Pelé

Rod Smith

Summary

This book is a biography of the legendary Brazilian soccer player Pelé. It traces his life from his early days as a poor boy who played barefoot because his family could not afford soccer shoes, to his later life as an ambassador for the Brazilian government, and one of the most successful soccer players the world has ever seen.

Pages 1–7: Pelé was born in 1940 into a poor family. His father was a soccer player. He wanted Pelé to be a soccer player too, but his mother wanted him to be a doctor. Although he was good at soccer, Pelé's dream was to work at an airport. However, when he was eight years old, he witnessed an air crash and gave up his dream of working with airplanes. Pelé learnt to play soccer from his father and soon became the best player in town. He formed a soccer team with his friends and they soon won the championships. At the suggestion of a local manager, Pelé joined the famous Brazilian team, Santos. He scored a lot of goals for the team and was soon famous.

Pages 7–15: In 1957, Pelé was accepted onto the Brazilian national team. He played in the 1958 World Cup in Sweden and scored six goals in all, which helped Brazil win the championship. He later went on to play in the 1966 and 1970 World Cup championships too. While watching a girl's soccer match in 1958, Pelé met a young girl, Rosemeri Cholby, who later became his wife. Pelé's soccer schedule often took him away from home, which was difficult for his family life. In 1974, Pelé retired from Santos and moved to New York in order to bring soccer to the United States. He played for three more years before retiring from the game. After this, Pelé worked as an ambassador for the Brazilian government and also for the international organization UNICEF, which helps children in trouble around the world.

Background and themes

Ambition: Pelé is born into a poor family, who could not even afford to buy him soccer shoes, but it did not stop him from playing. He works hard to be a good soccer player, and by working hard, he achieves his goals and becomes a world famous and successful player.

Values: When Pelé retired from soccer, he was very famous and very rich. Instead of simply enjoying his retirement, he continued to work to help those less fortunate than himself. He used his talents to improve his life and continued to use his talents to help others improve theirs.

Discussion activities

Before reading

1 **Discuss:** Ask students to look at the front cover of the book. *Who is the man? Where is he?* Do students know anything about Pelé? If so, ask them to write a list of things that they know about him. If not, ask students to look at the picture and talk about what they think about him. *What nationality is he? What kind of character is he? What is he doing in this picture?*

2 **Group work:** Put students into groups. Give them five minutes to choose a famous sport star (for less able students ask them to choose a sport). Each group should prepare a few sentences about their sport star/sport – but without using the star's/sport's name. Each group takes it in turns to read out their sentences to the class. The class guesses the sport star/sport. Alternatively, ask students to work individually and to write a few sentences about their favourite sport star/sport.

After reading

3 **Role play:** Put students into pairs. Ask one student to take the role of Pelé's father and the other to take the role of his mother. Tell students to imagine that they are Pelé's parents talking about their son after Brazil's success in the 1958 World Cup in Sweden. Ask them to prepare a conversation between his mother and father. They should use their imagination and think about how they both feel about the success of their son. Walk round the class and help the students with their dialogues. Give students time to practise before asking confident pairs to role play their dialogues in front of the class.

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