

Go!

The remarkable true story of Olympic track star Wilma Rudolph

About the Story

Lexile: 970L (captions)

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective: to analyze a quote by Wilma Rudolph and explain how the quote applies to the play

Key Skills: setting, key ideas and details, author's craft, character, figurative language, author's purpose

Essential Questions:

- What is a hero?
- What does it mean to have grit?
- Why is failure important?

Standards:

The article and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.5, R.7, R.10, W.2, W.9, SL.1, SL.2, L.4, L.6

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.

Characters

Character	Role
*Stage Directors 1, 2, 3 (S1, S2, S3)	Edward and Robert, Wilma's characters
*Dr. Coleman	Wesley, Wilma's brother
*Wilma, a young girl	Coch King, a high school track coach
*Mama, Wilma's mother	Announcers 1 and 2
*Papa, Wilma's father	
Coch Temple, a college track coach	
Nancy, John, and Max, Wilma's teammates	
Announcers	Crowd, to be read by a group

Scene 1
Clarksville, Tennessee, 1944
S1: Lights the on a small house.
S2: Four-year-old Wilma lies in bed, shivering.
Dr. Coleman: How are you feeling, Wilma?
Wilma: Awfully. Not good.
Mama: Wilma has been sickly since the day she was born, but this is something different.
Papa: But how can you go away, and one leg has gone crooked with her foot twisted inward?
Dr. Coleman: I'm afraid Wilma has polio. It's a virus that attacks the spinal cord.
Mama: Is her leg going to stay like that?
Dr. Coleman: Time will tell. She should see a specialist in Nashville.
Papa: Nashville? That's 50 miles away.
Dr. Coleman: I know. But the hospital here refuses to treat black patients.
Mama: If it will help our little girl, then we'll do it.
S3: Papa walks Dr. Coleman to the door.
Dr. Coleman: I must warn you not to get your hopes up. It's possible that Wilma may never walk again.
Wilma: Is that true, Mama?
Mama: I don't believe it. And don't you believe it either.
Scene 2
Nashville, Tennessee, 1946
S1: Onstage is a box with one side cut away so the passengers can be seen by the audience.
S2: Behind the box is a screen showing video footage of athletes, so the box appears to be moving.
Scene 3
Cobb Elementary School, Clarksville, Tennessee, 1949
S1: Nine-year-old Wilma, wearing her leg brace, is at recess. Two kids are picking on her for being different.
Edward: It's not fair.
Robert: I'll be a hero.
S2: In the scene, Wilma is the only one left.
Edward: (sneaking) I guess we're stuck with Wilma.
Wilma: I'm just the same as you. My leg is just messed up.
Edward: But in dodgeball you need to be fast.
S3: Wilma wants to outshine her brother. Her brother Wesley picks on her and makes her cry.

Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of support materials at scope.scholastic.com.

Audio:

- Vocabulary
- Text-to-speech

Recommended pairings from the Scope archives:

Special Collection: Courage and Resilience

Skill Building Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Preparing to Write: Applying a Quote
 - Close Reading and Critical Thinking
 - Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice
 - **Literary Elements:** Character Thinking Tool
 - Choice Board
 - Quiz*
 - Contest Entry Form
- *Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1. Preparing to Read

15 minutes

Preview Teacher Resource

- In this play, you'll notice that the word *Black* (describing a group of people) is capitalized. Click [here](#) for an explanation of why Scholastic made this decision.

Do-Now: Respond to a Journal Prompt (5 minutes)

- Share the following prompt with students: Spend five minutes journaling about someone you think of as strong. This person can be real or fictional. In what way is this person strong? You may want to draw this person, list things that make this person strong, or record a memory you have of this person's strength.

Preview Vocabulary (5 minutes)

- Share **Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice** and review the words as a class. Optionally, assign the practice **activity** for homework. Highlighted words: *hobbles*, *illuminated*, *jostles*, *scowls*, *surges*

2. Reading and Discussing

45 minutes

- Have a volunteer read the As You Read box on page 15 of the magazine or at the top of the digital story page.
- Assign parts and read the play as a class.
- Break students into groups to discuss the following close-reading and critical-thinking questions. *Tip: If you're remote, you can have each group respond in a shared doc or discuss the questions in their own chat rooms; you can also make the questions an asynchronous assignment.*

Close-Reading Questions

(10 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **Based on information in Scene 1 and the “What to Know” text feature, what challenges did Wilma face growing up in Clarksville?** (setting, key ideas and details) *Wilma faced many challenges growing up in Clarksville. As a young girl, Wilma was often sick and then became infected with polio. Wilma also faced racism and racist laws and customs that made her daily life and illness more challenging. Because of the Jim Crow laws that existed in the South at the time, Wilma and her family did not have the freedom to make choices about where they lived, worked, shopped, went to school, and more. As we learn in Scene 1, Wilma had to travel to a faraway hospital for treatment because that was her only option for receiving the care she needed.*
2. **In Scene 4, Wilma speaks two lines to herself. Why did the playwright include these lines?** (author’s craft, character) *The playwright included these lines because they provide insight into Wilma’s mind and show how Wilma won the race by telling herself that she could do it, even when she was falling behind. These lines show that Wilma was a determined person and her strong drive to succeed is what helped her win races.*
3. **In Scene 9, SD2 says Wilma is “staring toward the finish line with fire in her eyes.” Explain what this means.** (figurative language) *This line means that Wilma is looking toward the finish line with fierce determination and focus. She wants to win, and the “fire in her eyes” shows that she is ready to push herself hard to reach that goal.*
4. **In the Epilogue, Papa explains that Wilma started a foundation to “support young people in athletics and academics.” Why do you think the playwright included this detail?** (author’s purpose, character) *The playwright may have included this detail to help readers understand more about the kind of person Wilma was. The fact that she started a foundation to help other young athletes shows that she was a caring and generous person who wanted others to have the chance to succeed like she did.*
5. **In Scene 6, Coach Gray calls Wilma a “fighter.” How does information about Wilma in the play support Coach Gray’s statement?** (character, key ideas and details) *Wilma Rudolph overcame many challenges to become an Olympic runner. First, she fought hard to overcome the physical challenges caused by her polio infection. Then Wilma pushed herself to become a fast and skilled runner. Even when the competition was tough and she felt hopeless, she trained harder to become stronger and faster.*

Critical-Thinking Questions

(10 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. In the Epilogue, Papa says that after winning three gold medals at the 1960 Olympics, Wilma “became a hero worldwide.” What do you think it was about Wilma that made her a hero to so many? *Answers will vary, but students will likely say that people saw Wilma as a hero because she overcame so many challenges—including a serious illness that threatened her ability to walk—to become not just a successful track star, but the fastest woman in the world as well. Students may also say that Wilma is heroic simply because of her strength and athletic ability.*
2. Consider one of Wilma’s last lines in the play, “No triumph can be had without struggle.” Do you agree? Has struggle ever led to triumph in your own life? *Answers will vary.*

3. Skill Building and Writing

30 minutes

- Have students complete **Preparing to Write: Applying a Quote**. This activity will help them organize their ideas in preparation for the writing prompt on page 19 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story page.
- Alternatively, have students choose a culminating task from the **Choice Board**, a menu of differentiated activities.

Recommended pairings from the Scope archives:

[Special Collection: Courage and Resilience](#)