University of Windsor
Scholarship at UWindsor

Telling the Stories of Race and Sports in Canada

Telling the Stories of Race and Sports in Canada - September 27th

May 1st, 12:00 AM

Teachers' Guide to Scott Chantler's Mini Comic "All Stars: The True Story of the 1934 Chatham Coloured All-Stars"

Heidi Jacobs
University of Windsor

Dale Jacobs
University of Windsor

Miriam Wright
University of Windsor

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/racesportsymposium

Part of the Kinesiology Commons, and the Social History Commons

TEACHERS' GUIDE

ALL STARS

The true story of the 1934 Chatham Coloured All-Stars
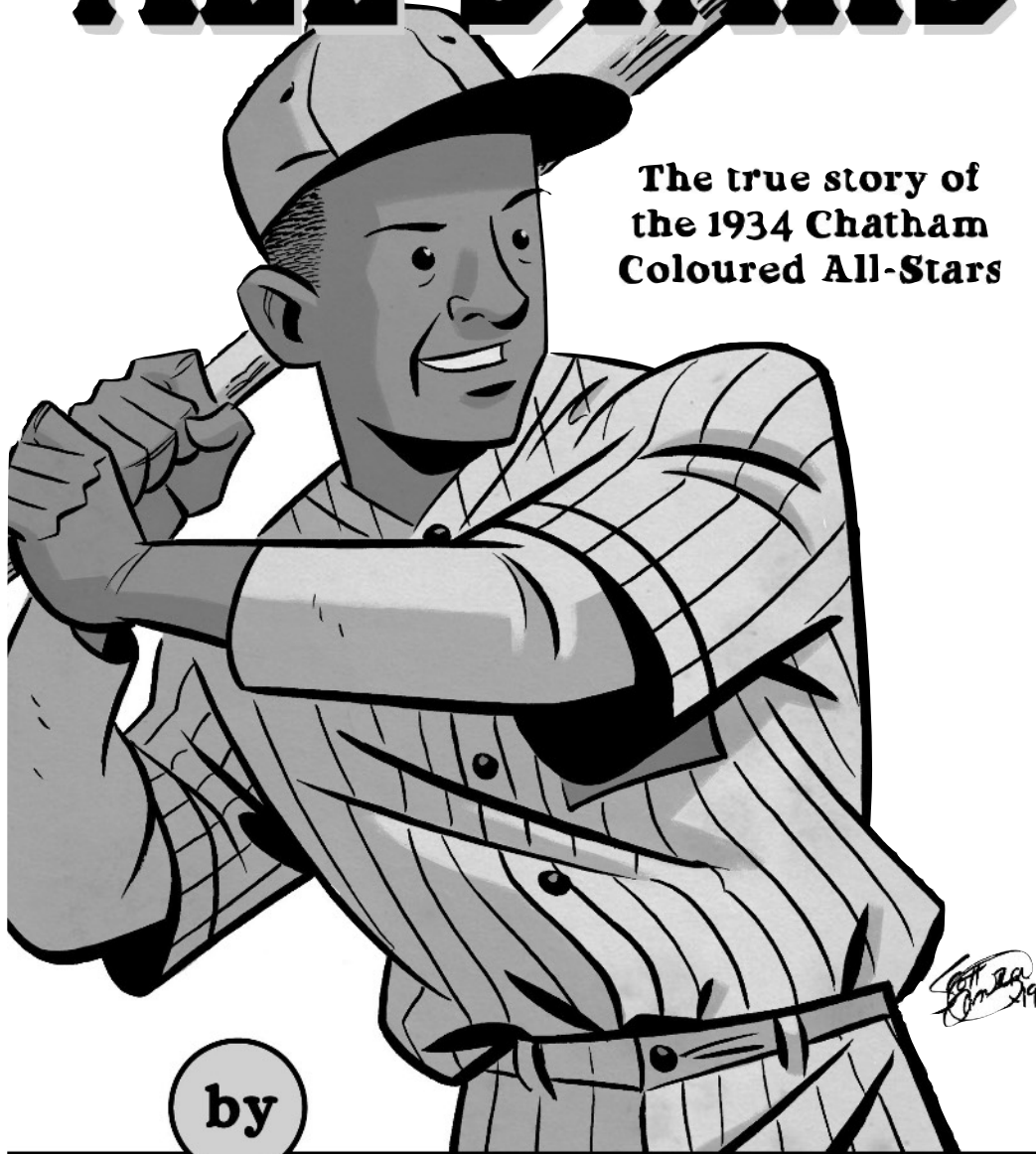
by

SCOTT CHANTLER

DR MIRIAM WRIGHT
Department of History, University of Windsor

DR HEIDI LM JACOBS
Leddy Library, University of Windsor

DR DALE JACOBS
Department of English, University of Windsor

Dr Miriam Wright and Dr Heidi LM Jacobs

HISTORICAL NOTES

When bringing Scott Chantler's comic into the classroom, this historical information can help students understand the context of the story of the Chatham Coloured All-Stars story and the significance of their 1934 win.

• This comic book is based on original material collected and preserved by Sarah Holmes Harding, the mother of Wilfred 'Boomer' Harding, and Pat Harding, the daughter-in-law of Boomer. The scrapbooks created by Pat Harding form the foundations of the *Breaking the Colour Barrier: Wilfred "Boomer" Harding and the Chatham Coloured All-Stars (1932-1939)* digital project http://cdigs.uwindsor.ca/BreakingColourBarrier/. Also available on this site are pictures, interviews with players and descendants of players, newspaper coverage.

• Scott Chantler used material from the *Breaking the Colour Barrier* site to create his comic. He used words written by journalist Jack Calder to capture particular plays in the game and specific details from interviews with the players to convey the controversy surrounding these games. The victory parade scene is also created using details from the

newspapers and the interviews. Mr Chantler's drawings of the All-Stars players are based on the team photograph from 1934.

• The first two pages of this comic show the Chatham Coloured All-Stars getting turned away from a hotel. In later years, several of the former players spoke about this event, including Wilfred "Boomer" Harding. You can listen to him talk about experiencing discrimination while playing ball in an interview he gave in the late 1970s: http://cdigs.uwindsor.ca/cdigs-ohms-ccas/viewer.php?cachefile=00004.xml

• During the 1930s, when the Chatham Coloured All-Stars were playing, and well into the 1940s and 1950s, Black people, as well as Indigenous people and other groups often faced discrimination in public places like restaurants, hotels, and movie theatres. Viola Desmond, a Black woman from Nova Scotia, was removed from a "white only" section of a movie theatre in 1948. You can read about her story here: https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/viola-desmond.

• In Ontario, civil rights and Black community groups pressed the government to create human rights laws. In 1951, the Ontario government introduced the Fair Employment Practices Act, which made it illegal to deny people jobs on the basis of race or religion. That law was followed in 1954 by the Fair Accommodation Practices Act, making it illegal to refuse service to people in public places like restaurants or hotels because of their race or religious background. For a short history of Hugh Burnett of Dresden, Ontario, who was involved in human rights activism in Ontario in the 1940s and 1950s, see: https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/hugh-burnett.

• Philip (Phil) Marchildon, the pitcher for the 1934 Penatanguishene team that played against the Chatham Coloured All-Stars, went on to play professional baseball with the Philadelphia Athletics and the Boston Red Socks. He was inducted into the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame in 1983. See his story here: https://baseballhalloffame.ca/blog/2009/05/08/phil-marchildon/.

• Although Phil Marchildon was able to have a professional baseball career in the 1940s, members of the Chatham Coloured All-Stars did not have the same opportunity. Until Jackie Robinson joined the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947, Major League Baseball did not accept Black players.

• Jack Calder, the "narrator" of this comic was a reporter with the *Chatham Daily News* during the 1934 championship season. It was Calder's detailed reporting of the 1934 season that allowed us to piece together the 1934 season and assemble facts and statistics about this significant season. You can read Jack Calder's coverage on our *Breaking the Colour Barrier* site: http://cdigs.uwindsor.ca/BreakingColourBarrier/1934-season. During WWII, he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force. He died in 1944 when his plane was shot down over Germany. Read about his WWII experiences in the book,

Grounded in Eire: The Story of Two R.A.F. Flyers Interned in Ireland during World War II by Ralph Keefer.

- There is some confusion about the Penetanguishene team name. The *Chatham Daily News* articles referred to this team as the "Shipbuilders," but their official name was the Spencer Foundry Rangers.

- Although he did not play for the 1934 Chatham Coloured All-Stars, Ferguson Jenkins, Sr started playing for the All-Stars in 1935. His son, Ferguson Jenkins, Jr went on to have a stellar pitching career in the major leagues and was the first Canadian inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1991.

- Earl 'Flat' Chase stands out as a player who deserves far more recognition than he has received. Newspaper accounts document his tremendous hitting, pitching, and fielding skills. In the final game of the 1934 championship series, Chase outpitched opposing hurler Phil Marchildon, who later played professional ball with the Philadelphia Athletics and the Boston Red Sox. Teammates and players both said that the only thing keeping him from the major leagues was the colour of his skin. During the 1934 Chatham City League season, Chase hit .700 and pitched the team toward many victories.

Dr Miriam Wright (History) and Dr Heidi Jacobs (Leddy Library) developed the *Breaking the Colour Barrier: Wilfred "Boomer" Harding & the Chatham Coloured All-Stars* project along with their colleague Dave Johnston (Leddy Library), the Harding Family, the Chatham Sports Hall of Fame, and the Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society. They are currently writing a scholarly history of the Chatham Coloured All-Stars and their legacy.

Dr Dale Jacobs

COMICS IN THE CLASSROOM

In addition to discussing the historical content of *All Stars: The True Story of the 1934 Chatham Coloured All-Stars*, it is productive to discuss with students how Chantler tells this story through the medium of comics. Since he is working in comics, Chantler has access to not only words, but also to images and to the way words and images can be combined in the design of the comics page. It's important to help students understand how to read and make meaning from all of these elements as part of using this comic in the classroom.

In comics, meaning is made not only through words, but across a variety of modes, including the visual, the gestural, the audio, and the spatial. Words are certainly important in comics, but meaning is also made from the visual mode—the way people, objects, animals, settings, and other elements are drawn, including the use of perspective, shading, depth of field, line, coloring, white space, and panel composition. Visual elements are also used to represent facial expressions and body language (the gestural mode), as well as the audio mode (through lettering, sound effects, punctuation, and the shapes of word balloons and caption boxes). Finally, the way these elements are arranged on the page— the spatial element—is highly important in the medium of comics, in terms of both overall layout and linear sequencing. These elements combine to encompass what we call comics design—the available means of making meaning at the level of the page.

One of the questions that can be used to help students think about how Chantler uses the comics medium is: How do you get information about the story as you read? By looking at a specific page or section of the comic, this question can lead to a good discussion of how we read comics and how the medium helps Chantler to convey the story. Let me briefly examine the first two pages of *All Stars* to give a sense of some of the things that can be discussed in class.

The first two pages contain no narration or dialogue between characters, and could be said to be "silent." Most of the information we get as readers comes through images, depictions of body language and facial expressions, and the spatial arrangement of panels —individual boxes containing images that are separated by white space, or gutters, on the page. While words are used sparsely in these pages, they become an important part of bringing together the understanding of the reader through the "Vacancy/No Vacancy" sign.
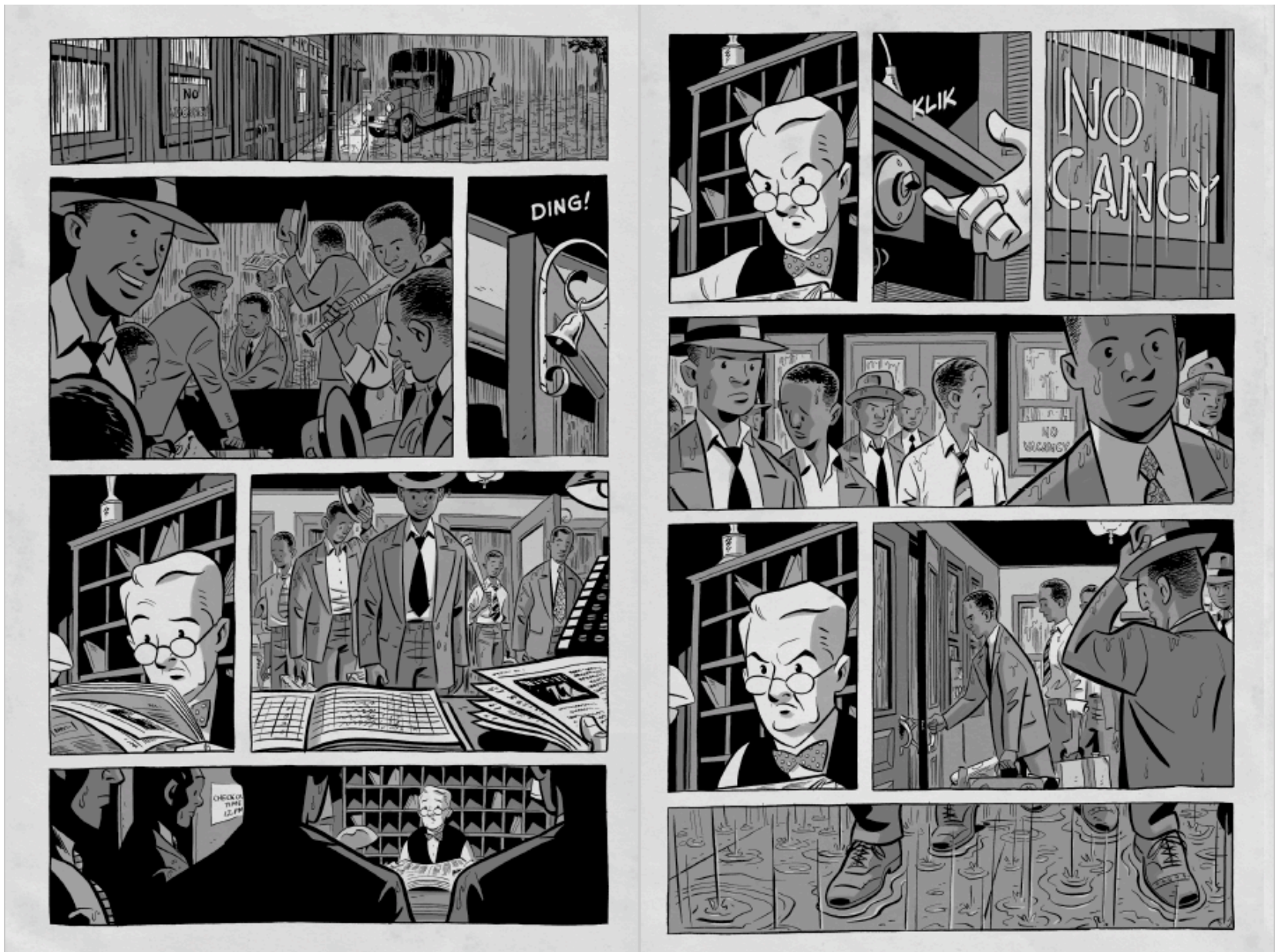
The comic opens with a narrow panel that stretches horizontally across the length of the page. This panel is what is called an establishing shot, giving the reader the location of the scene. Information here is conveyed visually: we gather that it is raining and that a truck is arriving at a hotel that has vacancies. The next panel in sequence shows a group of well-dressed men; smiles imply that they are happy, the suitcase indicates that they are traveling, and the bat gives a clue that they might be baseball players. Because of the panel sequence, we are to understand that they are disembarking from the truck shown in the initial panel. The third panel shows a closeup of a bell that, because of the sequence of panels, we are to assume is attached to the door of the hotel. We know that the bell rings because of the inclusion of the sound effect, "DING!" In those three panels, we get information from words (linguistic mode), images (visual mode), facial expressions (gestural mode), sound effects (audio mode), and panel sequence (spatial mode).

The next panel depicts an older man reading the newspaper. Since there has been no indication that the scene has changed, we can assume that he is the clerk of the hotel that the men have entered. We can make that assumption because of the sequence of panels. At this point, his expression is quizzical (eyebrow raised) as he awaits the men. The next

panel is from his perspective, while the sixth and last panel of the page is from the perspective of the men. By the final panel, the clerk's expression has changed from quizzical to an expression that is harder to read. Is he worried? Dismayed? Taken together, this page depicts a group of tired travellers who have reached a hotel and are trying to get a room for the night. The last panel depicts the moment before we, as readers, find out how this seemingly simple scenario will resolve itself. How is the clerk going to react to the men and what we assume is their request for rooms? Since it is the last panel on the page, we can't know the answer to that question until the page has been flipped in what is called a page reveal.

   The first panel on page two once again shows the clerk, framed exactly the same way he was when he was introduced (in panel four of page one). His expression, however, has changed drastically and he is now clearly angry. To the right of the panel, we can see his arm being extended and what he is doing is revealed in the next panel in the sequence. Here we see a closeup of a switch and a hand, accompanied by a "KLIK" to indicate that he has flipped the switch. The third panel in this sequence shows a closeup of the "Vacancy/No Vacancy" sign we first saw in panel one on the first page, but now the "NO" has become illuminated. As the third panel in sequence in this tier, we understand that "No Vacancy" is now indicated because of the actions of the clerk. Chantler again combines words, images, sound effects, facial expressions, and sequence to convey the decision of the clerk regarding the All-Stars. The effect this decision has on them is shown on the rest of the page, that consists of panels with images of the men gathering their things and leaving the hotel, intercut with another panel that shows the clerk, expression unchanged from panel one of page two.

   At the end of the comic, that same image of the clerk will recur, but this time with an expression that is much changed. The final panel of the comic returns to the "Vacancy/No Vacancy" sign, this time with the "NO" not illuminated. These panels make us think back to the panels on page two, creating a web of meaning that influences not only how we read the final panels of the comic, but also make us reinterpret the panels from page two.

   This same kind of analysis and discussion can be applied to the game sequences that follow. Important in these sections is the relationship between the reporter's narration the action that is depicted in the panels on these pages. In addition, you might think about why the action can sometimes not be contained within a panel or why some panels have no borders. Or you might discuss the connection between the batting sequence of the Penetang batter on page six and the batting sequence of Boomer Harding on page eight. These are only a few of the ways you might think about how Chantler uses the comics medium to tell the story of the 1934 Chatham Coloured All-Stars.

Dr Dale Jacobs is the author of *Graphic Encounters: Comics and the Sponsorship of Multimodal Literacy* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2013). His essays on comics have appeared in *English Journal*, *College Composition and Communication*, *Biography*, *ImageText*, *Journal of Comics and Culture*, *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, *Studies in Comics*, and *Journal of Teaching Writing*. With Jay Dolmage, he has published chapters on comics and disability in *The Future of Text and Image: Collected Essays on Literary and Visual Conjunctures, Disability in Comic Books and Graphic Narratives*, and *Inks: The Journal of the Comics Studies Society*.

Selected Resources for Teaching Comics

Bitz, Michael. *When Commas Meet Kryptonite: Classroom Lessons from the Comic Book Project*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2010.

Carter, James Bucky, ed. *Building Literacy Connections with Graphic Novels: Pages by Page, Panel by Panel*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2007.

Duncan, Randy and Matthew J. Smith. T*he Power of Comics: History, Form, and Culture*. New York: Continuum, 2009.

Gorman, Michele. *Getting Graphic!: Using Graphic Novels to Promote Literacy with Preteens and Teens*. Santa Barbara, CA: Linworth Books, 2003.

Jacobs, Dale. "More than words: Comics as a means of teaching multiple literacies." *The   English Journal*, 96.3 (2007): 19-25.

Monnin, Katie. *Teaching Graphic Novels: Practical Strategies for the Secondary ELA Classroom*. Gainesville, FL: Maupin House, 2010.

Schwarz, Gretchen E. "Expanding Literacies Through Graphic Novels." *English Journal* 95.6 (July 2006): 58-64.

---. "Graphic Novels for Multiple Literacies." *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 46.3 (2002): 262-65.

Versaci, Rocco. "How Comic Books Can Change the Way Our Students See Literature: One Teacher's Perspective." *The English Journal* 91.2 (November, 2001): 61-67.

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada

Canada