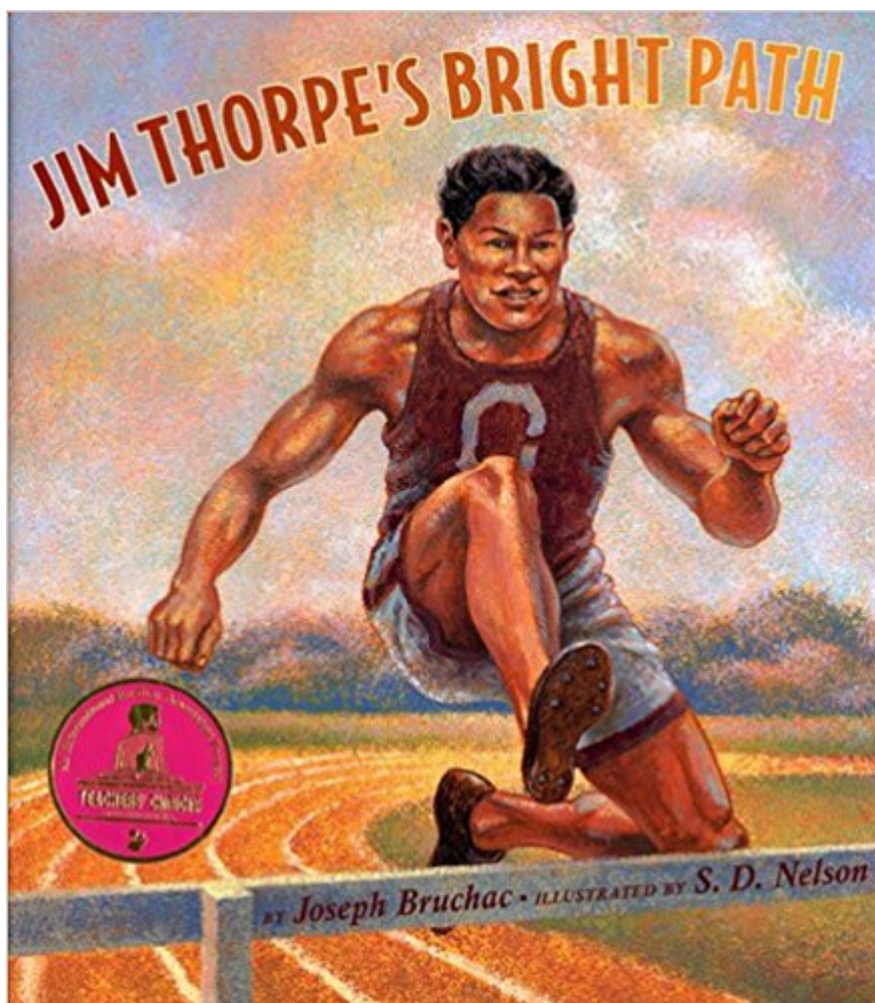


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Jim Thorpe's Bright Path



Synopsis

A biography of the legendary Native American Jim Thorpe (1888-1953), voted the Greatest Football Player and Greatest Athlete of the Half-Century by two AP polls, focusing on his early childhood and how school and sports shaped his future.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 870 (What's this?)

Paperback: 40 pages

Publisher: Lee & Low Books (August 1, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1600603408

ISBN-13: 978-1600603402

Product Dimensions: 8.9 x 0.2 x 10 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 5 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #973,940 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #49 in Books > Children's Books > Sports & Outdoors > Track & Field #481 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Sports & Recreation #1202 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Multicultural

Age Range: 6 - 11 years

Grade Level: 1 - 6

Customer Reviews

Grade 1-4 "Thorpe, who was named "Wa-tho-huck," or "Bright Path," by his Pottowatomie mother, spent a childhood marked by remarkable physical prowess until he was sent to an Indian boarding school at age six. He lost his twin brother (pneumonia), his mother ("sudden illness"), and his father (snakebite), but persevered, finally proving himself on the Carlisle Indian School football field in his teens. Bruchac ends this picture-book biography here. He sticks to the facts, occasionally employing bits of dialogue. He includes details about the unfair treatment of Native Americans, such as the mandatory Indian boarding schools that had unsanitary living conditions and educated students only to be maids and laborers. The theme of overcoming personal and societal obstacles to reach success is strongly expressed. The author keeps his subject linked to his heritage; for example, referring to Thorpe's speed and endurance as skills that had enabled his American Indian ancestors to provide for their families. Unfortunately, Nelson's acrylic illustrations are not as successful as the writing. The human bodies are stiff, with hands and feet that would be at home on

wooden marionettes. Athletes appear frozen rather than moving fluidly. An author's note and a chronology, both illustrated with small black-and-white photos, sketch the rest of Thorpe's life. "Liza Graybill, Worcester Public Library, MA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Gr. 2-3. In 1999 the U.S. Congress recognized Thorpe as "Athlete of the Century," a marvelous achievement for anyone, let alone a Native American kid born in a log cabin. But Thorpe had much going for him: determination, confidence, amazing athletic ability, and a father who insisted that he learn English to protect himself from unscrupulous men who took advantage of Indians. In a straightforward style, Bruchac summarizes Thorpe's youth, concluding at the start of his football career at Carlisle Indian School. Events in Thorpe's later life (e.g., his dramatic Olympic success) are relegated to a time line at the back of the book--which, unfortunately, many kids may miss. Nelson's thickly painted artwork is appropriately muscular and energetic, but aside from a few somber pictures related to the deaths of Thorpe's twin brother and parents, the dominant image is one of a generally happy youth who apparently made the best of whatever came his way. Inspirational and respectful, yes, but there's not much depth behind the smiling facade. Prepare for some questions about Indian boarding schools. Stephanie Zvirin Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

My son got this book three years ago when he was five, and he enjoyed having it read to him and then reading it himself. He still reads it now that he's almost eight. What's fascinating to him is that it is about a young man, much like himself, who loves and is good at lots of sports. That Jim Thorpe was a real person also makes it more entrancing than fiction. As a parent, I like the book for the different topics it brings up and allows us to discuss in addition to the sports--American Indian history, different kinds of families and living situations, hard work and persistence to achieve goals. Highly recommended.

This is a very interesting, inspirational true-to-life story with wonderful, colorful illustrations. Other reviewers have told the story but it's always motivational and exciting to hear that a young man can go so far in sports, like in an assortment of track, football and baseball. My boy really enjoyed it, so much so that we read it together and we talked about all the accomplishments from one sportsman. Great story - I recommend it to all youngsters. Jim Thorpe was definitely on the Bright Path.

The title of "Jim Thorpe's Bright Path" has a specific meaning because when he was born in 1887 in the Indian Territory that would become the state of Oklahoma, his mother gave him another name: "Wa-tho-huck," which means "Bright Path." This illustrated children's book by Joseph Bruchac, with illustrations by S.D. Nelson, tells the story of the young Jim Thorpe as not only an inspiration but also as a testament to what Thorpe and others of his generation had to go through. Bruchac's inspiration for this book for young readers came from a pair of people and a pair of songs. Swift Eagle, an Apache/Pueblo elder who worked with Thorpe in Hollywood taught the author a song Thorpe had given him back in 1935. Jack Gladstone, a Blackfeet folk singer, wrote a song entitled "Bright Path" about Thorpe. There are two key parts to the path being told here. When Jim and his twin brother Charlie turned six they were supposed to go to the Agency Boarding School. But their father, who had become one of the few Sac and Fox men who could read and write English, and who had seen uneducated Indians cheated out of everything by dishonest men, insisted that his sons needed white man's knowledge to survive. So the first key part of the path was Jim getting more of an education than was available on the reservation, even though he had to work a lot harder at learning to read, write and do arithmetic than he did in playing sports where he excelled at everything that he did. The second part was ending up at Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, where Thorpe ran track for Pop Warner and wanted to play on the football team. It is interesting that Bruchac chooses to end the story of Jim Thorpe with making the football team at Carlisle. This is before he becomes an All-American or goes to the 1912 Summer Olympic Games in Stockholm, Sweden where he won both the Pentathlon and the Decathlon and was infamously declared by King Gustav to be the greatest athlete in the world. But clearly the point Bruchac wants to make is that when Jim Thorpe ran a football he was not just carrying a football but also the hopes and dreams of both his family and his people. There is also poignancy to his efforts because of all of the personal tragedies his family endured as he made his way along his Bright Path. However, the most important part is that the story ends at a point when young readers can still identify with a character who did not really go to school and before he became such a great and famous athlete. It is in the Author's Note in the back of the book that young students will learn all about Thorpe's greatest athletic accomplishments as well as the effort to get back the Olympic medals that he was stripped of because he had played minor league baseball before the games (young readers today will find the idea of amateurism to be rather interesting given the world of sports today). There is also a time line of Important Dates in Jim Thorpe's Life and Legacy that goes from his birth in 1887 to being memorialized on a Wheaties box in 2001. That is where it is pointed out that in 1950 Thorpe was voted America's Greatest All-Around Male Athlete of the first half century by the Associated Press

for a period that included the likes of Babe Ruth, Bobby Jones, and Jesse Owens. It is interesting to think of a children wanting to be like Jim and be a famous athlete when they grew up.

As a girl I didn't know if I would like this book on football but I read it anyway and ended up really liking it. This book is the story of football player Jim Thorpe's life. The story takes the reader through everything that Jim Thorpe did up to when he played football, including going to boarding school and losing his brother. From Jim Thorpe's Bright Path I learned so many things about him. I learned that Jim ran track, went to the Olympics and even played baseball. He was not just a football player he could play almost every sport there was and play it well. The information is presented in an interesting way so the reader does not get bored and the illustrations go perfectly along with the book. At the end there is another information page and a timeline of Jim Thorpe's life.

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