in 1906, and continue nearly a full century until his death in 1982. *Satchel* blends meticulous historical research and hundreds of interviews into a compelling narrative. It is a book for those who love tales of baseball, of race, or of the American dream.

Teachers and students will find *Satchel* an enormously useful teaching tool. His life—its highs along with lows—opens opportunities for research, analysis, and discussion.

• note to teachers

Larry Tye's *Satchel* offers a lens into 20th-Century America. It explores race, geography, and history. It takes us deep into the urban cultures of Chicago and Pittsburgh, Mobile and Kansas City, and follows Satchel's African American barnstorming teams onto farms and into small towns across rural America. Students will see how a biographer captures an enigmatic, historically important figure from our past. Racism comes to life in these pages, along with successful bids to uproot it. We watch relationships evolve between blacks and white, players and fans, men and women, modernists and traditionalists. It is a book appropriate for students from middle school through graduate school.

There is no better way to follow the ups and downs of blacks and whites in America than in the controlled setting of a baseball diamond. And what better way to bring alive the story of race than through the singular lens of America's most gifted, engaging, and enduring black ballplayer? Just as *Seabiscuit* was about more than a heroic race horse—it was the story of depression era America and the triumph of hope—so *Satchel* shows us the full sweep not just of black baseball but of Jim Crow America.

• about the book

Satchel's story is larger-than-life. He learned to pitch in reform school. When he played years later in Venezuela, crowd members at first threatened him with poison darts, then shared their meal of bug meat and asked for his autograph when one of them recognized him as the great Satchel Paige. His salary in his best years at least equaled the President's, which is how he could afford forty tailor-made suits, thirty pairs of custom-made shoes with pearls in the toes, underwear festooned with flowers, and a personal valet. And no other player in history—not even the great Babe Ruth—was threatened with a firing squad if he lost the way Satchel said he was in 1937, when Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo summoned him to the island nation to pitch in a critical series.

This book rewrites our history of the integration of baseball, with Satchel Paige playing at least as critical a role as Jackie Robinson. The truth is that Satchel had been hacking away at Jim Crow long before the world heard of Jackie. Satchel never was a modern militant, waging war over every slight, but he brought a spotlight to the Negro Leagues. He pushed to be paid a wage commensurate with his drawing power, in the process raising the wages of his teammates. He proved that black fans would fill ballparks, even when those parks had concrete seats and makeshift walls, and that white fans, too, would turn out to see black superstars. Satchel pitched so brilliantly, especially when his teams were beating the best of the white big leaguers, that fans, sportswriters, and big league owners like Brooklyn's Branch Rickey could not help but notice. If Jackie Robinson was the father of equal opportunity in baseball, Satchel Paige was the grandfather.

• about the author

LARRY TYE was a prize-winning journalist at *The Boston Globe* and a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University. An avid baseball fan, Tye now runs a Boston-based training program for medical journalists. He is the author of *The Father of Spin*, *Home Lands*, and *Rising from the Rails*, and co-author, with Kitty Dukakis, of *Shock*.

• teaching ideas

“Preface”

1. Have students discuss what inspired Larry Tye to write *Satchel*. What legends prompted his interest in this baseball legend? (See *Class Activities #3 for a corresponding project*).
2. Discuss the process of research. Explain the difference between primary and secondary sources. Have students conduct library research on an event from the recent past. Then, have students conduct interview projects in which they talk to a parent/grandparent/local resident about the same event. Discuss the differences in the sources.
3. In “Preface” ix, Tye discusses his search for Satchel’s age. Why was this search difficult? Why was this search important?
4. Several terms from “Preface” recur throughout the text. Have students define and discuss “Jim Crow,” “Uncle Tom,” and “Stepin Fetchit.” Do these terms still have relevance today? What words have taken their places? Do the attitudes underlying these phrases still ring true? Have students discuss with parents/older adults the realities of these terms.
5. In “Preface” xi, the text compares Satchel to A. Philip Randolph, W.E.B. Du Bois, and other civil rights leaders. In what way(s) is Satchel like these men? In what way(s) is he different?

“Chronology”

1. Use the “Chronology” to construct a timeline of American and world history. What major world events took place during Satchel’s life? How did they affect his life?
2. Have students construct timelines of their own lives. What significant personal and world events intersect?

“Author’s Note”

1. Why was Tye’s “tactical decision” necessary?
2. What matters of style does Tye address in this note? Use the “Author’s Note” as a springboard to discussions of style and voice in student writing.

“Coming Alive”

1. Have students describe the Mobile, Alabama, of Satchel’s youth.
2. Have students describe Satchel’s family. What were the family relationships and how did they impact Satchel’s life? What were the attitudes of Mobile? How did these impact Satchel as he was growing up?
3. Have students research the Mobile Bay hurricane. Use that hurricane to prompt a research study of hurricanes in the United States.
4. Discuss the history of race in Mobile (pp. 4-6). How does race in this city parallel or differ from the racial history of America? Or the Deep South?
5. Use Maya Angelou’s “My Arkansas” to discuss the lingering racism of American society.
6. Have students create a family tree for Satchel. Also have students create family trees of their own. (Be careful of strained and unclear family relationships.)
7. How did “Satchel” get his nickname? Why might there be differing versions of this and other stories of Satchel’s life?
8. Have students trace Satchel’s early development as a baseball player.
9. Discuss Mount Meigs Reform School. What was its purpose? Out of what movement did it arise? How did it impact Satchel’s life?

• teaching ideas (continued)

“Blackball”

1. What was Alex Herman’s role in Satchel’s life? Discuss the concept and role of mentors. Ask your students to identify a mentor in their lives. Encourage students to establish mentor relationships through local groups that provide such services.
2. How did Satchel respond to making money?
3. Discuss the history of race in baseball. How is race viewed differently today than it was when Satchel was playing baseball? Are there still similarities?
4. Have students discuss the differences between the White and Negro Leagues.
5. What did baseball mean to black society? Have students describe a typical Negro League game. What elements were different from white baseball?
6. Discuss Satchel’s relationships with his managers and the other players. What might have motivated Satchel’s separation from his teammates?

“The Glory Trail”

1. Who was Janet Howard? Connect her to Satchel.
2. Why are Satchel’s statistics difficult to know? How did the realities of Satchel’s career mask or enhance his real results?
3. How did baseball reporters help clear the path for integrated baseball? Have students examine the role of the press in social change. Use the press’s role in integrating baseball as a starting point.

“The Game in Black and White”

1. What unique opportunity did Neil Churchill give Satchel? Why did this opportunity allow Satchel to “crack another little chink in Jim Crow”?
2. Discuss the diversity of venues that this chapter explores. Why/how did Satchel play in so many settings?
3. How did “barnstorming” give black players a chance to compare their skills to whites?
4. How did these famous barnstorming white players match up to Satchel’s pitching?

“South of the Border”

1. What “liberties” did playing south of the border give black athletes?
2. Discuss Satchel’s shoulder injury. How did it happen? What were its repercussions? How did Satchel recover?
3. In Puerto Rico, Satchel met Lucy. Discuss their meeting. How does the story of their marriage portray Satchel? How did he justify his infidelities? How do these stories alter Satchel’s image?

“South of the Border”

1. Discuss the significance of Satchel’s purchase of a home in Kansas City.
2. Why is Satchel’s advice to young players (p. 156) ironic?

“Master of the Manor”

1. What happened to Satchel’s relationships with Janet and Lucy?
 2. Discuss Satchel’s relationship with Lahoma Jean Brown. How was it different from the others?
 3. In this chapter, what signs of maturity begin to show in Satchel’s life?
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“Baseball’s Great Experiment”

1. Why was Jackie Robinson a “better” choice for breaking baseball’s color barrier than Satchel?
 2. Why did Satchel have “little use” for Robinson (p. 181)?
 3. Where does the integration of baseball fit in the timeline of racial equality in America?
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“An Opening at Last”

1. Who gave Satchel his entry into the white majors?
 2. For how long had Satchel pitched before he got his first Major League contract?
 3. How did Satchel’s first Major League season go?
 4. Discuss the mix-ups involved in Satchel’s marriage to Lahoma. How are they typical of Satchel’s life?
 5. How many children did Satchel have?
 6. Satchel still holds the record for oldest pitcher to ever throw a complete game. At what age did he pitch?
 7. Satchel appeared in his last Major League game at what age (a record also)?
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“Maybe I’ll Pitch Forever”

1. Which of Satchel’s feats make him a legend?
 2. What books did Satchel pen?
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“Crafting a Legend”

1. When was Satchel admitted into the Baseball Hall of Fame? In what ways was the admission hollow for Satchel?
2. Describe Satchel’s later working years of his life. Do you think these years were personally satisfying/successful?
3. Describe Satchel’s goals for his children. What did these goals reveal about Satchel?
4. Describe Satchel’s later years and death.

• class activities

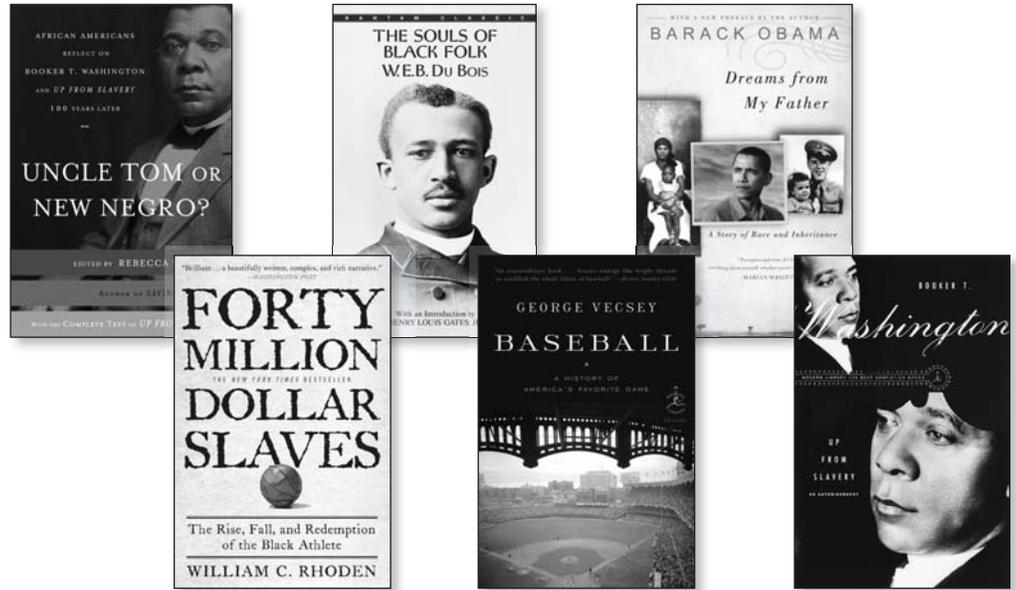
1. Have students write their autobiographies. They can begin by making timelines of their lives. Then, they can interview significant people in their lives to help compile stories about their lives. Do the stories people relay reflect the major points on the timeline? Discuss how history can be up to interpretation, especially when it comes to writing biography.
2. Have students choose a significant event from their lives about which to write a narrative essay. They should begin by identifying the event and its significance. Use a pre-writing device to generate the specific details of the event. First, hook the reader; then, narrate the event, and end with how the event is significant.
3. Have students identify a person who inspires them. Assign students a writing project about this person. This project may take the form of a poem, essay, or short story.
4. Use *Satchel* as a springboard to researching the famous people with whom Satchel came into contact. Use figures from sports, entertainment, and history that are mentioned in the text, such as:

Louis Armstrong	Lena Horne	A. Philip Randolph
P. T. Barnum	Teddy Horne	Paul Robeson
Count Basie	Langston Hughes	Bojangles Robinson
Cab Calloway	Jack Johnson	Jackie Robinson
Dizzy Dean	George Kaufman	Will Rogers
Fats Domino	Joe Louis	Art Rooney
W.E.B. Du Bois	Martin Luther	Max Schmeling
“Duke” Ellington	Mills Brothers	Jim Thorpe
Marcus Garvey	Frank Merriwell	Booker T. Washington
Moss Hart	Jessie Owens	Cy Young

Teachers might also assign modern ball players, entertainers, and public figures.

5. Use *Satchel* to introduce a study of the racial history of America. Examine the debate between W. E. B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington. How does Satchel’s experience at Mount Meigs figure in this debate?
6. Satchel Paige is famous for his aphorisms, or pithy expressions of life. Have students study aphorisms, and construct their own versions, perhaps based on modern communications (iPods, email, texting) or other modern-day examples.
7. Examine barriers as a subject for writing about social problems. What barriers do students encounter daily? What barriers still remain for minorities in America?
8. Work with a math teacher to study the mathematics of baseball.
<http://www.teachersfirst.com/baseball.htm> has many activities to help get you started.
9. Use *Satchel* for geographical discovery. Have students trace Satchel’s movements on U.S. and world maps. Assign students to research the different places that were important to Satchel’s life. Students can also prepare travel brochures to “sell” their location to classmates.
10. Have students write essays on the importance of a home. Lead a discussion of Satchel’s search for belonging.

• for further reading



Uncle Tom or New Negro? African Americans Reflect on Booker T. Washington and Up from Slavery 100 Years Later, Rebecca Carroll

Dreams from My Father, Barack Obama

Maybe I'll Pitch Forever, Leroy Paige

The Complete Game: Reflections on Baseball, Pitching, and Life on the Mound, Ron Darling

Pitchin' Man: Satchel Paige's Own Story, Satchel Paige

The Souls of Black Folk, W. E. B. Du Bois

Forty Million Dollar Slaves: The Rise, Fall, and Redemption of the Black Athlete, William C. Rhoden

Satchel Paige's America, William Price Fox

Shades of Glory: The Negro Leagues and the Story of African-American Baseball, Lawrence D. Hogan

Baseball: A History of America's Favorite Game, George Vecsey

Up from Slavery, Booker T. Washington

• online resources

- <http://www.baseball-almanac.com>: A site for baseball history and statistics.
- <http://www.baseballhalloffame.org>: The official site of the Baseball Hall of Fame.
- <http://www.nlbpa.com>: The site of the Negro League Baseball Players Association.
- <http://www.satchelpaige.com>: A site for biography, quotations, and more.

• about the guide writer

DAVID CORLEY teaches high school English in South Carolina. His experience is with many different levels of students in grades 9-12. He has also taught courses for adult education, college, and graduate-level students.

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Achebe, Chinua. **Things Fall Apart**
Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. **Purple Hibiscus**
Asimov, Isaac. **I, Robot**
Bradbury, Ray. **Fahrenheit 451**
Brooks, Terry. **The Shannara Trilogy**
Butler, William. **The Butterfly Revolution**
Cather, Willa. **My Antonia**
Cisneros, Sandra. **The House on Mango Street**
Clark, William van Tilburg. **The Ox-Bow Incident**
Clarke, Arthur C. **Childhood's End**
Cook, Karin. **What Girls Learn**
Crichton, Michael. **Jurassic Park**
Doctorow, E.L. **Ragtime**
Drew, Alan. **Gardens of Water**
Dunn, Mark. **Ella Minnow Pea**
Ellis, Ella Throp. **Swimming with the Whales**
Ellison, Ralph. **Invisible Man**
Ford, Jamie. **Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet**
Gaines, Ernest. **A Lesson Before Dying**
García Márquez, Gabriel. **Chronicle of a Death Foretold**
Gibbons, Kaye. **Ellen Foster**
Grisham, John. **A Time to Kill**
Guterson, David. **Snow Falling on Cedars**
Hansberry, Lorraine. **A Raisin in the Sun**
Hayes, Daniel. **Eye of the Beholder**
Hayes, Daniel. **The Trouble with Lemons**
Homer. Fitzgerald, Robert, trans. **The Odyssey**
Jones, Lloyd. **Mister Pip**
Kafka, Franz. **The Trial**
Khedairi, Betool. **Absent**
L'Amour, Louis. **Hondo**
Le Guin, Ursula K. **A Wizard of Earthsea**
Matar, Hisham. **In the Country of Men**
Maxwell, William. **So Long, See You Tomorrow**
McCarthy, Cormac. **All The Pretty Horses**
McCarthy, Susan Carol. **Lay That Trumpet**

in Our Hands

Miéville, China. **Un Lun Dun**
Mitchell, David. **Black Swan Green**
Mori, Kyoko. **Shizuko's Daughter**
Mullen, Thomas. **The Last Town on Earth**
Naylor, Gloria. **Mama Day**
Otsuka, Julie. **When the Emperor Was Divine**
Potok, Chaim. **The Chosen**
Pullman, Philip. **The Amber Spyglass**
Pullman, Philip. **The Golden Compass**
Pullman, Philip. **The Subtle Knife**
Rawles, Nancy. **My Jim**
Remarque, Erich Maria. **All Quiet on the Western Front**
Richter, Conrad. **The Light in the Forest**
See, Lisa. **Snow Flower and the Secret Fan**
Shaara, Jeff. **Gods and Generals**
Shaara, Jeff. **The Last Full Measure**
Shaara, Michael. **The Killer Angels**
Shaffer, Mary Ann; Barrows, Annie. **The Guernsey Literary & Potato Peel Pie Society**
Shute, Neil. **On the Beach**
Sinclair, Upton. **The Jungle**
Smith, Alexander McCall. **The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency**
Sparks, Christine. **The Elephant Man**
Spiegelman, Art. **Maus I**
Tan, Amy. **The Joy Luck Club**
Tolkien, J.R.R. **Lord of the Rings Trilogy**
Tolkien, J.R.R. **The Hobbit**
Twain, Mark. **Adventures of Huckleberry Finn**
Voigt, Cynthia. **Dacey's Song**
Voigt, Cynthia. **Homecoming**
Vonnegut, Kurt. **Cat's Cradle**
Vonnegut, Kurt. **Slaughterhouse-Five**
Wartski, Maureen. **Candle in the Wind**
Wolff, Tobias. **Old School**

Nonfiction:

Angelou, Maya. **I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings**
Armstrong, Karen. **Islam**
Baldwin, James. **Nobody Knows My Name**
Baldwin, James. **The Fire Next Time**
Bible. **The Five Books of Moses**
Bryson, Bill. **Short History of Nearly Everything**
Cary, Lorene. **Black Ice**
Chen, Da. **Colors of the Mountain**
Collins, Billy. **Poetry 180/180 More**
Conway, Jill Ker. **The Road from Coorain**
Farrow, Anne, et. al. **Complicity**
Frank, Anne. **Diary of a Young Girl**
Haley, Alex. **The Autobiography of Malcolm X**
Heath, Chip and Dan Heath. **Made to Stick**
Hickam, Homer. **October Sky**
Hunter, Latoya. **The Diary of Latoya Hunter**
Hunter-Gault, Charlayne. **In My Place**
Katz, Jon. **Geeks**
Kennedy, Randall. **Nigger**
Kidder, Tracy. **Mountains Beyond Mountains**
Kidder, Tracy. **Strength in What Remains**
Lewis, Anthony. **Gideon's Trumpet**
Miller, Jennifer. **Inheriting the Holy Land**
Nafisi, Azar. **Reading Lolita in Tehran**
Nazario, Sonia. **Enrique's Journey**
Neufeld, Josh. **A.D.**
Opdyke, Irene Gut. **In My Hands**
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Robison, John Elder. **Look Me in the Eye**
Santiago, Esmeralda. **Almost a Woman**
Santiago, Esmeralda. **When I Was Puerto Rican**
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Suskind, Ron. **A Hope in the Unseen**
Taylor, Nick. **American-Made**
Thomas, Piri. **Down These Mean Streets**
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Whiteley, Opal. **Opal: The Journey of an Understanding Heart**

