

# Jim Thorpe's Bright Path

written by Joseph Bruchac

illustrated by S. D. Nelson

## About the Book

**Genre:** Biography

**Format:** Paperback, \$11.95  
40 pages, 9 x 10-1/4

**ISBN:** 9781600603402

**Reading Level:** Grade 4

**Interest Level:** Grades 1–6

**Guided Reading Level:** T

**Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:**  
5.5/0.5

**Lexile™ Measure:** AD870L

\*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

**Themes:** Biography/Memoir, Childhood Experiences and Memories, Coping with Death, Dreams & Aspirations, Education, Environment/Nature, Families, History, Nonfiction, Optimism/Enthusiasm, Overcoming Obstacles, Siblings, United States History, Native American Interest

### Resources on the web:

[leeandlow.com/books/jim-thorpe-s-bright-path](http://leeandlow.com/books/jim-thorpe-s-bright-path)

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

## SYNOPSIS

From the day he was born, Jim Thorpe's parents knew he was special. As the light shone on the road to the family's cabin, his mother gave Jim another name – Wa-tho-huck – "Bright Path."

Jim's athletic skills were evident early on, as he played outdoors and hunted with his father and twin brother. When the boys were sent to Indian boarding school, Jim struggled in academics but excelled in sports. Jim moved from school to school over the years, overcoming family tragedies, until his athletic genius was recognized by Coach Pop Warner at the Carlisle Indian School.

From the award-winning team of Joseph Bruchac and S. D. Nelson comes an inspiring biography of the young person behind the world-renowned athlete. Thorpe's story of determination and perseverance will resonate with every child who dreams of finding his or her own bright path.

## BACKGROUND

### Author's Note from Joseph Bruchac

"That day, on the football field at Carlisle, a legend was born. The quiet American Indian boy from Oklahoma went on to international fame, and Jim Thorpe is now widely acknowledged as the dominant sports figure of the twentieth century.

At Carlisle Jim not only played football and ran track, he played lacrosse, was captain of the basketball team, and was the school's best tennis and handball player. His career there spanned six years, broken by a two-year stretch during which he played minor league baseball in North Carolina. That early foray into semiprofessional baseball, during which Jim pitched and played first base, would later come back to haunt him.

Jim Thorpe's two greatest college football years were 1911 and 1912. Starting on both offense and defense, he was also the team's kicker and leading tackler. On November 23, 1912, in the Springfield game, Jim scored all thirty of Carlisle's points, and at the end of the 1912 season, he was named an All American for the second year in a row. He continued to excel in track as well, setting collegiate records in thirteen different events. Although all Jim's records were eventually broken, no one had ever dominated as many events at one time. In fact, it seemed as if Jim could master any sport. He was an excellent golfer and bowler and a superior swimmer, billiards player, figure skater, gymnast, rower, and hockey player.

In 1912, coached by Pop Warner, Jim Thorpe went to the Summer Olympic Games in Stockholm, Sweden. There he won both the Pentathlon and the Decathlon. After placing the laurel wreath on Jim's head and handing him the gold medals, the king of Sweden extended his hand. "Sir," King Gustav said, "you are the greatest athlete in the world."

Jim took his hand and shook it. "Thanks, King," he said. Jim Thorpe had truly shown the world what an Indian could do. But sadly, in 1913 Jim's glory at the Olympics was spoiled by the disclosure that he had played minor league baseball in 1909 and 1910. When asked if this was true, Jim freely admitted it. Many other college athletes did the same in those days, and Jim thought he had done nothing wrong. However, the Amateur Athletic Union ruled that as a professional, Jim should not have competed in the Olympics. He was stripped of his gold medals, and his name was removed from the Olympic record books.

Jim Thorpe went on to a great and varied career in professional sports. When he left college, he became a professional baseball player, and from 1913 to 1919 he played with the New York Giants, the Cincinnati Reds, and the Boston Braves. The big-time era of football began in 1915, when the professional game was reorganized. The Canton Bulldogs scored a publicity coup when they signed Jim Thorpe, by then the world's best-known American Indian as well as the world's most famous athlete. Jim led Canton to victory game after game, including three unofficial world championships. When the American Professional Football Association (later known as the National Football League) was formed in 1920, the members elected Jim Thorpe president. President or not, Jim kept playing until 1929 for teams including the New York Giants and the Oorang Indians. By age forty-two, even

Jim was too old for pro football, and he retired.

Jim Thorpe was a determined by gentle person with a great sense of humor and an unforgettable grin, a modest man whose greatest virtue was his love of honesty. He gave inspiring lectures around the country about his career and the importance of providing equal rights and opportunities for American Indians. "I would like to ask every one of you here to work for the improvement of Indian conditions," Jim would often say at the end of his talks. His eloquent words affected the lives of countless people, who held him up as a fine example of what an Indian could do.

Married three times, Jim Thorpe had five sons and three daughters. After his death in 1953, his children tried to follow his example of fighting for Indian rights. His daughter Grace, an activist with the National Congress of American Indians, also devoted herself to ensuring that her father's athletic accomplishments would not be forgotten. Through her efforts and those of many others, the Amateur Athletic Union restored Jim's status as an amateur, and the International Olympic Committee reversed its decision in 1982. In 1983 the duplicate gold medals were given to the Thorpe family. Jim Thorpe's path was bright again.

### Important Dates in Jim Thorpe's Life and Legacy

"Important Dates in Jim Thorpe's Life and Legacy" from author Joseph Bruchac is a timeline with accompanying photographs located in the back of the book for more about the different monumental events in Jim Thorpe's life and how his efforts and legacy are still impactful today.

## BEFORE READING

### Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- What does it mean to be homesick? How do you feel when you're homesick? Have students identify what makes home special and what actions they took when feeling homesick.
- Ask students what they know about boarding schools. What images come to their mind when they hear the term? Have students ever learned about Indian boarding schools before? How is that image different from the first one they thought of?
- What does it mean to be persistent? How do you demonstrate persistence even though something may be challenging? Why is it important to be persistent? Do you think persistence can be learned? How so?
- What does it mean to stand up for what's right? What are some instances in history where people had to stand up for what they believe in even though they encountered adversity and opposition?
- If applicable and knowing the students in your classroom, begin a conversation about culturally responsive language when referring to Native people. Make a guideline on chart paper with definitions and terms so that students can refer to it during discussion. This can be done at any point during engagement with the book. Write terms on the board or on chart paper so students can be reminded of what is appropriate to mention in discussion. Consider consulting the National Museum of the American Indian's Framework for Essential Understandings about American Indians (<https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/pdf/NMAI-Essential-Understandings.pdf>). The Native terminology listed below comes from the National American Indian Education Association. (<http://www.niea.org/nieaflipbook/mobile/index.html#p=7>)
  - Let students know that American Indians are indigenous, meaning they were the first people to inhabit this land.
  - There are 567 federally-recognized tribal nations within the United States, each with their own distinct culture, traditions, and language.
  - Tribal affiliation is important to Native peoples and should be the primary descriptor when referencing a particular culture or people. For example, Simon J. Ortiz is an Acoma writer.
  - The term "tribe" is often used as a general descriptor for individual indigenous communities. Groups in various regions of the United States use other terms in lieu of tribe, including "nation," "band," "Rancheria," "pueblo," and "village."
  - American Indian (or Alaskan Native) is a term used in federal government policy and research to refer specifically to indigenous peoples of the United States. Some Native

people prefer to use this term.

- The term Native also can be used to describe indigenous peoples from the United States but is used more generally in official and non-official documents. The word Native can be used as a descriptor, for example, Native lands, Native people, Native heritage, Native traditions.
- The term First Nations or First Peoples can also be used to describe the Indigenous population in Canada.

### Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)  
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

- **Book Title Exploration:** Talk about the title of the book, *Jim Thorpe's Bright Path*. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?
- Read Joseph Bruchac and S. D. Nelson's biographies: Read about Joseph Bruchac and S. D. Nelson on the front page or back flap of the book.
- Encourage students to stop and jot in their reading notebooks during the read-aloud when they: learn new information, see a powerful image, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or hear new words.
- Have students quickly write a feeling in their notebooks during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote that feeling down and have them write a journal entry about it.

### Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- how the different boarding schools affected Jim and treated Native students and their families and communities
- how Jim dealt with homesickness at school and overcame tragedy
- how loved ones can help in times of stress and need
- the implications of Native children being sent to boarding schools and their devastating and detrimental long-lasting effects
- how the United States government was responsible for the atrocities inflicted upon Native children after being forced to attend boarding schools
- how Jim demonstrated persistence and courage in the face of racism, prejudice, and heartbreak
- how Jim channeled his drive and dedication through the sports he loved
- why Jim Thorpe's legacy is inspirational today

Encourage students to consider why the author, Joseph Bruchac, would want to share with young people this story about Jim Thorpe and his determination to overcome tragedy and obstacles in his way to become one of the greatest athletes of all time.

## VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word. (Many of the Spanish words can be found in the book glossary, but there are also some that are not included. Students could be encouraged to create a log of these words—they will not be listed here.)

### Content Specific

North Canadian, Indian Territory, mixed-blood, Oklahoma, Pottowatomie, "Wa-tho-huck," bow, trap, Sac and Fox, Agency Boarding School, clan ancestor, Chief Black Hawk, cot, Haskell Institute, Lawrence, Kansas, bugle call, Chauncy Archiquette, Garden Grove, Carlisle Indian School, foreman, Pop Warner, scrub, varsity, tackling, doggone, gauntlet, end zone

### Academic

roamed, endurance, military discipline, arithmetic, influenza, pneumonia, stubborn, stricter, engineering, wakened, athleticism, stirred, grieved, seize, self-assured, snickered, temper, competed, reluctantly, discourage

## AFTER READING

### Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

### Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Where did Jim's story begin?
2. What was Jim's other name and what did it mean?

3. Who was Jim's brother? What did they like to do together? What did Pa Thorpe teach them, and how was this important to the Sac and Fox?
4. What happened when Jim and Charlie reached age six?
5. What were Indian boarding schools like? How did they treat Indians?
6. How did Jim feel about school? How did Charlie feel about school?
7. Who was Chief Black Hawk?
8. What were the Indian boarding school dormitories like?
9. How did Charlie die? How did his death affect Jim?
10. What happened after Jim returned to school? What did Pa do?
11. Where did Jim attend school after Charlie's death? What was it like? How did Jim do there?
12. What sport did Jim see for the first time at the Agency Boarding School? What did he do while he waited to play the sport?
13. What happened during Jim's second year at Haskell?
14. Why did Jim never return to Haskell?
15. Where did Jim go to school after Haskell? What happened as soon as he got there?
16. Where did Jim work outside of Carlisle?
17. What did Jim see other athletes doing at Carlisle? What did he do afterwards?
18. What did Pop Warner tell Jim? What did he ask him to do?
19. What happened after Pop Warner handed Jim the football? What did he do and how did Pop react?
20. How did Jim use the motivation from his family as inspiration in his life?

### Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What does the title *Jim Thorpe's Bright Path* mean to you after reading? How did your perceptions of Jim Thorpe change after reading this story? Why?
2. Why do you think Jim's name, "Wa-tho-huck," Bright Path, is significant? How did Jim represent a bright path? Why do you think his mother gave him this name after he was born, and how was it impactful during his life?
3. How did the tragedy in Jim's life influence him? How did Charlie continue to inspire and motivate Jim even after his early death? How did Jim deal with the death of his parents, and how did he use them as motivation to continue with school? Why do you think Jim continued his studies and sports?
4. How did Jim use persistence and determination to achieve his goals? What lessons did Jim



learn along the way that influenced his personal, academic, and professional lives?

5. In what ways did Jim overcome the many different obstacles in his life, starting at an early age? What were the different techniques that Jim used to overcome barriers in his way?
6. What kind of legacy does Jim Thorpe have? How was he impactful as both an athlete and activist for Native people? Why was he honored for his work? What are the different ways that he is admired and acknowledged today?
7. Why were the Indian boarding schools different than schools that white children attended? How do you think this demonstrates the treatment and perception of Native people in this country? How did Jim work to try and change that?
8. How did Jim channel all of the adversity in his life in his athletic career? Why were sports so important to him and Native people overall?
9. What do you think the line, "His education had put his feet on the bright path" means? How was education critical to both Jim and his family?
10. How would you describe Jim Thorpe to a person who had never heard of him before? What are some of the qualities that you would use to speak about Jim? What are the most important things to say when explaining Jim's life and legacy?

### Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. **Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion.** You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. What is one big thought or takeaway that you have after reading this book? Think about Jim's dedication to his family, school, sports, and Native people overall. Why was Jim such an inspiring and significant athlete and activist?
2. What do you think the essential message is to the reader? Think about possible motivations behind Joseph Bruchac's intentions in writing the book. What do you think he wanted to tell his readers?
3. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to your own life? What do Jim's experiences, thoughts, and feelings mean to you?
4. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while you read *Jim Thorpe's Bright Path*? Why did you make those connections?
5. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to what you have seen in the world, such as on television or in a newspaper? Why did this book make you think of that?
6. How has a family member or friend impacted your life? Jim was inspired by his brother, mother, and father. How has a family member or friend's words inspired you to pursue an important cause in your life?



## ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)  
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
  - Review the illustrations and have students summarize what is happening, first orally, and then in writing.
  - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details from different spreads. Then ask students to write a short summary or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about how Jim's story inspired them and his persistence for to attend school and work despite family tragedy, racism, and overall injustices against Native people.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word. Guide students to the glossary at the back of the book for further definitions.
6. There are many terms pertaining to different Indian boarding schools and wars that happened during Jim's life. Create a chart with all of the different schools, historical figures, and wars that were happening during the time period. Keep the graphic organizer up throughout the course of using the book.
7. There are schools and places that are mentioned throughout the book where Jim travels. For students who may be unfamiliar, consider displaying a map of the United States highlighting the schools that Jim attends and the cities where he goes during his athletic career. Label significant places as your students move through the book. Make sure to mark your students' town/city on the map as well.

## Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)  
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)  
(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)  
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy

development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. How does Jim Thorpe use grit and perseverance throughout the book? Provide evidence from the text with different events that show how he used determination to get through difficult times.
2. Which people in the book support Jim and Jim's "bright path"? Which characters challenge his dream?
3. What gives Jim confidence when he plays football? How did he develop a positive self-esteem, even though he encountered obstacles along the way?
4. What were the different coping techniques Jim used when he experienced death in his family? What were the different ways that Jim grieved?
5. Choose an emotion that interests you: happiness, sadness, fear, anxiety, faith, hope, or perseverance. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *Jim Thorpe's Bright Path*.

## INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

### English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Have students analyze the relationship between Jim and his coach, Pop Warner.** What was Pop Warner's coaching style like? How did Pop Warner help and hurt Jim throughout his athletic career? How did racism play a part of how Pop Warner betrayed Jim after Jim's participation in the Olympics? How did it make students feel reading about why Jim's honors were stripped? Why do you think this was an important part of the story, and how does it demonstrate the treatment of Native people overall as a society? Students can present their findings in an essay and then share their thoughts with a partner or small group.
- **Provide students with the opportunity to reflect on how Jim Thorpe experienced racism and discrimination in his various sports and how athletes experience it today.** Students can chart the different instances of racism throughout Jim's athletic career and examples that they find from athletes today in a graphic organizer with two columns: present-day and Jim's experiences. Example articles of how athletes endure discrimination today include (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/racism-hockey-sports-1.5039166>)

(<https://www.hcn.org/issues/51.7/tribal-affairs-native-american-athletes-and-fans-face-ongoing-racism>). Students can then transfer their findings into a comparative essay.

- **Read *The Story of All-Star Athlete Jim Thorpe* ([www.leeandlow.com/the-story-of-all-star-athlete-jim-thorpe](http://www.leeandlow.com/the-story-of-all-star-athlete-jim-thorpe)), the chapter book version of *Jim Thorpe's Bright Path*.** Students can compare and contrast what it was like to read the picture book versus the chapter book version. What were the experiences like? What did they learn from the picture book that they didn't learn from the chapter book, and vice versa? How did it make them think about what it would be like to write a picture book versus a chapter book about a historical figure? Have students write a comparative essay and then share their thoughts with a partner or the whole class. Students can also examine how both picture books and chapter books are important for reading and learning.
- **Conduct a biography unit featuring Lee & Low's books on athletes.** Titles include *Paul Robeson* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/paul-robeson>), *Game, Set, Match Champion Arthur Ashe* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/game-set-match-champion-arthur-ashe>), *Surfer of the Century* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/surfer-of-the-century>), *Louis Sockalexis* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/louis-sockalexis>), *The Last Black King of the Kentucky Derby* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-last-black-king-of-the-kentucky-derby>), and *Sixteen Years in Sixteen Seconds* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/sixteen-years-in-sixteen-seconds>). Students can examine the following questions during the unit and chart their findings in a graphic organizer or visual presentation format of their choosing with photographs, newspaper articles, and other documentation about the person: Who was this person? What was their impact? Why was this person important for both the sport and society? What was their legacy and how is it relevant today?
- **Encourage students to select a resource from the Text & Sidebar Sources from the back of the book.** Students can examine the piece, whether it's a book, video, photograph, or website, and write a reaction to how they think the author and illustrator were informed by this information and how it helped to develop the book.
- **Have students think about expository nonfiction versus narrative nonfiction.** How was reading *Jim Thorpe's Bright Path* different from reading a newspaper article about Jim? Have students read excerpts from The Smithsonian article, "Why are Jim Thorpe's Olympics Records Still Not Recognized?" (<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/why-are-jim-thorpes-olympic-records-still-not-recognized-130986336/>). Have students create a Venn Diagram with the headings, "Narrative Nonfiction: *Jim Thorpe's Bright Path*" and "Expository Nonfiction: "Why are Jim Thorpe's Olympic Records Still Not Recognized?" Students can compare and contrast the different formats of the texts and the information they learn in both.
- **Have students read the Author's Note from Joseph Bruchac located in the back of the book.** Students can write a journal entry in response recording their reactions from reading the Author's Note. What did the Author's Note make them think about? What new information did they learn about Jim Thorpe as well as the author? What resonated with students the most after reading the Author's Note? What questions would they like to ask Joseph Bruchac about his process of writing *Jim Thorpe's Bright Path*, communicating with Jim's family, and conducting research while writing? IF possible, consider reaching out to

Joseph Bruchac for a school visit ([http://josephbruchac.com/school\\_visits.html](http://josephbruchac.com/school_visits.html)).

### Social Studies/Geography

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Show students primary source images of Native Americans when they arrived at boarding school and after they attended for an extended period of time.** Two such images are (<http://cdm15330.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15330coll22/id/34016>) and (<http://cdm15330.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p15330coll22/id/34014>), from the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania. Have students make a T-chart of things that they notice from the photographs and what they read about in the story. How do you think these photographs connect to Jim's life and what it was like for him to attend Indian boarding schools throughout his childhood?
- **Have students continue to conduct research on Indian boarding schools and how they affected Native children and continue to do so today.** Consider reading another Lee & Low title, *Home to Medicine Mountain* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/home-to-medicine-mountain>), and have students compare Jim's experiences to the characters in the book. Consider also showing a documentary on Native American Boarding Schools, such as (<https://www.pbs.org/video/unspoken-americas-native-american-boarding-schools-oobt1r/>). What are students' reactions? What did they learn from watching the documentary and reading *Home to Medicine Mountain*? What have they learned about Indian boarding schools that they had not known prior to reading and engaging with additional information, and what does it make them think about the experiences that Native people have had to endure overall?
- **Encourage students to research other Native Olympians and Olympians of color.** Students can select an athlete of their choosing and then conduct a more elaborate research project answering the following questions: Who was this person? How were they impactful as an athlete? What kind of racism and discrimination did they experience during their athletic career? How did they overcome obstacles in their way? What was their legacy? Resources and articles featuring Olympic athletes include (<https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/8-native-olympic-athletes-you-should-know-about-VaCXHdYZAU6TtvbihfwYNQ/>). Students can share their research findings with a partner, in small groups, or with the whole class in a visual presentation format of their choosing.
- **Have students examine the timeline in the back of the book and elaborate on the events that happened during the time period.** In order for students to understand the historical context of Jim's life, encourage students to research the events in the timeline by gathering photographs and other primary source documents about that particular event. Display both enlarged timelines in the front of the class so that students have easy access to both the dates and events. Students can work in groups in different years (i.e. 1900-1910) and then add their events and findings to the class timeline, located below the enlarged timeline from the book.

### Art & Media

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **If possible, consider purchasing or requesting through the school or local library a copy of the documentary, *Jim Thorpe: The World's Greatest Athlete*** (<https://www.jimthorpefilm.com/index.html>), **co-produced by author Joseph Bruchac**. Consult Joseph Bruchac's Teacher's Guide about the film (<https://www.jimthorpefilm.com/guide/WebGuide.pdf>) for more information on how to use this film with students in the classroom.
- **Have students create a drawing, painting, or other visual representation after reading *Jim Thorpe's Bright Path***. Encourage students to think about how the story impacted them and why it motivated them to create this particular art piece.

### School-Home Connection

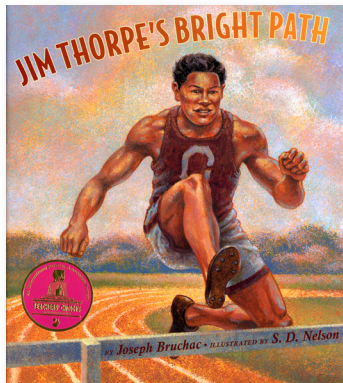
(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **If possible, provide students with a copy of *Jim Thorpe's Bright Path*** (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/jim-thorpe-s-bright-path>). Encourage family members to read *Jim Thorpe's Bright Path* at home. Have students and their families talk about what hard work, dedication, and persistence means to them. Students can also examine the illustrations and how they are meaningful in each of the books.
- **If applicable and relevant, encourage families to read more stories by and about Native people at home**. Using Oyate's document on evaluating children's books for anti-Indian bias (<http://oyate.org/index.php/resources/41-resources/how-to-tell-the-difference>), students can look through their books at home or at a local library to try to identify books with stereotypes of Native People and be mindful of these stereotypes in the future.





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Joseph Bruchac** is among the most respected and widely published Native American authors, with over 100 titles in print, including the popular Keepers of the Earth series and Lee & Low's *Killer of Enemies* trilogy, which received a starred review from *Kirkus Reviews*. A Rockefeller Fellow and an NEA Poetry Writing Fellow, Bruchac has received numerous recognitions over his long-standing career; including the Native Writers' Circle of the Americas Lifetime Achievement Award. In addition to writing, Bruchac is an editor at Greenfield Review Press, a literary publishing house he co-founded with his wife. He lives in Greenfield Center, New York. To find out more about Joseph Bruchac, visit [josephbruchac.com](http://josephbruchac.com).

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**S. D. Nelson** collaborated with Joseph Bruchac as illustrator of *Crazy Horse's Vision* and *Jim Thorpe's Bright Path*. He is also the author and illustrator of two picture book stories inspired by the traditions of his Lakota heritage – *Gift Horse*, winner of the Parents' Choice Award, and *The Star People*, an Oppenheim Gold Award winner. Nelson's lifelong interest in Ira Hayes inspired him to tell the story of this American hero for children in *Quiet Hero: The Ira Hayes Story*. A former middle school art teacher, Nelson is now a full-time artist. He is of Lakota (Sioux) descent and lives with his wife in Chandler, Arizona. Visit him online at [sdnelson.net](http://sdnelson.net).

## REVIEWS

"Joseph Bruchac's cogent text details key events in the childhood of one of the most talented athletes of the 20th century." –CCBC

"Recommended for grades four and up, this is a lovely biography with splendid illustrations and a wonderfully lyrical text." –*SW BookViews*

"Finished with a career recap, plus a discussion of the long effort to restore Thorpe's confiscated medals... young readers in need of a role model could hardly do better." –*Kirkus Reviews*

## ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

**LEE & LOW BOOKS** is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at [leeandlow.com](http://leeandlow.com).

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