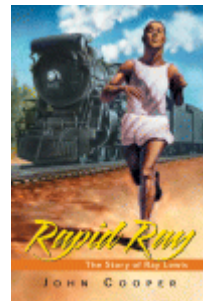

TEACHER GUIDE
Tundra Books
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Rapid Ray
The Story Ray Lewis
Written by John Cooper



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ABOUT THIS BOOK

Ray Lewis was one of the fastest runners of his era. Growing up in Hamilton, Ontario was tough, but he never backed down from a challenge. And there were challenges, especially because Ray was black in a world where African-Canadians were relegated to second-class status. But strength of character, perseverance, athletic talent, and hard work drove him to be the best he could be — all the way to the medal podium at the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics, where he became the first Canadian-born black athlete to receive an Olympic medal. Two years later, he would win a medal at the British Empire Games (later the Commonwealth Games), representing his country with pride and dining with members of the Royal Family. The struggle to reach the top wasn't easy. All the time he was building an athletic career, Ray Lewis was also working as a railway porter on the Canadian Pacific Railway, often running alongside the train tracks when the train was stopped on the prairies — training anywhere he could to keep his dream of athletic excellence alive. Ray's life was one of striving to be the best and never straying from his goals in the face of adversity.

ABOUT THIS AUTHOR

John Cooper has been writing for more than 25 years. He has worked as a reporter, a freelance writer, a corporate communications specialist, and a manager with the Ontario Government.

He has also taught corporate communications and public relations writing at community college. An author and co-author of several books on African-Canadian history, he has

contributed to *Maclean's* magazine and to several specialty publications. He is a graduate of York University and Centennial College and lives in Whitby, Ontario with his wife and three children.

TEACHING IDEAS

THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

Racism

Racism is a set of practices and beliefs that a group of people will use to separate and discriminate against others based on the belief that they are different because of skin color, religion, language, or country of origin. Racism often involves denying equal treatment to others and sometimes takes the form of abusive language or behavior.

Blacks in Sports

Jackie Robinson was the first black professional baseball player in the major leagues; he played for the Montreal Royals in 1947 and went on to play for the Brooklyn Dodgers in the National League.

Black players were featured in professional football in the United States in the 1920s, but pressure from white team owners led to them being banned from professional leagues for 20 years. African-American players would not be hired again until 1946, when the All-America Football Conference team, the Cleveland Browns, signed Marion Motley and Bill Willis.

Nathaniel 'Sweetwater' Clifton was the first African-American to sign a contract to play in the National Basketball Association. He signed with the New York Knicks in 1950.

William "Willie" O'Ree was the first black professional hockey player. Born in 1935 in Fredericton, New Brunswick, he joined the Boston Bruins in January 1958.

Railway Porters

Railway porters, also called Sleeping Car Porters, were generally African-American or African-Canadian men hired to provide service to the railways' passengers, who were mostly white. Being a black man and also a servant was a stereotype that was very prevalent in the early twentieth century. Porters depended on tips for a big part of their income. They were often poorly treated by passengers and called 'George,' after George Pullman, who created the company that made passenger rail cars. Porters had to pay out a lot of their own money for food and uniforms and were forced to cover the costs if a passenger stole anything that belonged to the railway, such as towels or cups. Being black, porters were denied the opportunity to be promoted to higher positions, such as supervisor, which were reserved for white men. In 1925 the porters formed a union, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, to fight for better wages and working conditions.

1932 Olympics

The 1932 Olympic games (also called the Games of the X Olympiad) were the first to feature an Olympic Village, where the majority of athletes lived, ate, and trained together. It allowed athletes to meet each other and develop lifelong friendships, despite being from different countries. It was also the first to have an official Olympic Stadium, the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. Thirty-seven countries participated and 1,408 athletes (1,281 men and 127 women) competed. Canada sent 102 athletes to the games, and Canadian competitors won 15 medals: two gold, five silver, and eight bronze. Canada had two black members on its team: Ray Lewis and Phil Edwards, who was born in British Guyana.

DISCUSSION AND WRITING

1. What was it like training for athletic events in the early years of the twentieth century, before we had modern equipment and facilities and specialized trainers, diets, and programs? What kinds of challenges do you think they faced? What would drive athletes to be their very best?
2. Ray Lewis was the first Canadian-born black man to win an Olympic medal. He believed that athletics gave people of all backgrounds a chance to compete equally, without having to deal with discrimination. He once said that the “time clock doesn’t discriminate against athletes.” What kinds of opportunities would sports have given to people back in Ray Lewis’s day? What opportunities do sports give people today?
3. Ray Lewis put in long hours as a railway porter serving passengers on the Canadian Pacific Railway. He traveled across the country many times. How do you think this may have affected his view of other people and his thoughts on how people should be treated?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Black athletes in the amateur ranks, like Ray Lewis, began integrating world-class sports in the 1920s. Integration is the process of bringing in someone from ‘outside’ to become part of the ‘whole’ — in this case black athletes were entering the realm of world-class sports. In professional sports, however, it was difficult for blacks to integrate; for years those sports were reserved for white athletes only. Ask your class to take a look at the following sports and find out when they allowed African-Americans or African-Canadians to participate: baseball, football, basketball, hockey. Who were the first athletes to integrate those games and what challenges do you think they faced?
2. Using a map of Canada, have your students identify the route the CPR traveled in Ray Lewis’s time and some of the places it would have taken him. Ask students to imagine that they are athletes working as porters to raise money for their athletic training. They travel far from home and often deal with people who might not treat them very well. How do the students feel? What do they think kept Ray Lewis strong and focused on his goals?

3. Have students reenact the medal ceremony at the 1932 Olympic games, when Ray Lewis won the bronze medal in the 4 x 400-meter relay. Then have members of the class act as reporters and interview “Ray” after the event.
4. The African-Canadian community is spread throughout Canada. Have students research information about African-Canadian communities in Montreal and Nova Scotia. How long have black communities existed in those places? How did they become established and what challenges did they face?

OTHER TITLES OF INTEREST

Suggested Reading

Bromley, Tireless Champion for Just Causes: Memoirs of Bromley L. Armstrong.
by Bromley L. Armstrong
ISBN 10968779808

I Came as a Stranger: The Underground Railroad
by Bryan Prince
ISBN 0887766676

The Kids Book of Black Canadian History
by Rosemary Sadlier, illustrated by Wang Qijun
ISBN 1550748920

My Name’s Not George:
The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters,
Reminiscences of Stanley G. Grizzle
by Stanley G. Grizzle with John Cooper
ISBN 189564223X

Shadow Running: The Ray Lewis Story
by John Cooper
ISBN 1895642477

Trials and Triumphs: The Story of African-Canadians
by Lawrence Hill
ISBN 1895642094 (pb), 1895642019 (hc)

Underground to Canada
by Barbara Smucker, illustrated by Tom McNeely.
ISBN 0772011117

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

<http://www.achievement.org>
<http://www.yorku.ca/aconline/culture/pioneers.html>
<http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/BHM/index.html>
<http://www.blackfacts.com>
<http://www.blackquest.com/link.htm>
<http://www.blackhistorysociety.ca>