

Alice Coachman: From hard times to great heights

Critical Thinking & Discussion Questions

K-2

What is a goal? Do you have any goals for your life?

What goals did Alice Coachman have as a little girl? Not everyone liked the goals that Alice had. Why do you think Alice's father did not want her to play sports?

Is there anything that you are not allowed to play?

What do you like doing when you are not at school? What would you like to be when you grow up?

Why do some people stop us from reaching our dreams?

What is a stereotype? How was Alice Coachman affected by stereotypes when she was a young girl? How did stereotypes affect her when she grew up?

What is nice about being different from someone else? What do you like about yourself that makes you special? (favorite food, talent, ethnicity) How are we all the same? (school, city, human, age) Where do stereotypes come from?

Discrimination can mean keeping certain people from doing what other people can do, often because of the color of their skin, their religion, or language. Explain how Alice Coachman faced discrimination.

Everyone has an authority figure in his or her life. What did Alice Coachman do when her father told her not to play sports?

Name 2-3 authority figures in your life. How can we honor an authority figure even when we don't like what they say?

How did Alice Coachman reach her dreams?

What can you do to help your classmates reach their dreams? How does it make you feel when someone helps you do something that is hard?

A mentor is a person who gives helpful advice to someone else. What advice would you have given Alice Coachman when she was discouraged?

Do you think that it is harder to reach a goal now than it was when your parents were young? What about when your grandparents were young? What challenges did your grandparents have that you do not have?

Do challenges excite you or do they make you want to give up?

Name your favorite athlete. Why are you glad that they did not give up reaching their goal?

How do challenges help us? What does endurance mean?

Name a Woodson Principle that is helpful when we face a challenge.

Grades 3 - 8

What kinds of setbacks or obstacles did Alice Coachman face in her life?
How did she succeed in spite of these challenges?

Alice Coachman's father did not want her to participate in sports because she was a girl. Why do you think people thought girls shouldn't play sports?

Are there any gender stereotypes today that keep people from participating in certain activities or pursuing certain goals? What about racial or ethnic stereotypes? Are there other types of stereotypes that some people face?

What kinds of discrimination did Coachman face on her path to the Olympics? Did winning an Olympic gold medal put an end to this discrimination?

How did Coachman respond to the way she was treated by authority figures: her father and the Albany mayor? How can we honor a person's role or title but disagree with their prejudices?

Some people may not have changed their views about women in sports even after seeing her outstanding athletic achievements. Why?

What advice would you give someone who felt that she/he shouldn't pursue her/his dreams?
What is the best advice you've ever received?
(Just for fun: What's the worst advice anyone has ever given you?)

Do you think that people today face more or fewer obstacles to success, compared to years ago? How can people achieve their dreams and goals in spite of challenges?

Do challenges motivate you or do they discourage you?

Does overcoming an obstacle make reaching a goal more worthwhile? Why or why not?

Have you ever met someone who became more determined when they encountered a setback?

What do you think is the best way to respond to a disappointment, setback, or obstacle?

Who are people who inspire you in your life?

Who are people who have gone out of their way to help you reach your goals?

Have you ever asked people directly for help in your life? Would you consider trying it? What do you think might happen if you ask? What's the best that could happen? What is the worst that could happen?

Do you think that people generally like helping other people?

Would you go out of your way to help another person? Why or why not?

Have you ever gone out of your way to help someone? How did it make you feel?

Do you think events like the Olympics are important? Why or why not? In what ways do events involving multiple cultures and countries help shape the way people view themselves and others?

Activities

While Alice Coachman was the first African-American woman to win a *gold* medal, she was not the first to win an Olympic medal. Dig deeper to discover the first African-American woman to win an Olympic medal. What medal did she win, and in which event?

Find out who was the first woman to become an Olympic Champion. When did that happen, what country was she from, and in which event did that woman compete?

Research the first African-American man to win an Olympic medal and describe his story.

Research Historically Black Colleges and Universities and pick one to write a 1-page report on.