

*BATTER UP LESSONS*

**Hank Aaron and The Home Run Record  
developed by  
Ms. Michelle Hamlett’s Historiography Classes 2020-2022  
Eastside High School**

<b>Learning Objective</b>	<b>Essential Question(s)</b>	<b>Suggested Activities</b>	<b>Standards</b>
<p>The student will be able to explain why Hank Aaron was subjected to so much hate when he was close to breaking Babe Ruth’s home room record.</p> <p>The student will be able to give examples of how Hank Aaron’s impact extended beyond his career in Major League Baseball.</p>	<p>What is the significance of Hank Aaron breaking Babe Ruth’s home run record?</p>	<p>Compare the racist attacks Jackie Robinson in 1947 was subjected to those faced by Hank Aaron in 1974. Do you think that racial attitudes changed in 27 years?</p>	<p>6.1.12.HistorySE.14.b: Use a variety of sources from diverse perspective to analyze the social, economic and political contributions of marginalized and underrepresented groups and/or individuals.</p>

**Research Sources**

**Note: At the time of this publication these websites were active.**

“Exuding grace and dignity, Aaron spoke bluntly but never bitterly on the many hardships thrown his way—from the poverty and segregation of the Alabama youth to the ugly, racist threats he faced during his pursuit of one of America’s most hallowed records.”

<https://apnews.com/article/hank-aaron-dead-0fa32aff826d18bbeb9efedd42cd81a2>

“When he retired in 1976 after a 23-year major league career with the National League Braves (spending 1954 to 1965 in Milwaukee, 1966-74 in Atlanta) before playing his final two seasons with the American League Milwaukee Brewers Aaron had amassed staggering offensive numbers, holding the career records for most home runs (755), RBIs (2,297), total bases (6,856), games played (3,298), at-bats (12,364) and plate appearances (13,941). He was second behind Ty Cobb in hits (3,771), though he held the NL record.

He is still the career leader in total bases and RBIs and is third in hits behind Pete Rose and Cobb. He was the first player in baseball history to amass 500 career home runs and 3,000 hits and the last player in history to be promoted from the Negro Leagues to the major leagues. Aaron appeared in a record 24 All-Star Games, won batting titles in 1956 and 1959, led the league in home runs four times, was named National League MVP in 1957, and twice appeared in the World Series, winning the title in 1957 when the Braves beat the New York Yankees in seven games.”

[https://www.espn.com/mlb/story/\\_/id/30759337/hank-aaron-lasting-impact-measured-more-home-runs](https://www.espn.com/mlb/story/_/id/30759337/hank-aaron-lasting-impact-measured-more-home-runs)

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“Hank Aaron kept the letters -- hundreds of thousands of letters -- that he received when chasing Babe Ruth’s home run record and beyond. They were vile letters, angry letters, threatening letters. Letters that revealed, in no uncertain terms, the dirty underbelly of a nation that has left its most fundamental issues of race and equality unresolved.

Aaron, who died Friday at the age of 86, kept those letters to remind himself -- and everybody else -- that the United States has only progressed to a point, that we still have so far to go.

And yet, even in chronicling the worst of us, Aaron always tried to see the best in us.”

<https://www.mlb.com/news/hank-aaron-overcame-racism-hate-throughout-life/>

“On April 8, 1974, Hank Aaron of the Atlanta Braves hits his 715th career home run, breaking Babe Ruth’s legendary record of 714 homers. A crowd of 53,775 people, the largest in the history of Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium, was with Aaron that night to cheer when he hit a 4th inning pitch off the Los Angeles Dodgers’ Al Downing. However, as Aaron was an African American who had received death threats and racist hate mail during his pursuit of one of baseball’s most distinguished records, the achievement was bittersweet.”

<https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/aaron-sets-new-home-run-record#:~:text=Hank%20Aaron%20breaks%20Babe%20Ruth's%20all%2Dtime%20home%20run%20record,legendary%20record%20of%20714%20homers>

“Off the field, Aaron was an activist for civil rights, having been a victim of racial inequalities. Aaron was born Feb. 5, 1934, in Mobile, Alabama, and didn't play organized high school baseball because only white students had teams. During the buildup to his passing of Ruth's home run mark, threats were made on his life by people who did not want to see a Black man break the record.

"If I was white, all America would be proud of me," Aaron said almost a year before he passed Ruth. "But I am Black."

[https://www.espn.com/mlb/story/\\_/id/30759123/long-home-run-king-hank-aaron-dies-86](https://www.espn.com/mlb/story/_/id/30759123/long-home-run-king-hank-aaron-dies-86)

Aaron’s Statistics

<https://www.baseball-reference.com/players/a/aaronha01.shtml>