

Reading with Canadian Celebrities

Grades 4-8

Written by Ruth Solski

About the author:

Ruth Solski was an educator for 30 years. She has written many educational resources over the years and is the founder of S&S Learning Materials. As a writer, her main goal is to provide teachers with a useful tool they can implement in their classrooms to bring the joy of learning to children.

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Printed in Canada

Published in Canada by:
S&S Learning Materials
15 Dairy Avenue
Napanee, Ontario
K7R 1M4
www.sslearning.com

ISBN: 9781770781719



At A Glance

Learning Expectations	Male Athletes	Female Athletes	Male Actors	Female Actors	Male Musicians	Female Musicians
Reading Comprehension						
• Locating information	•	•	•	•	•	•
• Using context clues	•	•	•		•	•
• Recalling events	•		•	•	•	•
• Evaluation	•	•		•		
• Sequential ordering	•	•	•		•	•
• Classifying information	•	•		•	•	•
• Identifying main idea	•			•		
• Locating proof	•	•	•	•		
• Understanding idioms	•					
• Recalling details		•	•	•	•	•
Vocabulary Development						
• Identifying phonetic sounds	•	•		•	•	
• Sentence ordering	•				•	
• Classifying words to meanings	•	•	•	•	•	•
• Identifying parts of speech	•			•	•	•
• Paragraph writing	•	•		•	•	
• Identifying syllables, compound words	•	•	•		•	•
• Identifying antonyms, synonyms, homophones	•	•	•	•	•	•
• Classifying words	•			•	•	
Research Skills						
• Using the Internet to locate information	•	•	•	•	•	•
• Mapping skills					•	•

Reading with Canadian Celebrities

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About this Book:

This resource is a compilation of forty-two biographies and forty-two worksheets that pertain to famous Canadian male and female athletes, actors, and musicians. The biographies have been created to promote and familiarize students with Canadians who have become famous in the fields of sport, music and drama while providing an interesting genre to strengthen students' reading skills. The worksheets that accompany the biographies focus on the development of a variety of reading comprehension skills, the development and reinforcement of vocabulary and language skills, and the continuing development of research skills.

Ways to Use the Biographies and Worksheets

- 1. Reproducible Worksheets:** Reproduce each biography and worksheet and staple them together to form a handout. The students read the biography, discuss the information, and then complete the activities on the worksheet.
- 2. Laminated Folders:** Each biography and its worksheet could be reproduced and glued to the inside of a file folder. A photograph of the male athlete obtained from a sports magazine, the newspaper or the Internet could be glued to the front of the file folder. Multiple folders on each athlete may have to be made depending on the size of the group or class.

Example:



The file folders should be laminated to ensure longer usage. The folders could be placed at an Interest Centre in the classroom. Each student chooses a folder on one of the athletes, reads the biography, and records the answers on the worksheet in a notebook or workbook.

3. Discussion Topics:

- Types of Sports
- Types of Sporting Equipment
- Sportsmanship
- Types of Drama and Acting
- Canadian Films and Movies
- Characteristics of a good actor, athlete, musician
- Survey and graphing popular musicians, athletes, actors, types of sports, kinds of music
- Types of Musicians
- Types of Music
- Musical Instruments
- Training requirements for an athlete, actor, musician
- Advantages and disadvantages of being an actor, athlete, musician
- How sports, acting and music have evolved.



W

ho would have ever imagined that a scrawny little kid from Brantford, with the name of Wayne Gretzky, would develop into a scoring machine in the world of professional hockey. Today, and for years to come, Wayne Gretzky, nicknamed 'The Great One,' will be considered the greatest hockey player ever.

Wayne was born on January 26, 1961, to Walter and Phyllis Gretzky in Brantford, Ontario. At the age of two, his father had him at a local park rink learning to skate. Later on, his father made him a rink in the family backyard. It was here that he acquired and practised his skating, scoring, and stick handling skills under his father's supervision.

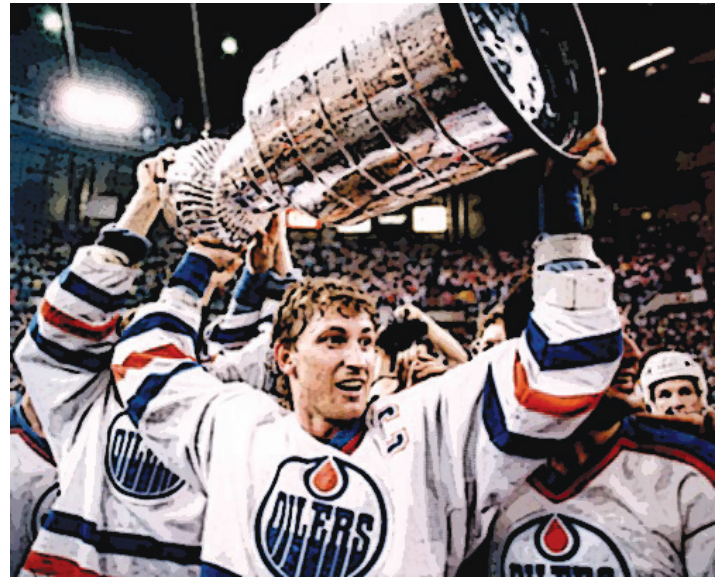
When Wayne was six, he began to play peewee hockey with ten year olds. During his first season, he only scored one goal and cried when he found out he was the only player on the team not to win a trophy. As a result of this disappointment, Wayne was determined to improve and practised faithfully. In no time, Wayne developed into a scoring machine and at the age of ten, he had racked up an amazing 378 goals in 82 games.

Wayne flew through Canada's junior leagues and at 17, he was playing with the Indianapolis Racers of the World Hockey Association. When the Racers folded after five seasons, Gretzky was sold to the Edmonton Oilers. In Edmonton, Wayne became the most dominant player in the history of the game. Here, Wayne was playing with phenomenal hockey players. During his rookie year with the Oilers, Gretzky became the youngest player to ever score 50 goals during one season. He won the Hart Trophy as the league's MVP and tied with Marcel Dionne for the league's lead in points.

In the 1980 to 1981 season, Wayne won his first of seven scoring titles and broke Bobby Orr's assists record with 109 assists. In the same year, Wayne shattered Phil Esposito's scoring record of 76 goals by scoring 92 times. In the same year, he earned 212 points. This was the first of four times that he'd score more than 200 points and he still holds the record.

Gretzky had a style all his own. It was unique and difficult to penetrate. The area behind the opposition's goal was referred to as Gretzky's office. It was from this position that Gretzky made perfect passes for goals. He was also a great penalty killer, often scoring when his team was shorthanded.

ISBN: 9781770781719



In 1983, the Oilers went to the Stanley Cup finals and lost horribly in four straight games to the Islanders. The Oilers rebounded the next year to win the Stanley Cup and continued to for the next four years. In 1988, after the Oilers had won their fifth Stanley Cup, Gretzky gathered his teammates at center ice for an on-ice group photo which started a hockey tradition for every team at all levels and it was the last time that Wayne would wear an Oilers' sweater.

In August of the same year, it was announced that Wayne Gretzky had been traded to the Los Angeles Kings in one of the most lucrative trades in NHL history. Fans and media were not very happy as their star hockey player was heading for the United States and would never wear a Canadian team sweater again in the NHL. The Oilers were never the same, but the LA Kings were sold out every game. While playing for the Kings, Gretzky scored his 802nd goal to pass Gordie Howe's all-time leading score as well as his 1,852nd point to pass Howe as an all time point-getter in the league.

After the Kings, Wayne played for St. Louis for a short while and then signed with the New York Rangers. Although Wayne still scored well, he found the team was only mediocre and decided to retire in 1999. At the same time the NHL also retired his number 99. Not only is Wayne Gretzky considered one of the greatest players to represent the NHL, he is also one of the finest men hockey has ever known. ☆



Wayne Gretzky

Name: _____

Date: _____

Reading Skills

Answer the following questions with complete sentences.

1. Does the size of a hockey player make any difference in his ability to perform well in the sport?

2. Why were so many people doubtful about Wayne's ability to play NHL hockey?

3. What hockey skills did Gretzky focus on while he was growing up?

4. During his hockey career, which team do you think provided him with the most rewards and enjoyment? Tell why.

5. What hockey tradition did Gretzky begin when he played for the Edmonton Oilers?

6. What event was the turning point in Gretzky's career and his life?

7. Why were people upset when they heard about Wayne leaving the Oilers?

8. Which famous hockey legends had their records broken by Gretzky?

9. Do you think Wayne Gretzky enjoyed his hockey career as much when he played in the United States?

Vocabulary Skills

- A. The word "scrawny" begin with the blend "scr". Record the "scr" words in the box on the lines beside their meanings.

scrunch	scrimp	scrounge
scroll	scrabble	scribble
scribe	scraggly	scramble

1. to crunch or squeeze _____
2. to be very cheap _____
3. a roll of special paper _____
4. to mooch; sponge; beg _____
5. a game using letters _____
6. to write quickly _____
7. one who writes _____
8. to mix together _____
9. unkempt; shaggy _____

- B. Rewrite each group of words to form a sentence about Wayne Gretzky.

1. perhaps, Wayne, Gretzky, the, most, childhood, lived, famous, athlete, any, of

2. was, when, Wayne, he, fourteen, and, decided, to, Brantford, leave, because, players, made, jealous, him, parents, unhappy, and, Toronto, Nats, play, the, for, to

3. most, was, the, Wayne's, game, versus, Union, Game, 2, memorable, Soviet, during 1987, Cup, the Canada, the




K

urt Browning is one of Canada's most famous figure skating stars and is the best entertainer the sport has ever seen. His personality and rapport with the audience shines through his performances, which makes him adored and admired everywhere that he goes.

Kurt was born in Rocky Mountain House, Alberta, on June 18, 1966 and was raised in the small town of Caroline, in the foothills of the Rockies. When Kurt was three, he began to learn how to skate on a small outdoor rink made by his father. In time, Kurt began to play hockey and in order for him to have more ice time to improve his skating skills, his parents enrolled him in a figure skating class. When Kurt reached the age of 11, he had to choose between hockey and figure skating. It was an easy decision for Kurt as he liked figure skating from the beginning and knew that he was too small for hockey.

In the following years, time and talent contributed to his quick rise through the ranks of local, regional, provincial, and national events. Kurt is the only skater to place first in all three categories: novice, junior, and senior, and was Canadian National Champion four times.

In 1988, Kurt caught the world's attention at the World Figure Skating Championships in Hungary. It was here where Kurt completed a perfect quadruple toe loop, which was the first of its kind to be successfully executed in competition. He finished in sixth place and earned a place in the Guinness Book of World Records. In 1989, with a program loaded with technically difficult moves such as six triple jumps, a triple, triple combination, and his trademark quadruple toe loop, Browning's execution of his program dazzled the judges and he claimed the World title.

During the years of 1990 and 1991, Browning reclaimed his World Title and became the first Canadian, to win three consecutive world titles. In both years he was awarded the Lionel Conacher award as Canada's male athlete of the year. This was the first time that this honour had been bestowed upon a figure skater.

At the Albertville Olympics in 1992, Kurt had been plagued with a back problem, which prevented him from skating his best and reaching the podium. He did manage to place sixth. In the same year, at the World Figure Skating



Championships in California, Kurt skated well and won a silver medal.

In 1993, Kurt won the World Figure Skating Championships with his memorable program, in which he impersonated the famous character Rick Blaine, from the classic 1942 film *Casablanca*. Fans and the judges loved the classy, artistic, and athletic program.

The year 1994 did not turn out the way that Kurt had planned. He was the favourite going into the Lillehammer Olympics in Norway. After completing a disastrous short program, Browning found himself in 12th place. Fans and the media couldn't believe what had happened to Canada's star skater. Fortunately, Kurt rebounded with a spectacular long program and finished in 5th place.

Shortly after the Olympics, Kurt retired from amateur skating to enter the world of professional skating, where he competed in various competitions, winning three World Pro Titles. He performed in *American and Canadian Stars on Ice*, a show which toured North America. Kurt also delighted television audiences with various skating specials. His achievements have been honoured with his induction into Canada's Walk of Fame, the Canadian Figure Skating Hall of Fame, and the Canadian Sports Hall of Fame. ★





Kurt Browning

Name: _____

Date: _____

Reading Skills

Record, on the line provided at the end of each sentence, either the word “fact” or “opinion.”

1. Kurt Browning is the greatest figure skater that Canada has ever had. _____
2. Kurt Browning was Canada's Senior Champion for four years. _____
3. Figure Skating skills improve the skating skills of hockey players. _____
4. Skaters who are small in stature make better figure skaters. _____
5. Talent, skating ability, and training made Kurt Browning a champion in figure skating. _____
6. Athletes who come from small communities usually do better in sports than those who come from large cities. _____
7. Kurt Browning's trademark jump is a quadruple toe loop. _____
8. People say Kurt retired from competitive skating due to his disastrous showing at the Olympics. _____
9. In one important competition, Kurt rebounded from 12th place to finish in 5th place with a spectacular long program. _____
10. Kurt Browning loved to perform and entertain audiences as an amateur and as a professional skater. _____
11. People consider Kurt Browning's Casablanca routine the best one that he ever performed. _____
12. Kurt Browning was an amateur and professional figure skating champion. _____

Vocabulary Skills

A. Circle the adjectives that describe Kurt Browning.

small	amusing	awkward
shy	athletic	arrogant
quick	talented	humble
wiry	obnoxious	caring
energetic	tall	hardworking
lazy	disinterested	stubborn
artistic	entertaining	boring
classy	outgoing	happy
negative	bubbly	enthusiastic

B. In some words, a pair of double consonants are found in the middle or at the end. Complete the following words with the correct pair of double letters.

ll, tt, nn, ss, zz, ff, pp

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1. ra ____ ort | 7. foothi ____ s |
| 2. enro ____ ed | 8. ski ____ s |
| 3. di ____ icult | 9. begi ____ ing |
| 4. da ____ led | 10. fo ____ owing |
| 5. cla ____ y | 11. a ____ ention |
| 6. profe ____ ional | 12. technica ____ y |

C. Many words contain the following vowel combinations.

ai, ou, oo, ee, oa

Complete each word with its correct vowel combination.

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 1. entert ____ ner | 7. thr ____ |
| 2. r ____ sed | 8. r ____ ching |
| 3. ____ td ____ r | 9. reb ____ nded |
| 4. ch ____ se | 10. t ____ red |
| 5. l ____ p | 11. l ____ rn |
| 6. l ____ ded | 12. ____ sy |

