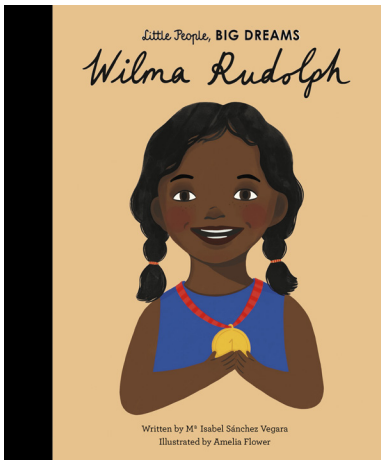


Little People, BIG DREAMS™

TEACHERS' GUIDE



Wilma Rudolph

Little People, BIG DREAMS™

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LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

Wilma Rudolph was born in Tennessee as the 20th of 22 children in a large, loving family. She had many health issues as a young child due to being born prematurely, including polio which left her left leg paralyzed. Wilma beat the odds; she recovered from this and went on to excel in running, even competing in the 1956 and 1960 Olympics. She became the first woman to win three gold medals in one Olympics. Wilma inspired others with how she overcame obstacles in her life, and this inspiration continued even after she was done racing. She spent her life working to inspire young people to believe that they could achieve any goal they set for themselves.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS IN THIS UNIT

1. What disease caused Wilma's leg to turn in and twist?
2. Who were important people who helped Wilma throughout her life?
3. What did Wilma do to overcome obstacles?
4. How many Olympic sprinting medals did Wilma win in her lifetime?
5. Why is Wilma a hero for more than just her running accomplishments?

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Wilma was the 20th of 22 siblings in her family. Her family was definitely big, and we also read about how caring and helpful they were to each other. Ask students to share how many people are in their families. Would they want to have as many siblings as Wilma? Why or why not?
2. Gazelles are featured in the book because they are fast runners, just like Wilma (p. 6, 15). In fact, "Gazelle" became Wilma's nickname! Explain to the students that the gazelle became a symbol for Wilma because of a characteristic she shared with it. Discuss other animal characteristics that students might share, such as "brave like a lion" or "silly like a monkey." Ask the students to share the animal they would like to be their symbol or nickname and why.
3. When Wilma earned a bronze medal at the Olympics in Australia, she told herself that next time

she would do even better (p. 12). Lead a discussion about growth mindset and the power of “yet.” After sharing your own example, ask students to share something at which they are working to get better. What are they doing to improve? Is anyone helping them? Why is this goal important to them?

4. It was very important to Wilma that her Olympic celebration be integrated and not segregated (p. 14). If students have read other books in the LPBD series that have touched on this topic, such as Rosa Parks and Jesse Owens, lead a discussion about the similarities of these dreamers’ experiences and how they worked to fight against injustice.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

1. On p. 3. Wilma’s big family is described as “loving.” Throughout the book, her family helps her as she works to recover from polio. Ask the students how their families help them. Share examples that might seem small, like someone helping you make your bed, and others that are grander, like someone taking care of you when you were sick. Have the students write thank you notes to someone in their family to show their gratitude for helping them.

2. When the doctors told Wilma that she would never walk again, her mom told Wilma that she would walk again, and Wilma decided to believe her mom instead of the doctors (p. 5). That choice to believe was part of why Wilma was able to prove the doctors wrong. Provide various art materials and large paper or poster board for students to create their own ‘BELIEVE’ signs. If there is something they are choosing to believe they will be able to do one day, that can be incorporated into their sign. For example, if a student is working on learning to ride a bike, they can draw bike symbols around the word.

3. After having the animal discussion listed in Classroom Discussion Topics section of this guide (question #2), take students to the school/community library or provide a variety of research materials in the classroom. Help students as they research the animals they chose as their symbols. When they’ve learned new information about their chosen animals, students can create a visual to showcase their learning and share it with their classmates.

4. Wilma earned her first bronze medal in the 400-meter relay (p.12). After explaining how a relay works, take the students outside or to the gym and enjoy some classroom relay races.

5. On p. 14, we see Wilma smiling with her three gold medals. Explain to students that the gold medal is awarded to the top performer in a particular area. Assign each student a classmate and ask them to think about that classmate’s top performing area. Provide examples like, “Being helpful,” “Making others laugh,” “Explaining math problems,” or “Sharing.” Once they have decided upon their partner’s gold medal performance, provide gold medal templates and let them create the medal for their partner. When everyone is done, have a medal ceremony in which students can award the medals to their partners.

