

THE STUMPTOWN KID

Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Award Nominee 2008 Grades 6-8

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The Stumptown Kid by Carol Gorman and Ron J. Findley. Peachtree Publishers, 2005.
224 pages.

Summary

This story is set in a small Iowa town in the 1950s. Protagonist Charlie is facing several problems: his father died two years earlier in the Korean War; his mother's boyfriend is an insensitive bigot; Brad the bully picks on him; and he fails his tryout for the Wildcats baseball team. When former Negro Baseball League player Luther Peale arrives in town, Charlie and Luther become friends. Luther agrees to be the coach for Charlie's "Stumptown" team. The white residents of the town are suspicious of Luther because he is a Negro and mysteriously showed up from out of town. When it is revealed that Luther accidentally pitched a ball that killed a white player in another state, violence erupts in the town. This story is much more than a baseball story: it is also a suspenseful, dramatic story with mystery, realistic relationships, challenging themes about prejudice, honesty and loyalty. Young readers will gain understanding and insight about how prejudice affects people's lives.

Awards

2006 Paterson Prize for Books for Young Adults
2005 Gustavus Myers Award - Honorable Mention

Carol Gorman's Biography

Carol Gorman grew up in Iowa. She received a bachelor's degree from the University of Iowa and was a middle school teacher for a number of years. She began writing after she married Ed Gorman, a writer. She is the author of about a dozen books for children. She lives in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

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

<http://harrison.cr.k12.ia.us/test/CarolG.html>

Other Titles by Carol Gorman

America's Farm Crisis

Chelsey and the Green-Haired Kid

Dork in Disguise

Games: A Tale of Two Bullies

The Marvelous Makeover of Lizard Flanagan

A Midsummer Night's Dork

Ron J. Findley's Biography

Longtime resident of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Ron J. Findley collaborated with Carol Gorman to write *The Stumptown Kid*. Findley used his extensive knowledge and love of baseball to generate ideas for the story.

Related Titles

A Negro League Scrapbook by Carole Boston Weatherford.

Black Diamond by Patricia McKissack and Fredrick McKissack, Jr.
The Boy Who Saved Baseball by John H. Ritter.
Choosing Up Sides by John H. Ritter.
Dad, Jackie, and Me by Myron Uhlberg.
Great Moments in Baseball History and other baseball books by Matt Christopher.
Heroes of Baseball: The Men Who Made it America's Favorite Game by Robert Lipsyte.
The Reappearance of Sam Webber by Jonathan Scott Fuqua.
That Sweet Diamond: Baseball Poems by Paul B. Janeczko and Carol Katchen.

Classroom Connections

Connections to Make for *The Stumptown Kid*

<http://www.carolgorman.com/stumptown.html>

Social Studies

- Research the Negro Baseball League.
 - How would sports and America be different if not for these brave men?
 - Which players do you think helped the game and the advancement of the African-American people?
 - Make a timeline citing the important events related to the Negro Baseball League and to civil rights in each decade from 1860 – 1972.
 - Have students research one of the players of the Negro Baseball Leagues and write a report, compile a class scrapbook or make a collage to present to the class. A list of players can be located on the following site:
 - <http://www.blackbaseball.com/players/index.htm>
- Charlie's father is killed in the Korean War. Find Korea on a map. Research the Korean War and present your findings to the class. What started the War? Who fought in it? How many Americans died in the War?
- The story is set in 1950, before the Civil Rights Movement. With a partner, research the conditions of race in America at the time.

Physical Education

- Learn the rules of baseball and play a game. Were the rules of the game any different in the 1950's, when the book was set? What kind of uniforms and protective gear did the players wear?

Language Arts

- Read aloud *The Boy Who Saved Baseball* and compare/contrast the two books.

Web Sites

Negro League Baseball

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

This site has detailed information about the history of Negro League Baseball.

Dealing with Bullies

<http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/emotion/bullies.html>

Established by the Nemours Foundation, the site is written for children and offers advice on dealing with bullies.

John Skilton's Baseball Links

<http://www.baseball-links.com>

A comprehensive collection of links to baseball resources.

History of the Negro Baseball Leagues

<http://www.blackbaseball.com/history/index.htm>

Information on the origin of the black baseball leagues—why they were founded and why they no longer exist.

Negro League Baseball

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Negro_league_baseball

History of the Negro League Baseball (both beginning and closing), Significant Negro leagues and the Hall of Fame.

Baseball and Beyond

<http://library.thinkquest.org/11902>

Includes a trivia ticker which shows baseball facts and important dates every 30 seconds.

Baseball Almanac

<http://www.baseball-almanac.com>

Includes Fabulous Feats, Famous Firsts, Legendary Lists, Rules and more.