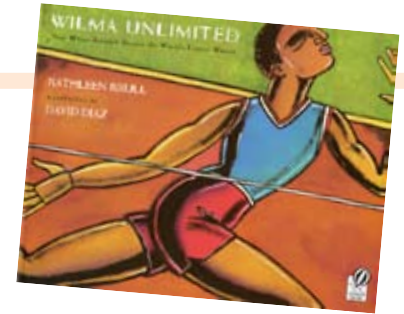


Wilma Unlimited: How Wilma Rudolph Became the World's Fastest Woman

by Kathleen Krull



Introduce *Wilma Unlimited*

Wilma Rudolph went from being unable to walk to being the fastest woman runner in the world. Paralyzed with polio when she was a child, Wilma proved that you can overcome obstacles and succeed if you work hard and keep trying.

Get kids curious about *Wilma Unlimited*. For example, explain that even though people thought Wilma would never be able to walk, she proved them wrong. Ask *Have you ever tried something difficult and succeeded? What was it?*

Discuss *Wilma Unlimited*

After reading *Wilma Unlimited* aloud, ask kids whether or not they liked the book and why. Help them understand the plot and connect with the characters by asking:

1. What made Wilma keep trying to walk even when it was painful? Are there things you can do now that were hard for you at first?
2. Why did kids at school make fun of Wilma's leg brace? How do you think Wilma felt? How would you feel if someone made fun of you?
3. How do you think Wilma felt when she walked in church for the first time without a brace? What makes you think that?
4. Why did Wilma and her mother mail the brace back to the hospital? How did Wilma's mother help her daughter succeed?
5. Have you heard of the Olympic Games? What are they? Wilma won the 100-meter dash, the 200-meter dash, and the 400-meter relay at the 1960 Olympic Games in Rome. Do you know any other Olympic events?

Optional: Lead a discussion exploring the prejudice Wilma and her family faced. Ask *Why do you think that only one doctor in Clarksville would treat Black people? Why did Wilma and her mother have to sit in the back of the bus? Was it fair? How do you think it made them feel?*

Activities

Doing a hands-on activity that connects to the story makes the experience more personal and memorable for kids. Choose one (or more) of the activities below, or make up one of your own.

1. **Do a track and field activity.** Pick one you can do in your space. For instance, teach teams of four kids how to pass a baton in a relay (kids don't need to run for this), or use masking tape to make a starting line on the floor and measure who can jump the farthest from the line.
2. **Learn about competitive running.** Invite local high school runners to introduce their sport and answer questions.

- 3. Make medals.** Ask the kids to think of something they are proud of and make a medal for themselves or for someone who helped them. Using cardboard, pens, markers, glue, and ribbons, have them design, color, and cut out their medals, then glue ribbons on them. They can take or wear their medals home to show their family.
- 4. Do some warm-up exercises.** Invite a school gym teacher or a local physical therapist to teach kids some warm-up exercises for stretching their muscles. Play some music while stretching.
- 5. Write a biography.** Have kids pick someone they admire to write a short biography about. They can summarize the person's life or a particular experience. They can also write about themselves.



Get Involved

There are lots of ways kids can help people with disabilities. They can **raise money to support the Special Olympics** (and similar organizations) or **volunteer their time** to help people with a range of disabilities. Check out the ZOOM into Action Web site at pbskidsgo.org/zoom/activities/action/way07.html for ideas about volunteering.

Web Explorations

Visit one or more of these sites to further explore the themes and topics from the book.

pbskids.org/readingrainbow/heroes_and_hope/draw_your_hero.html

Heroes and Hope. Who is your hero? Have kids draw pictures of their heroes, color them, and send them to *Reading Rainbow* to be posted on the site.

pbskidsgo.org/buster

Visit Buster's blog of his trip to Park City, Utah. Watch the video and learn about Ricky, a boy born with a disability who is a mono-skier training for the Paralympics. Go to **My Blog**, then "Read More about: Places I Have Been."

pbskidsgo.org/itsmylife/emotions/volunteering/print_crossword.html

Try the Volunteering Crossword puzzle on the **It's My Life** Web site.

More Suggested Books

Read about people who have disabilities:

Seeing Things My Way by Alden R. Carter

How It Feels to Live with a Physical Disability by Jill Kermentz

Imagine Me on a Sit-Ski! by George Moran

Our Teacher's in a Wheelchair by Mary Ellen Powers

Read other biographies:

Lou Gehrig: The Luckiest Man by David A. Adler

The Dinosaurs of Waterhouse Hawkins: An Illuminating History of Mr. Waterhouse Hawkins, Artist and Lecturer by Barbara Kerley

Zora Hurston and the Chinaberry Tree by William Miller

