

Touch the Sky

Alice Coachman, Olympic High Jumper

A RIF GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

Themes: Women Athletes, Black History, Civil Rights, Perseverance

Book Brief: Meet Alice Coachman, whose parents think she needs to act more like a lady. Alice doesn't give up running and jumping, though, and eventually becomes the first African-American woman to win a gold medal at the Olympics.

Author:

Ann Malaspina

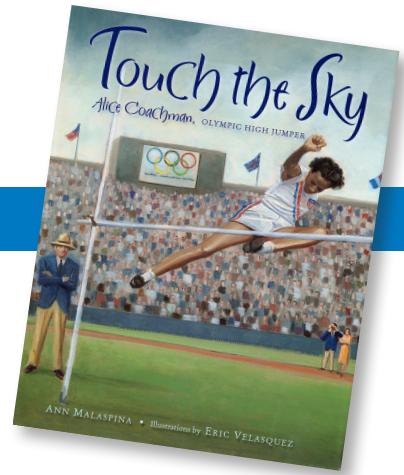
Illustrator:

Eric Velasquez

Content

Connections:

Social Studies, Math, Science



TIME TO READ!



BEFORE WE READ, LET'S LOOK AT...

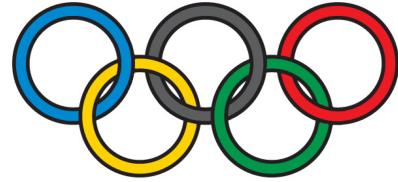
The Cover: Have students make predictions about the book based on the title and cover. What is the woman on the cover doing? Where is she? What are the five rings in the background? What is a biography? Is this a fiction or a nonfiction text?

The Pictures: Flip through some of the pages. Based on the pictures, in what time period do students think the story is set? Why?

Prior Knowledge: Alice was born in Georgia in 1923. What challenges would she have faced as both an African-American and a woman? Discuss with students the racism and sexism common in Alice's time.

Vocabulary: crossbar, sawdust, sprinters, javelin

Purpose for Reading: "As we read, think about the title—*Touch the Sky*. What does it mean? See if you can identify other symbols the author uses in the story."



WHILE WE READ

MONITORING COMPREHENSION

- ◆ Why doesn't Alice's father want her to be an athlete?
- ◆ What evidence from the text shows that Alice is a problem solver?

- ◆ Why are the lemons important?
- ◆ How is high school like a job for Alice?
- ◆ Why hadn't an African-American woman won an Olympic gold medal before Alice?

LET'S THINK ABOUT

Our Purpose: Explain what "touch the sky" means. What other symbols did you notice in the story?

Extending Our Thinking: How did Alice pave the way for other African-American athletes? Do Black athletes face any of the same challenges today that Alice faced in 1948? What about female athletes? Talk with a partner about a dream or goal you have. What will you need to do in order to reach that goal?

NOTE TO EDUCATORS

- ◆ Extension Activities for Educators also available.
- ◆ Vocabulary Scaffolding Sheet also available.