



Teaching with *Jim Thorpe: World's Greatest Athlete*

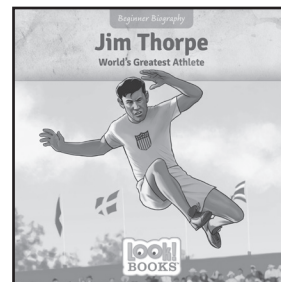
CONNECTION TO STANDARDS

Students will retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.

(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.2)

DIFFERENTIATION FOR ESL

- Review these additional vocabulary words in context: *official*, *industrial*, *victory*, *mismatched*, *competition*, *professional*, *average*, *success*, *struggles*, *honor*.
- Have each student choose a vocabulary word and write it in a new sentence.
- Provide each student with sticky notes. While reading, encourage students to put a sticky note next to any phrase or word in the text that they find confusing. After reading, pair students with a partner and allow them to help each other clarify the words' or phrases' meanings.



Lexile: 970L
Words: 77

GRL: TK

BEFORE READING

Build Background Knowledge: Write the word *athlete* on the board. Ask volunteers to raise their hands to define the word *athlete*. Then tell students that an athlete is a person who is good at or trained in sports, games, or exercises that require physical skill and strength.

- Ask students to think about what makes someone a good athlete. Invite them to share their ideas with the class.
- Tell students that they'll be reading about Jim Thorpe, a person who many believe to be one of the greatest athletes of all time. Ask students to think about why that may be true as they read.

Preview

- Show the cover of the book. Read the title and ask students if they know who Jim Thorpe is. Then ask them to name some great athletes they know of.
- Explore the cover illustration. Ask students to describe what they see, and to guess what sport Jim Thorpe is participating in.

- Lead students in a brief picture walk of the book, exploring the illustrations and photos on each page. Have students identify one or two details in each illustration or photo. Point out the text features.

Predict: Ask students to predict some of the things they will learn about Jim Thorpe in the book. Have students support their predictions with evidence they discovered while previewing the book.

Vocabulary: Turn to page 23 (“Words to Know”). Read each vocabulary word. Invite students to raise their hands if they know the word and to define it for the class. Then read the definition provided. Ask students to consider whether the provided definition matches their understanding of the word.



Strengthen understanding of words students do not know well by modeling how to use the word in a sentence. Create sentences with rich context clues, then review how the context clues help students understand the meaning.

Skill Introduction: Write the words “main idea” on the board. Explain to students that the main idea of a book is the most important message the author is trying to make. Tell students that the title of a book often gives clues to its main idea.

Re-read the title of the book to the class. Based on that title, ask them what they think the book’s main idea is. Then explain that the text of a book provides more details and information that support the main idea. Tell students that as they read, they should think about how each new fact they learn supports the main idea.

DURING READING

Check for Understanding: Ask students the following questions as they read.

- pp. 6-7, *What sports did Jim play while in school?* (track, baseball, hockey, lacrosse, football)
- pp. 8-9, *Why was Jim’s 1912 gold medal in the pentathlon historic?* (He became the first Native American to win an Olympic gold medal for the U.S.) *What made Jim’s gold medal in the decathlon especially amazing?* (He was wearing mismatched shoes.)
- pp. 10, *Why did the International Olympic Committee take away Jim’s gold medals?* (The committee learned that he had played minor-league baseball and getting paid to play a sport broke the rules of amateur competition.)
- pp. 12-13, *What sports did Jim play professionally?* (baseball and football)

- pp. 16, *What did Jim do to help Native Americans?* (He started a casting company to help get Native American film roles and gave speeches about his life.)
- pp. 16-19, *What are some honors Jim received?* (The Associated Press named him the greatest athlete of the first half of the 20th century. In 1954, two Pennsylvania towns combined and renamed themselves “Jim Thorpe, PA”. He was elected into the Pro Football, College Football, National Track and Field, and U.S. Olympic Halls of Fame.)
- pp. 21, *What happened in July 2022?* (The International Olympic Committee re-named Jim the sole winner of the 1912 Olympic pentathlon and decathlon and returned his scores to the record books.)

Reinforce Vocabulary

- pp. 5: Review the definition of *forge*. Have students think about and share with the class a path they are forging in their own lives, and what they are doing to forge that path.
- pp. 10: Go over the definition of *amateur*. Invite students to share examples of amateur sports or activities they take part in.

AFTER READING

Main Idea: Once the class has finished reading the book, ask students to consider whether their guess for the book’s main idea was correct. Then confirm that the book’s main idea is, in fact, that Jim Thorpe is believed by many to be the world’s greatest athlete.

Invite students to share facts and details from the text that support the main idea. You can write all of the shared facts on the board or have students write them down on their own.

Skill: Have students write a paragraph to support the main idea that Jim Thorpe could be considered the world’s greatest athlete. Encourage them to include facts and details from the list and text to support their argument.

Skill Extension: Once students have finished their paragraphs, ask them to consider whether they believe that Jim Thorpe was the world’s greatest athlete. Invite them to share their opinion with the class. If they disagree, who do they believe is the world’s great athlete, and why? Some more questions you can have them discuss:

- Is being a great athlete all about winning?
- Does someone need to receive awards or honors to be considered a great athlete?
- Is being a great athlete something you’re born at, something you need to work for, or a combination of both?