

Name _____

Date _____

Historical Heroes: Jesse Owens



Directions: Read the passage below, then answer the questions that follow.

James Cleveland Owens was born in Oakville, Alabama, in 1913. He was nine years old when his family moved to Cleveland, Ohio. That is where he got the nickname Jesse. His new teacher asked his name. He shared that his name was "J.C." He had a Southern accent, and the teacher did not hear him correctly. She heard him say "Jesse." The nickname stuck.

As a boy, Owens was on the track and field team. He also took what odd jobs he could find. He had an after-school job. Owens's coach let him practice before school. That way, he could keep his job at a shoe repair shop.

After high school, he went to Ohio State University. He was on the track team, where he set three world records and tied a fourth. Even though he was a star on the track team, he still faced racism that was everywhere. He was forced to live off campus with other African American athletes. When the team traveled, he was made to stay in hotels designated as "black only."

Despite those circumstances, he focused on his training and competition. He went on to win four gold medals in the 1936 Olympic Games in Germany.

Questions

1. Jesse Owens was on the _____ track and field _____ team in school.

2. Why did Jesse Owens practice track and field before school?

Jesse Owens practiced track and field before school so that he could keep his after-school job.

3. What college did Jesse Owens attend?

Jesse Owens went to Ohio State University.

4. How many records did Jesse Owens set when he was in college?

Jesse Owens set three records and tied a fourth when he was in college.

5. How did Jesse Owens show that he was a hard worker? Student answers will vary, but may include:

Jesse Owens showed he was a hard worker by taking odd jobs when he was a student and an athlete. He

was also a hard worker because it takes focus and hard work to win medals at the Olympic level.