

THE CHAMP: THE STORY OF MUHAMMAD ALI

Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Award Nominee 2007 Grades 3-5

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The Champ: The Story of Muhammad Ali by Tonya Bolden. Illustrated by R. Gregory Christie. 40 p. Alfred A. Knopf, 2004.

Summary

Muhammad Ali is one of the world's best-known sports figures. This picture book biography introduces both Ali the fighter and Ali the activist. Bolden retells the anecdote of Ali's decision to become a boxer after his bicycle was stolen. Highlights of the biography include his Olympic medal, his heavyweight championship, his conversion to Islam and his refusal to be drafted. Some of Ali's poems are included in the book. R. Gregory Christie's illustrations, which portray the characters with large heads and very expressive faces, are striking and bold.

Awards

This book has been included in several "Best Books" lists but has not yet received any awards.

Author's Biography

Tonya Wilcyce Bolden is an African-American author who was born in New York on March 1, 1959. She graduated from Princeton University in 1981 with a B.A. in Slavic Languages & Literature with a Russian focus. She then received her master's degree in the same from Columbia University in 1985. She began her career as a salesperson for a dress manufacturer, became an office coordinator, and later entered the editorial world. She is a prolific writer and has written books, magazine articles and reference materials for both adults and youth. She is noted for her writings about African American heroes.

Illustrator's Biography

R. Gregory Christie lives in Brooklyn, New York and has illustrated many award-winning picture books. He is known for exaggerating certain characteristics of the characters he illustrates. He often emphasizes faces over the rest of the body. His bodies tend to be simple and minimized while his faces are usually over-sized and convey the world inside of his characters. He paints his illustrations like no other illustrator and his distortions may seem strange or different at first. However, his illustrations have a unique quality that blends realism and distortion.

R. Gregory Christie: Rising Star

<http://bccb.lis.uiuc.edu/0304focus.html>

Other Titles by Tonya Bolden

And Not Afraid to Dare: The Stories of Ten African American Women
The Book of African American Women: 150 Crusaders, Creators, and Uplifters
Just Family
Maritcha: The Story of a Nineteenth-Century American Girl
Portraits of African American Heroes
Rock of Ages
Tell All the Children Our Story: Memories and Mementos of Being Young and Black in America

Other books Illustrated by R. Gregory Christie

DeShawn Days by Ton Medina.
Love to Langston by Tony Medina.
Only Passing Through: The Story of Sojourner Truth by Anne Rockwell.
The Palm of My Hand: Poetry by African-American Children edited by David Adedjouma.
Stars in the Darkness by Barbara Joose.
Yesterday I Had the Blues by Jeron Ashford.

Related Titles: Ali

Champion: The Story of Muhammad Ali by James Haskins.
Float Like a Butterfly by Ntozake Shage.
I Shook Up the World: The Incredible Life of Muhammad Ali by Ali Maryum.
Muhammad Ali: Legends in Sports by Glenn Stout and Matt Christopher.
Muhammad Ali: Meet the Champion by Denise M. Jordan.
Muhammad Ali by Ntozake Shange.
The Story of Muhammad Ali by Leslie Garrett.

Biographies about Other African American Sports Heroes

Joe Louis: America's Fighter by David Adler.
Jump: From the Life of Michael Jordan by Floyd Cooper.
Kobe Bryant by A. R. Schaefer.
Major Taylor: Champion Cyclist by Lesa Cline-Ransome.
Promises to Keep: How Jackie Robinson Changed America by Sharon Robinson.
Randy Moss by Arlene Bourgeois Molzahn.
Sports Great Vince Carter by Jeff Savage.

More sport biographies: See

Just for Kids

<http://www.just-for-kids.com/48NFSR.HTM>

African-American History Booklist for children

Arlington Public Library

<http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/Libraries/info/AfricanAmericanHistory/LibrariesInfoAAKidsBookList.aspx>

Classroom Connections

See the web site: **A&E Television Study Guide: Muhammad Ali**

http://www.aetv.com/class/admin/study_guide/archives/aetv_guide.0003.html

This site includes vocabulary and discussion questions.

Biographies

- Have students read a biography and then create a web with the subject of the biography in the middle of the web and events, discoveries, etc. stretching out on the spokes of the web.
- Have a time line that goes around the room. After the student reads a biography, place the name of the subject of the book on the time line in the appropriate time zone.

Olympic Athletes

- Ali won the Olympic Gold Medal for boxing in 1960. Have students write a biography and create a poster about another Olympic medalist. Student may share what they have learned at an Olympics Fair.

Sports Figures

- Have students research information about sports figures –their accomplishments and the important events in their lives. Use the pictures and the information to create a bulletin board.

African-Americans

- During Black History Month have students select a famous African-American and create a poster to be displayed during this month.

Comparative Religion: Islam

- Have the students research the Islam religion. See this web site for information:
The Rainbow Family “Islam for Children”
<http://atschool.eduweb.co.uk/carolrb/islam/islamintro.html>

Web Links

Book, Author and Illustrator

Nancy Keane’s Booktalks: The Champ

http://www.nancykeane.com/booktalks/bolden_champ.htm

A “quick and simple” booktalk of *The Champ* is included on this excellent children’s literature site. Nancy Keane’s site is a real gold mine of helpful information.

R. Gregory Christie: Rising Star

<http://bccb.lis.uiuc.edu/0304focus.html>

Excellent article about the art of Christie, the illustrator of this book.

Tonya Bolden: Writer, Editor, Speaker & Workshop Leader

<http://www.tonyabolden.com/>

A site designed to give information about Tonya Bolden and her work.

Muhammad Ali

Muhammad Ali

<http://www.courier-journal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/section?Category=ALI>

A site maintained by the *Courier-Journal* from Louisville, Kentucky that has various articles about Muhammad Ali. Louisville, Kentucky is Ali’s hometown.

A&E Television Study Guide: Muhammad Ali

http://www.aetv.com/class/admin/study_guide/archives/aetv_guide.0003.html

This site includes vocabulary and discussion questions.

Biographies and History

Carol Hurst's Children's Literature Site: Biographies and Memoirs in Children's Literature

<http://www.carolhurst.com/subjects/biographies.html>

This page has activities that are based on biographies.

<http://www.carolhurst.com/booklists/biographies.html>

Includes an annotated list of recommended biographies.

Kids Domain: Black History

http://www.kidsdomain.com/kids/links/Black_History.html

Lots of links for Black History.

Kids Reads: Celebrating Black History Month

<http://www.kidsreads.com/features/2005-BHM.asp>

Annotated list of books that honor Africans and African Americans who have shown courage in their struggle for equality. Includes a link to a trivia quiz about sports figures.

Nancy Keane: Biographies

<http://nancykeane.com/rl/449.htm>

List of biographies that would interest boys.

<http://nancykeane.com/rl/431.htm>

Biographies recommended for elementary school students.

Stamp on Black History

<http://library.thinkquest.org/10320/Stamps.htm>

This site offers a list of names for all the African Americans who have been honored with postage stamps.

Islam

The Rainbow Family: Islam for Children

<http://atschool.eduweb.co.uk/carolrb/islam/islamintro.html>

A site designed for students between the ages of seven and eleven that gives the basics of the Islamic religion.