Table Talk: the year 1945

FULL TABLE

Four stories from the 1945 paper, one from each section, each with starters that get people telling their own. A spare story is on side 4, for a story that isn't landing.

GROUP	TIME	YOUR ROLE	BEFORE YOU START
8 to 10 people	40 minutes	Reader and host	A paper at each place, open to the front page. Seat cards 1 to 4 at each place. Keep card 5, the spare, in your folder. Take-home cards, one for each person. TV on slide 1.

THE 40-MINUTE SESSION · Tables in a U. Starters are options: pick one, rephrase it, or use your own.

3 MIN	9 MIN	9 MIN	9 MIN	7 MIN	3 MIN
Welcome	**Story 1**	**Story 2**	**Story 3**	**Story 4**	**Close**
slide 1	Japan signs	GM strike	Jackie Robinson	Nylons	take-home cards

WELCOME · 0 TO 3 MINUTES · TV: SLIDE 1, 1945

"Welcome to Courier Club. Today the paper is 1945. Let's open it to the front page."

Then say what's coming: the front page, a strike at General Motors, Jackie Robinson, and a line outside a store.

1 Japan signs on the Missouri

FRONT PAGE

3 to 12 minutes · card 1

TV Slide 2, Japan signs. Leave it up while people talk.

SAY *"The six-year world war ended this morning on the deck of an American battleship."*

STARTERS

1. Who in your family or among your friends was part of the war, overseas or at home?
2. Where was your family living in 1945? What did that town do when the news came?
3. What stories about the end of the war got told at your table, year after year?
4. MacArthur signed with six pens and gave two away. Who would you hand a pen to?

FACTS

- Page 2: the ceremony began just after 9 o'clock and lasted 23 minutes. MacArthur signed with six pens and handed one each to General Wainwright and General Percival.
- Page 2: crowds opposite the White House called "We want Harry." The President came out three times.

Stay on The signing. Leave the other front-page stories closed.

Over for the GM strike and Jackie Robinson.

2 320,000 stay out at General Motors

BUSINESS & MONEY, FRONT PAGE

12 to 21 minutes · card 2

TV Slide 3, the GM strike. Wait while people turn to Business & Money.

SAY *"Auto workers spend Christmas on strike at 96 plants."*

STARTERS

1. What was your first job, and what did you do with your first pay?
2. Who in your family worked in a plant, a mill, a mine or an office? What did they make?
3. Was anyone in your house in a union? What got said about it at the dinner table?
4. Who worked on the home front during the war, and what happened to that job when it ended?

FACTS

- The union asks a 30 per cent raise. Walter Reuther goes further: if General Motors says it can't pay, he asks it to open its books and prove it.
- Reuther, by the Detroit Free Press: "There is no turning back now that we have been forced to turn down this strike road."
- Same page: within ten days of Japan's surrender, close to half of the 4,000,000 men and women making munitions were released from their jobs.

> **Then** Jobs talk travels. Let people swap trades with each other, and say back what you hear: "So you were a teacher for thirty years."

3 Robinson signs with Montreal

SPORTS, FRONT PAGE

21 to 30 minutes · card 3

TV Slide 4, Jackie Robinson. Wait while people turn to the Sports section.

SAY *"Baseball's color line faces its test."*

Then say it plainly: Jackie Robinson, the first Black player signed into organized baseball in the modern era.

STARTERS

1. Jackie Robinson is the first Black player signed into organized baseball in the modern era. What did people around you say when they heard?
2. Where did you see the color line yourself: at a ballpark, a lunch counter, a school?
3. Who was watching this one most closely in your house, or on your street?
4. When a line like that was crossed, what did it feel like: hope, worry, about time?

FACTS

- Sports, front page: "The minor leagues, like the majors, have kept the line, and no Black player has crossed it in the majors this century."
- He signed on October 23 with the Montreal Royals, the Dodgers' top farm club. He was 26, a shortstop with the Kansas City Monarchs at $400 a month, batting well over .300.
- His own words that day: he "realized how much this means to me, to my race and to baseball."

> **Then** Let people talk to each other. This one can run warm. You don't referee and you don't sum up. A long silence here is people thinking: give it the full ten seconds.

> **Lighter?** If the room wants out, say "Let's turn to Life & Arts," and go to the nylons early.

Over for the nylons and the close.

4 Thousands in line for nylons

LIFE & ARTS, PAGE 4

30 to 37 minutes · card 4

TV Slide 5, Nylons.

SAY *"The nylon stocking is back from the war."*

STARTERS

1. What did your family do without? What came back first?
2. Which store in your town would have had the line? Who would have been in it?
3. What was getting dressed up for in your house: church, a dance, Saturday night?
4. With nylon gone to war, what did people wear or do instead?

FACTS

- Nylons first went on sale in May 1940. About 4,000,000 pairs reached the stores in a day, at a little over a dollar a pair. They were gone within days.
- By 1942 nearly all nylon had gone to war: parachutes, tire cords, ropes, shoelaces, mosquito netting and hammocks.

> **Stalls?** Same page, the Household ledger: milk, delivered, was 15.6 cents a quart. Butter was 50.7 cents a pound.

The close · 37 to 40 minutes

TV: SLIDE 6, TAKE YOUR CARD HOME

Hands	One story at a time: "Which of today's stories goes on our front page?" Say the winner out loud.
Ask	Did the paper get it right for your town? Take one or two answers.
Hand out	A take-home card each: three things to be asked about at dinner or on the phone.
Say	The next date and the next year. Thank them. Leave slide 6 up until the room clears.

IF IT GOES ANOTHER WAY

Quiet room. Count to ten, then read a fact or tell a short one of your own. Never go round the table.

A story isn't landing. Say "Let's try another one," hand out card 5 and turn to the spare story on side 4.

One talker. Thank them, look down at the paper, and read the next fact to the room.

A heavy turn. Listen. Don't ask for more or give an opinion. Go to the next story.

A lifted hand, a look away, a turned chair. Turn the page and say nothing about it. Passing the paper, holding the picture and listening are all taking part.

Late arrival. A chair, a paper open to the page, a nod. No recap.

A date or name that doesn't match the paper. Let it stand. Nobody is corrected.

An argument. Thank both, read the next fact from the paper, and move to a starter about a place.

Someone asks what you think. Give it back: "I wasn't there. What did your family make of it?"

Running long. Shorten the nylons, never the close. Stop at 40.

The TV won't work. Carry on without it. Hold up the paper, open to the page.

Afterward, in the hub. A tap when someone joins in, and one per hand at the close. After the room clears, not before: who came, by name, and anything worth keeping in the person's own words.

Counts the hub asks for. How many came, how many joined in, cards handed out, and whether you ran past 40.

Signs it worked: eyes go to the page, someone tells a story unasked, someone asks when the next one is.

Over for the spare story.

A spare story

CARD 5

When a story isn't landing, or there's time left before the close. Say "Let's try another one," hand out card 5, and turn to Business & Money, page 2. Then go to the close as usual.

5 A steel spring walks downstairs

BUSINESS & MONEY, PAGE 2

Spare story · about 10 minutes · card 5

TV Slide 7, the Slinky.

SAY *"Christmas shoppers watch a shipyard engineer's toy step down a board."*

STARTERS

1. Who in your family took you downtown to shop for Christmas? Which store did you go to first?
2. What was the toy everybody wanted one year in your house?
3. Who in your family could make a toy out of almost nothing? Tell about that person.
4. Which store windows did your family go to see at Christmas?

FACTS

- Mr. Richard James, who made the toy, brought 400 steel-wire springs to Gimbels in Philadelphia. Christmas shoppers bought all of them at a dollar apiece in ninety minutes.
- In 1943 he was working at the Cramp Shipbuilding Company, on the Delaware River. He was making a spring to keep delicate instruments on shipboard from being jostled. One was knocked off a shelf, "stepped" its way down and came to rest standing up.
- Mrs. Betty James found the name, Slinky, in the dictionary. It means graceful in movement. It stands two and a half inches high, with 98 coils of steel.

Run it every other week.

Courier Club sends a new edition every 2 weeks, with at least 9 ready-to-run activities in each: Table Talk, music, read-aloud bulletins and game shows, with the slides for your TV and the cards to print. See the plans at **erstwhilecourier.com/club**.