

Wilma Unlimited

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1996
San Diego: Voyager Books

COURAGE

USA

Nonfiction

Reading Time: 9 minutes

CONCEPTS

Courage
Hope
Fortitude
Determination

SUMMARY

As a young child stricken with polio, Wilma Rudolph struggles with disappointment, pain and hardship. Instead of giving up, she faces adversity with fortitude. She later becomes one of the world's fastest women athletes, winning three gold medals in the 1960 Olympics. Artist David Diaz enhances this inspirational story with bold illustrations depicting Rudolph's determination, speed and triumph.

OBJECTIVE

The student will be able to define and discuss courage, hope, fortitude and determination as they apply to the story.

Interdisciplinary Ideas

LANGUAGE ARTS

1. Research and write a short biography of Wilma Rudolph or another woman or athlete who overcame difficulties and achieved success through determination and hard work.
2. Write a story titled "If I Had Nineteen Brothers and Sisters." Include advantages and disadvantages of growing up in a large family.

SOCIAL STUDIES

1. In small groups, research facts about Wilma Rudolph. Make a time line of important events in her life. Choose highlights from the time line to present to your class.
2. Research unfair laws that made life difficult for African Americans at the time of Rudolph's childhood (1940s and 50s).

MATH

1. Research and compare Wilma Rudolph's record-setting times in the 1960 Olympics track and field competition with the times of gold medalists in the most recent Olympics. (Keyword: Wilma Rudolph)
2. Convert and compare their speeds in miles per hour.
3. Run the 100-meter dash and a team relay race. Use a stopwatch to time the races. How could you improve your times?

SCIENCE

Research the history of and cures for polio, scarlet fever, mumps and/or chicken pox. What is the difference between Salk and Sabin vaccines?

ART

Draw and color an illustration for your story from Language Arts #1. Emulating David Diaz's style, mount your picture on a background design that shows where it took place, and design your own font for the title.

After the Story

Wilma Unlimited

DISCUSSION

1. Do you think *Wilma Unlimited* is a good title for this book? Why or why not? What difficulties did Wilma encounter as a young child? What problems did her family face? Where did they find strength?
2. What natural abilities and character traits do you think Wilma possessed? How did these traits help her overcome obstacles in her life? Who encouraged her? How? Who encourages you?
3. How did Wilma cope with being teased and with sadness? Do you think her determination made her strong? Explain.
4. As a child, what were her hopes? What actions did she take to make her dreams come true? As an adult, what did she do to help others achieve their goals? Think about what you can do to make use of your own abilities in realizing your dreams or in helping others. Share with the class.

ACTIVITIES

1. Find Tennessee on the world map.
2. Make copies of pages where Wilma is watching other children going off to school or playing on the playground. Add conversation bubbles to the pictures and write what Wilma might be thinking.
3. Invite someone from the Special Olympics to speak to your class, or research online. (Keyword: Special Olympics) Ask about the important roles of volunteers in this organization and its events.

HOME CONNECTION

1. Ask family members to tell about a person who has shown courage, fortitude and determination in overcoming obstacles in his or her life. Ask for permission to share with the class.
2. At home, discuss why it is considered more correct to use "disabled" or "physically challenged" in place of "crippled."

JOURNAL

1. Reread the Author's Note at the back of the book. Write about Heartwood attributes Wilma displayed in her life before and after she retired from her career as an athlete.
2. Think about how you cope with teasing. Write some strategies that could be used to address this issue. Share with the class.

VOCABULARY

fortitude
pneumonia
paralyzed
luxury

exhilarated
triumphant
propel