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Dramatic Publishing

Jackie & Me



By
Steven Dietz

Based on the book by
Dan Gutman

“Jackie Robinson is the only player in the history of Major League baseball whose number was retired by every single team.”

—*Baseball Almanac*

“You’re going to be a great player, kid.”
(to Mickey Mantle after the 1952 World Series.)

—Jackie Robinson, *Baseball Almanac*

“After the game, Jackie Robinson came into our clubhouse and shook my hand. He said, ‘You’re a helluva ballplayer and you’ve got a great future.’ I thought that was a classy gesture ... Here was a player who had without doubt suffered more abuse and more taunts and more hatred than any player in the history of the game.

And he had made a special effort to compliment and encourage a young white kid from Oklahoma.” —Mickey Mantle, *Baseball Almanac*

Jackie & Me

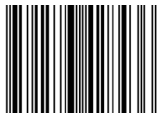
Adventure/Comedy. By Steven Dietz. Based on the book by Dan Gutman.

Cast: 6 to 15m. (doubling possible), 2 to 6w. (doubling possible). Extras as desired. Ten-year-old Joey Stoshack is a headstrong young boy with a special talent for time travel. When Joey is assigned to write a report on an African American who has made an important contribution to society, he uses his special ability to go back to Brooklyn, New York, in 1947. There he meets one of baseball’s greatest players, Jackie Robinson. Joey plans on writing a prize-winning report, but he doesn’t plan on a trip that will forever change his view of history and his definition of courage. “Robinson’s powerhouse contribution to the game he loved, and to the American civil rights movement, are well chronicled in *Jackie & Me*.” (*The Seattle Times*) “[Kids] learn about Jackie Robinson, racial discrimination and restraining one’s temper to achieve a larger goal ... The show is truthful, fun and filled with worthy life lessons for kids.” (*Chicagocritic.com*) “Moving ... empowering ... this is not a play about celebrity worship or mere historical awareness but a strikingly sophisticated exploration of what having a hero can do for a young man as well as what the admiration of a young man can do for a role model who doesn’t yet know what that means and is just trying to hit a ball.” (*Chicago Tribune*). Flexible staging. Approximate running time: 85 minutes. Code: J66.

Cover: Chicago Children’s Theatre premier production.

Photo: Michael Brosilow. Cover design: Susan Carle.

ISBN 10: 1-58342-843-7
ISBN 13: 978-1-58342-843-6



9 781583 428436 >

www.dramaticpublishing.com



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311 Washington St.

Woodstock, IL 60098

Phone: (800) 448-7469

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Printed on recycled paper

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Adventure/Comedy by

STEVEN DIETZ

Adapted from the book by

DAN GUTMAN



Dramatic Publishing Company

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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(JACKIE & ME)

For inquiries concerning all other rights, contact:
Abrams Artists Agency
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New York, NY 10001 • Phone: (646) 486-4601, ext. 222

ISBN: 978-1-58342-843-6

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All producers of the play *must* give credit to Steven Dietz as the dramatizer of the play and Dan Gutman as the author of the book in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The names of Steven Dietz and Dan Gutman *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type shall read as follows:

Jackie & Me

Adapted from the book by Dan Gutman.

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In addition all producers of the play must include the following acknowledgment on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and on all advertising and promotional materials:

“The world premiere of *Jackie & Me* was presented by
Chicago Children’s Theatre, Chicago, on February 11, 2011.”

The world premiere of *Jackie & Me* was presented by the Chicago Children’s Theatre at the Ruth Page Center for the Arts, Chicago, on February 11, 2011, until March 27, 2011.

Cast

Joey Stoshack..... Tyler Ross
Mom..... Vanessa Greenway
Dad..... Ron Rains
Jackie Robinson..... Kamal Angelo Bolden
Rachel..... Tracy N. Bonner
Ant..... Patrick DeNicola
Flip..... Sean Cooper
Branch Rickey..... Charles Stransky

Production Staff

Director.....Derrick Sanders
Stage Manager.....Michelle Medvin
Set/Scenic Designer..... Ian Zwica
Costume Designer.....Christine Pascual
Lighting..... Seth Reinck
Sound..... Michael Griggs

For my children, Ruby & Abraham Dietz

“Maybe I see Jackie differently. You say he broke the color line. But I say he didn’t break anything. Jackie was a healer.”

—*Carl Erskine, Brooklyn Dodgers pitcher*

Jackie & Me

CHARACTERS

(6m., 2w., doubling as indicated)

JOEY STOSHACK: a 10-year-old boy (played by adult actor).

JACKIE ROBINSON: a 28-year-old ballplayer.

MOM / WOMAN (at fountain) / MRS. HERSKOWITZ

DAD / MAN (at fountain) / DIXIE WALKER / DELIVERY MAN /
BROOKLYN KID 1 / PHILLIES CATCHER

MS. LEVITT / RACHEL ROBINSON / JAYHAWKS CATCHER

COACH / BRANCH RICKEY / EDDIE STANKY / BABE RUTH

FLIP VALENTINI / BROOKLYN KID 3 (YOUNG FLIP) / LEO
DUROCHER / PEE WEE REESE / REPORTER / POLICEMAN

BOBBY FULLER / ANT / BROOKLYN KID 2 / BEN CHAPMAN

OTHERS:

 GROUNDSKEEPER

 UMPIRE'S VOICE

 JAYHAWKS PLAYERS

 YELLOW JACKETS PLAYERS

 STUDENTS

 ANNOUNCER

 DODGERS PLAYERS

 PHILLIES FANS

 PHILLIES PLAYERS / SCHOOLBOY ROWE

 PHILLIES CATCHER

 YELLOW JACKETS CATCHER

 KID IN A CAP

 OTHER MEN (with BABE RUTH)

TIME AND PLACE

The Present. And 1947. Pittsburgh. New York City.
Brooklyn, New York. Philadelphia.

SETTING

An open playing space that will depict a variety of locales.

LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL FIELDS

JOEY'S HOME

A CLASSROOM

FLIP'S FAN CLUB: A glass case displays baseball memorabilia.

BRANCH RICKEY'S OFFICE: Chairs and a desk with an old time black phone.

A DRINKING FOUNTAIN: A fountain with a sign hanging nearby that reads "WHITES ONLY."

THE HOTEL MCALPIN: A hotel room with a small mirror hanging.

THE DODGERS CLUBHOUSE A locker room with baseball equipment, lockers and towels.

EBBETS FIELD: The Dodgers baseball field.

A BROOKLYN STREET

HERSKOWITZ GROCERY: A corner grocery in Brooklyn.

SHIBE PARK: The Phillies baseball field.

THE VISITOR'S CLUBHOUSE (SHIBE PARK): A locker room.

A DARK ALLEY: In the Bronx.

THE VISITOR'S CLUBHOUSE (YANKEE STADIUM): A locker room.

YANKEE STADIUM

JOEY'S BEDROOM

NOTE ON CASTING

It may be desirable, but is not required, to use three or four additional nonspeaking cast members (or "supernumeraries") to fill out the teams, classroom, crowds, etc.

NOTE ON UPDATING

The present year, and thus the names of any current ballplayers mentioned, may be updated as needed.

Jackie & Me

ACT I

AT RISE: *In the darkness, a lone trumpet plays “The Star-Spangled Banner,” quietly and mournful at first, as a shaft of light slowly rises on a GROUNDSKEEPER. The GROUNDSKEEPER is slowly “chalking” the first [or third] base line, as a light rises on JOEY STOSHACK, alone.*

JOEY (*to audience*). There’s something you should know about me. I’ve got a *special power*. When most kids hold an old baseball card in their hand, its just a piece of cardboard. But for me ... well ...

(And now, with the white chalk line nearly complete, the song grows louder, more joyful and is joined by voices: “Oh, say does that star-spangled baaaanner yet waaaaaa-aaaave ... ”)

JOEY (*cont’d*). ... when I hold a baseball card, *my hand starts to tingle ...*

(“O’er the laa-aand of the freeee ... ”)

JOEY (*cont’d*). ... and that baseball card ...

(“ ... and the hooooome of the ... ”)

JOEY (*cont’d*). ... it becomes a *time machine!*

(“ ... braaaaaaaaaaaaaave.”)

UMPIRE’S VOICE. Play ball!

(A Little League baseball field.)

All that is required onstage is the pitcher, BOBBY FULLER, and perhaps a few JAYHAWKS PLAYERS [the opposing team] and some YELLOW JACKET PLAYERS [JOEY's team] in the distance. JOEY's COACH stands to one side.

JOEY, in his uniform, puts on his batting helmet and lifts his bat, ready to hit.)

BOBBY FULLER & JAYHAWKS PLAYERS. NO BATTER,
NO BATTER, NO BATTER, NO BATTER!

COACH. Come on, Joey, give 'er a good rip.

JOEY *(to audience)*. It's the first game of the year, the score is tied—and my team, the Yellow Jackets, really need a hit.

BOBBY FULLER. You can't hit, Stoshack!

JAYHAWKS PLAYERS *(chanting)*. Sto-shack, Sto-shack,
He's a No-Hack!

JOEY. And they need that hit from me.

BOBBY FULLER. You couldn't hit water if you fell out of a boat!

(JAYHAWKS PLAYERS laugh, etc.)

COACH. Little bingo now, buddy!

JOEY. Two outs, two men on—and the pitcher for the Jayhawks is a kid I cannot stand.

BOBBY FULLER *(winds up, saying)*. Hey No-Hack—you're so ugly, when you look in the mirror it turns the other way!

(Pitches.)

(JOEY swings and misses.)

UMPIRE'S VOICE. Strike one!

(JAYHAWKS PLAYERS laugh, cheer, etc.)

JOEY. His name is Bobby Fuller, and I know it's not right to say this—

BOBBY FULLER. Hey Slow-Sack—

JOEY. But *I hate that kid.*

BOBBY FULLER (*winds up again*). You're so dumb, you took a ruler to bed to see how long you slept! (*Pitches.*)

(*JOEY swings and misses.*)

UMPIRE'S VOICE. Strike two!

(*JAYHAWKS PLAYERS laugh, cheer, etc.*)

JOEY. Time out! (*Steps out of the batter's box. Speaks to audience*) I could feel the blood rushing to my face! I knew I was about to blow up.

BOBBY FULLER (*to JAYHAWKS PLAYERS*). Hey, I think little Jo-Jo-Girl is scared of me!

JOEY. But right then I thought of what my mom always says when I'm about to lose my temper—

(*A quick light on MOM.*)

MOM. You can't let it get to you, Joey. You've got to *turn the other cheek.*

JOEY. *But I am running out of cheeks to turn!*

(*MOM is gone.*)

UMPIRE'S VOICE. Batter up!

JOEY (*digs in at home plate*). The coaches are always talking about "being a good sport" and "treating the other team with respect."

BOBBY FULLER. Hey Low-Crack—

JOEY. The Little League has *very strict rules about this stuff*—

BOBBY FULLER. You know the only thing dumber than a box of hammers?

JOEY. But I guess this kid never got the message!

BOBBY FULLER (*starts his wind-up*). A big, dumb ugly *Po-lack!* (*Pitches.*)

(*JOEY swings extra hard and misses.*)

UMPIRE'S VOICE. Strike three—you're out!

BOBBY FULLER & JAYHAWKS PLAYERS (*arms in air, celebrating*). YESSSSSSSSS!!!

(*All action freezes as JOEY stands, holding his bat, literally shaking with anger.*)

JOEY. OK. You can call me ugly and dumb. You can make fun of how I play. But nobody—*nobody*—makes fun of my heritage. I'm proud to be Polish, proud to be a Stoshack. (*Lifts the bat, just as—*) And that's when I felt my arm lifting that bat into the air.

COACH (*steps in*). Take it easy, Joey. He struck you out fair and square.

JOEY. But, Coach—

COACH. We're not gonna lose our temper here, are we? If you get thrown out, we'll be out of players and we'll have to forfeit the game. You wouldn't do that to your teammates, would you?

BOBBY FULLER. Hey, Stoshack, just so you know, I like Polish people. They throw fun parties. And you know when a Polish party is over? When someone flushes the punch bowl!

(*Quick beat. Then JOEY attempts to hurl the bat at BOBBY FULLER just as COACH grabs the other end of the bat, leaving JOEY's arm to continue forward without the bat as he yells.*)

JOEY. Take it back!

(Now JOEY jumps atop BOBBY FULLER, punching him as they fall to the ground, immediately surrounded by all of the JAYHAWKS PLAYERS, the YELLOW JACKET PLAYERS and the UMPIRE until JOEY disappears into the middle of the fight.)

COACH rushes to the fight and tries to pull the JAYHAWKS PLAYERS and the YELLOW JACKET PLAYERS away.)

JAYHAWKS PLAYERS *(as needed)*. COACH *(as needed)*.

GET HIM, BOBBY!

JOEY—NO!

STUPID POLACK!

STOP IT!

FIGHT! FIGHT! FIGHT!

GETOFFOFHIM—

KICK HIS BUTT!

RIGHT NOW!

(JOEY appears downstage, talking to the audience. His uniform is torn up and his helmet is gone.)

NOTE: The fight continues upstage as though JOEY is still in their midst.)

JOEY. Man oh man—it was brutal under that pile of bodies! Everyone was punching at me and I was punching at them and there was blood and spit and everything smelled really bad and I said a whole lotta words that I'm never supposed to say—and the next thing I knew, the umpire had thrown me out and we had to forfeit the game and Coach had a hold of Bobby Fuller by the neck—

(COACH is holding BOBBY FULLER in one hand and JOEY's baseball cap in the other.)

COACH. Run along now, Bobby.

BOBBY FULLER *(breaks into a grin and runs off, saying)*.
Good game, Polack!

JOEY (*to COACH*). Did you hear that?!

COACH. You could have killed him with that bat!

JOEY. But what about the things he said?!

COACH. Joey, you already cost your teammates the game—
don't make it worse.

JOEY. OK, I know, I'm sorry.

COACH. You've got a problem, young man. And you're not
gonna play again in this league till you solve it.

(JOEY puts out his hand, asking for his cap. COACH stares at JOEY but does not give him back his cap. COACH goes, leaving JOEY alone.)

At JOEY's home.

DAD and MOM approach from opposite directions. DAD has his coat on and he holds his Yankees baseball cap. MOM is dressed in her nurse's uniform. She has JOEY's backpack.)

DAD. He did what?

MOM. He got in a fight.

DAD. Who started it?

MOM. What does it matter who—

DAD. I've always told him that it's wrong to fight, but if another kid starts it, sometimes you have to—

MOM. He started it. Joey started it.

DAD. You're sure?

MOM. The Little League commissioner called me, said he thinks Joey has a problem—that he needs help.

DAD (*a slight smile*). Anger management classes or something?

MOM. Is this funny to you?

DAD (*it's not*). No, I'm just—

MOM. Because if it is—

DAD (*overlapping*). He's a kid, Beth. He got in a fight and that was wrong, but I'm sure he's already learned his lesson.

(*JOEY appears. He sits and plays with his Nintendo DS [or Game Boy].*)

DAD (*cont'd*). Right, Joe?

JOEY (*quiet*). Hi, Dad.

DAD. You do know it was wrong—what you did?

JOEY. Yeah.

(*Awkward pause.*)

DAD. School OK?

JOEY. Yeah. It's good.

(*Beat.*)

DAD. OK ... Well, you should be thinking of what you'd like to do this weekend.

JOEY (*eagerly*). Maybe Wild Mountain! They've got this gigantic new roller coaster that goes—

MOM. I don't think your dad meant something quite that ...

JOEY. Fun?

MOM. *Expensive*. Money's a little tight right now—for all of us.

DAD. OK, whatever it is, you let me know and we'll figure something out, all right? See you Friday, buddy.

(*DAD opens his arms to give JOEY a hug, but JOEY lifts his hand to give DAD a fist bump.*)

DAD (*cont'd*). Love you.

(*DAD gives the fist bump and goes.*)

(*MOM is staring at JOEY.*)

JOEY. What's to eat?

MOM. We've talked about this, you know.

JOEY. Yes, I know, but—

MOM. If you can't control your temper, you're not going to play baseball.

JOEY. Mom, what if Ty Cobb's mom had told him to control his temper?! He wouldn't have been Ty Cobb!

MOM. I'm not raising Ty Cobb here! I'm talking about *you*, Joey. You are done with baseball until you can change your ways.

JOEY. Is that what the commissioner said?

MOM. He suspended you for two games.

JOEY. Two games?! I can't believe—

MOM. But *I'm* suspending you for the whole season.

(JOEY stares at her in disbelief.)

MOM *(cont'd)*. Something, or someone, has to get your attention.

JOEY. The whole season?! You can't do that!

MOM. I think it's what you need.

JOEY. We'll you're wrong!

MOM. Joey—

JOEY. And just because you had a crappy day and money's tight and you're mad at Dad doesn't mean you have to take it out on—

MOM. Joey. There it is again.

JOEY. What?!

MOM. *Your temper. (Beat.)* I'm not saying it's easy. We all get mad, we all get frustrated sometimes and wish we could just break something.

JOEY. Is Dad out of work again?

MOM *(this stings, a beat)*. OK. See, right now—what I'm feeling right now—is an example of what I'm talking about.

JOEY *(hands her some small object)*. You wanna break this?

MOM. No.

(Pause.)

JOEY. Did you get in a fight over what I did?

MOM. Joey, why do you—

JOEY. Because it seems like things are worse now—and that maybe it's because of me.

MOM *(firm, kind)*. It's not you. It's just . . . the way things are right now. I want you to focus on your temper, on not letting it—

JOEY. Yeah, I know, I will—

MOM. *You need to promise me, Joey.*

JOEY. And then you'll let me play?

MOM. We'll see.

(She musses his hair and goes, saying—)

MOM *(cont'd)*. Dinner in five.

JOEY *(turns to the audience)*. “We’ll see.” Every kid knows what that means. “We’ll see” is what parents say when they want to say “no” to you . . . *as slowly as possible*.

(The classroom.

The teacher, MS. LEVITT, addresses the STUDENTS.)

MS. LEVITT. And this year, for our black history unit, we're going to do something a little different. Instead of doing written reports on an influential African-American, this year you'll be doing *oral reports*, which you'll present to the entire class—

(The STUDENTS and JOEY grumble.)

MS. LEVITT *(cont'd)*. And the report judged as the most well-researched and presented will win—

STUDENT. Probably like a *sticker* or a new *eraser*!

(The STUDENTS laugh, groan, etc.)

MS. LEVITT. That student will win three all-day passes to Wild Mountain.

JOEY *(stunned, thrilled)*. No . . . way.

MS. LEVITT. Now,

JOEY *(his hand immediately shoots up)*. Ms. Levitt? Ms. Levitt? Ms. Levitt?

MS. LEVITT. No, Joey, not this time.

JOEY. Oh, come on!

MS. LEVITT. You cannot write about a ballplayer again. You always do that—

JOEY. How about a retired player?

MS. LEVITT. Joey, this is a history class—

JOEY. OK, how about a *really old retired player who is almost dead*?!

MS. LEVITT *(beat)*. Joey, listen to me—

JOEY. I HAVE GOT TO WIN THOSE PASSES TO WILD MOUNTAIN!

MS. LEVITT. It's time to broaden your horizons. There is more to life than baseball.

JOEY *(beat, to audience)*. *Did she really just SAY THAT?!*

MS. LEVITT *(handing out papers)*. Here is a list of notable black Americans from which you will select one person to profile.

JOEY *(reading from list)*. Frederick Douglass. Harriet Tubman.

MS. LEVITT *(looking at JOEY)*. Keep in mind that you are to use *only the names on this list*.

JOEY. Sojourner Truth. Langston Hughes.

MS. LEVITT. And the goal of your research is to discover, as best you can—