

Young Portrait Explorers: Wilma Rudolph



Learning Objective: Learn how Wilma Rudolph became the first American woman to win three gold medals in a single **Olympics** (a world-wide sports competition held every four years).

Portrait Discussion:

Spend 30 seconds letting your eyes wander from top to bottom and all through the center of the photograph.

Movement: Notice what Wilma Rudolph is doing in this photograph. How would you describe her movement? Is she standing still or running fast? How can you tell that her body is moving, even though this photograph is still? *Wilma Rudolph was an **Olympic athlete**, which means she was one of the best and fastest people in her sport — running. To become an Olympic athlete, you have to work hard and practice every day.*

Activity:

Show someone in your family how you move your body when you run! Run in place or run somewhere safe. When you run, which parts of your body do you move? Is the way you run similar to or different from Wilma Rudolph?

Setting: Take a look at the background of this photograph. Is Wilma Rudolph running inside or outside; how can you tell? What are the other people in this photograph doing?

*In this photograph, Wilma Rudolph is running in a race at the Olympics. The other people in this photograph are **spectators** (people watching a sporting event).*

Facial Expression: Look closely at Wilma Rudolph's facial expression. What emotions do you see in her face? Does she look tired? Proud? How do you feel after you run fast? *The photograph shows Wilma Rudolph right before she crossed the finish line — the white line that runs across the photograph — to win first place.*

Historical Context:

Wilma Rudolph was an Olympic athlete. She won three gold medals (first place) at the 1960 Summer Olympics in Rome, Italy! As a child, Wilma Rudolph lost the ability to move part of her leg. Over many years, she worked hard to make her leg strong and eventually she was able to use both of her legs fully. Have you ever had to work at something that was hard for you to do?

In this photo, Wilma Rudolph is running in the 1956 Summer Olympics in Melbourne, Australia

What words would you use to describe Wilma Rudolph?

Related Children's Book:

Wilma Unlimited by Kathleen Krull

Activity: Be an Olympic Athlete

Materials:

Running shoes
Shoelace/piece of string
Circular piece of paper
Markers/crayons/colored pencils

Instruction:

Wilma Rudolph ran 100 meters (328 feet) in 11 seconds and won a gold medal for it. How far can you run in 11 seconds? Have someone time you. Try a few times — can you beat your record? Create your own medal with the cut-out paper and piece of string.



Wilma Rudolph by George Silk, gelatin silver print, 1960. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. © George Silk/The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images

Find the portrait on our website, here: https://npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.2004.150