

In this beautifully illustrated and heartwarming book, Billy Mills, an Oglala Lakota man and 1964 Olympic gold medal winner, narrates the story of his journey from the Pine Ridge Reservation to the Olympic Games in Tokyo, Japan over the course of his young life. Through Billy’s journey, he highlights the important people and events that shaped his life. He provides the reader with insights to help understand how the power of identity, connection, and core values inspired him to achieve his dreams by overcoming harsh adversities in his lifetime. The book offers supplementary notes from Billy Mills and the illustrator, as well as a more in-depth biography of Billy Mills by his co-author, Donna Janell Bowman. Its back matter also contains a timeline of “Key Dates and Select Achievements” in Billy Mills’s life.

Key concepts in this book include: dreams and passions that fuel life’s achievements: connections to family and culture: overt prejudice and racism: and the message of empowerment that we are “stronger together.”

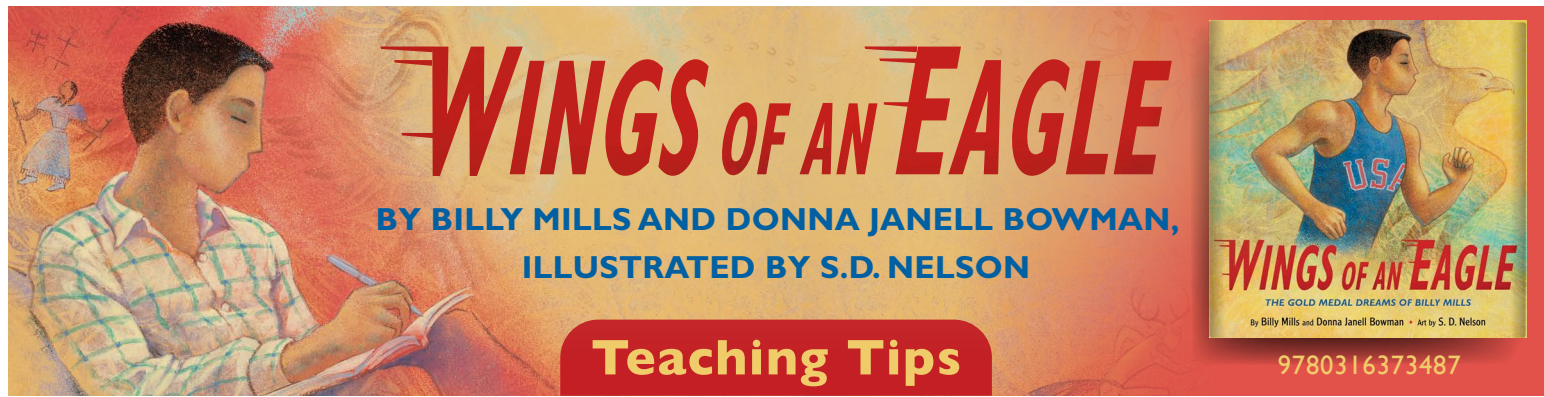
These Teaching Tips focus on five areas: social studies (geography, chronology, and history), reading, and writing.

SOCIAL STUDIES

GEOGRAPHY:

- Billy was born and raised on the Pine Ridge Reservation, the sovereign lands of the Oglala Lakota Nation, which is within the area now known as South Dakota (USA).
 - o There are nine Indigenous Nations located in South Dakota: (1) Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe: (2) Crow Creek Sioux Tribe: (3) Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe: (4) Lower Brule Sioux Tribe: (5) Oglala Sioux Tribe: (6) Rosebud Sioux Tribe: (7) Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate: (8) Standing Rock Sioux Tribe: and (9) Yankton Sioux Tribe.
 - o Using an outline map of South Dakota, USA, locate and label the sovereign lands of the nine Indigenous Nations in South Dakota. Resource: <https://gisgeography.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/South-Dakota-Outline-Map.jpg>
 - o *Extension: use a map to locate and label surrounding states, physical features, and major cities; add these to your map of South Dakota Indigenous Nations.*
 - o *Extension: use the internet to look up information about one (or more) of the Indigenous Nations in South Dakota. Share your findings with your classmates. Resource: <https://sdtribalrelations.sd.gov/tribes/nine-tribes.aspx>*
- Billy moved from Pine Ridge, South Dakota to Lawrence, Kansas for high school and college. When he joined the US Marines, he trained in Quantico, Virginia, and then moved to Camp Pendleton, California. Billy traveled to Tokyo, Japan for the 1964 Olympic Games.
 - o Using a world map, label each of these five locations to see how far Billy traveled in his young life.





o **MATH Extension:** calculate the distance between each place in Billy’s story. Add up the distances to see how far he traveled from home to get to the Olympic Games.

CHRONOLOGY:

- At the end of the book, Billy included a timeline of the key events in his life. Create an illustrated timeline that lists Billy’s age at each key event. Illustrations can be hand drawn or downloaded from the internet.

HISTORY:

- In his story, Billy and his co-author mention different people and laws. Visit your school or local library and search online to find out more about one or more of these people or laws: **Jim Thorpe**, **Buster Charles**, and **Jim Crow laws**. Create a PowerPoint presentation or poster to help your classmates learn more about these people or laws. Include such information as who were the people? Where were they from? Why are they known in history? What are the laws? Who did the laws affect?

READING:

- Billy and his co-author provide many different examples of times when someone doubted his abilities or told him, “No,” he could not do something. Reread the story to collect evidence of all the times Billy was excluded or doubted by others. Create a T-Chart with the evidence on the left side and an explanation of how Billy proved these people wrong each time on the right side.

WRITING:

- Billy and his co-author used a metaphor throughout the story – that of an eagle. Locate one or more examples from the story where the eagle is mentioned. Cite the evidence and explain how the text uses the eagle metaphor to make his message more powerful in this book; if you select more than one example, try to make the connection between all of your selected examples. Explain why you believe the eagle metaphor is important to this story.
- In the beginning of Billy’s story, the text mentions footsteps of his ancestors that he followed throughout his life; at the end of the story, his footprints became part of that story to be told.
 - o What do you think Billy’s “footprints” are?
 - o When you think about your lifetime, what story do you hope that your footprints will tell?

These Teaching Tips were created by Natalie Martinez, Ph.D.



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