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Hank Aaron

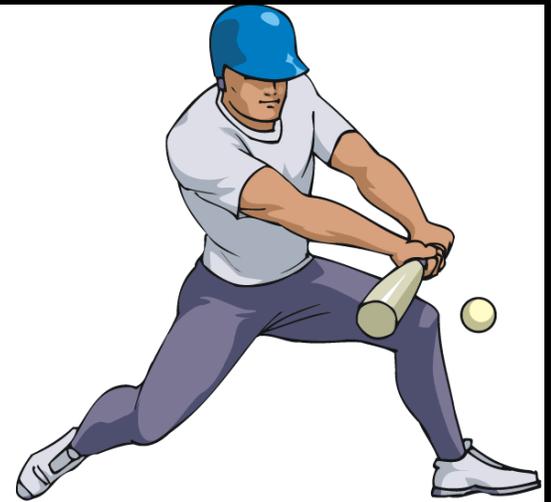
DIRECTIONS: Read about Hank Aaron. Answer the questions.

Hank Aaron was born in Mobile, Alabama in 1934. He had seven brothers and sisters. Hank was inspired to play baseball after hearing a speech by Jackie Robinson, who became the first black major league baseball player in 1947. Hank was naturally athletic, and played both baseball and football in high school. He started playing semi-pro baseball when he was only 15 years old, earning \$10 a day playing for the Mobile Black Bears, an all-black baseball team. In 1951 he joined the Negro Baseball League, playing with the Indianapolis Clowns, and the following year he helped his team win the Negro World Series.

In 1952 he was signed by the Major League team the Boston Braves (which became the Milwaukee Braves two years later) to play in the minor leagues. He was an impressive player, and named MVP of the South-Atlantic League. But it wasn't easy. He faced a lot of racial prejudice. In 1954 Hank was called up to the Major Leagues. In his first year in the majors he had the lowest stats of his entire career, but then things really took off for him. For the next 20 years, Hank Aaron would hit at least 20 home runs every year. In his third year in the majors his batting average was an impressive .328, meaning he would average 32 hits for every 100 at-bats, and he was named the Sporting News National League Player of the Year.

1957 was the best year of his career. He was moved to fourth in the batting order, a position known as "cleanup". That year he hit 44 home runs. He also had 132 Runs Batted In (RBSs), which means that because of what he did at bat (get a hit, sacrifice fly, ground out or walk), his team scored. The Milwaukee Braves won the World Series that year, for the only time in baseball history.

In 1970, Hank Aaron was the first player in history to reach 3,000 hits and 500 home runs in his career. Three years later he had reached a high of 713 home runs in his career. This was only two home runs away from the most famous and sacred career home run record of them all - that of Babe Ruth. On the 4th of April, 1974, when he was 40 years old, playing for the Milwaukee Brewers, Hank broke Babe Ruth's record at Fulton County Stadium in Atlanta. When he retired in 1974, his career home run record was 755 (This record was broken by Barry Bonds in



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2007.). Hank Aaron was inducted into the Major League Baseball Hall-of-Fame in 1982. Both the Braves and the Brewers “retired” his number - 44 - which means that no player on their teams will ever wear that number again, which is one of the greatest honors in baseball.

1. How did Hank Aaron get inspired to play baseball? _____

2. What challenges did he face? _____

3. What was the best year of Hank Aaron’s career? Why? _____

3. What long-standing record did Aaron break before he retired? How long did Aaron’s record stand?

