

42 Is Not Just a Number: The Odyssey of Jackie Robinson, American Hero by Doreen Rappaport.

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42 Is Not Just a Number: The Odyssey of Jackie Robinson, American Hero by Doreen Rappaport (review)

Elizabeth Bush

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Reviewed by:

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Elizabeth Bush

RAPPAPORT, DOREEN *42 Is Not Just a Number: The Odyssey of Jackie Robinson, American Hero*. Candlewick, 2017 [128p]
ISBN 978-0-7636-7624-7 \$14.99
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 4-6

Prospective readers drawn by the prominent number 42 on the book's cover will undoubtedly know at least the outline to the story of Jackie Robinson and his career as the first black baseball player to make it out of the farm team system into the majors. Rappaport condenses Robinson's bio from his early years in his financially struggling family, through stints in community college, the military, and UCLA, and forward to his recruitment onto the Montreal Royals and, ultimately, the Brooklyn Dodgers. Short chapters revolve around well-defined episodes, and the scope of the entire work extends only through Robinson's 1947 season, with a coda that skips ahead to the posthumous retirement of number 42 in 1997. Brevity and accessibility, however, don't mean lightweight coverage: Rappaport slams down hard on the vicious opponents and rival fans who made Robinson's rise through the system a living hell, sparingly but effectively dropping the n-bomb in documented quotations. Retellings of the Robinson story have sometimes cast him as pacifistic, or at least stoic, in the face of the racial slurs, but Rappaport presses against this image as well, depicting Robinson as a man with a personal history of using his mouth and his fists in defense of his dignity and who therefore fought daily against his pugnacious nature in order to disarm the arguments of those who would keep African-American players out of the game. This is an excellent companion title to his daughter Sharon Robinson's *Promises to Keep* (BCCB 4/04). A timeline, index, source notes, and bibliography are included.

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offers up not one but three Snickers for Bash's bodyguard services, the middle-grade big man is happy to oblige, thinking all he'll have to do is keep bullies away from the nerdy, red-headed Darius. Unfortunately, Darius doesn't mention that the extra payments mean extra danger, and soon Arthur is acting as Darius' protector from actual bad guys with actual guns looking for the very same treasure Darius is trying to track down, a piece of jewelry linked to his town's history and his parents' death. The Conan Doyle echoes are clear, with Darius the incredibly intelligent but emotionally clueless Sherlock figure, while Arthur's a beefed-up Watson (there's even a bit of Mary in Arthur's stepsister Deirdre, who becomes essential in their eventual escape from the villain). Arthur's straight forward narration and direct addresses to the reader make this highly accessible, and the plot's quick pace, with the appearance of a bloodstained letter and a decrepit old house within the first few chapters, gives it immediate appeal. Like Lyall's *Hound and Wallace, Pt. 1* (BCCB 9/16), the story hints at the boys' emotional lives, as each kid struggles with insecurities and family turmoil, but their problems never reach an angst level that overwhelms the engrossing mystery. For kids who've moved beyond Encyclopedia Brown but aren't quite ready for the various YA iterations of Sherlock, this will hit the sweet spot. KQG

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RINKER, SHERRI DUSKEY *Big Machines: The Story of Virginia Lee Burton; illus. by John Rocco.* Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017 [40p]
ISBN 978-0-544-71557-8 \$17.99

Reviewed from galleys

R 4-8 yrs

Long story short, Burton wrote stories of steam engine and choo choo and snow plow because that's what her own sons liked, and other children have been enjoy-



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