

**STOKES: The Brief Career of the NBA's First Black Superstar**  
 by Ty Chapman and John Coy, illustrated by Lonnie Ollivierre

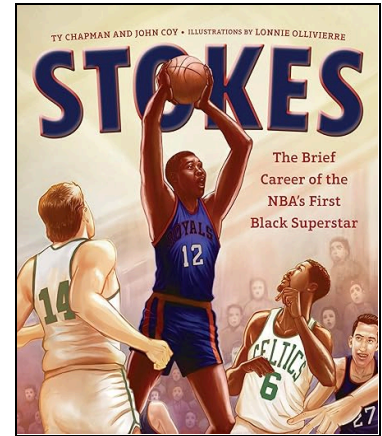
**Book Lesson for Educators and Caregivers**

**Book Title:** *STOKES: The Brief Career of the NBA's First Black Superstar*  
 Written by Ty Chapman and John Coy  
 Illustrated by Lonnie Ollivierre

**Recommended Ages:** 7-11 years old

**Book Summary to Share With Children**

*Maurice Stokes was the NBA's first Black superstar and an honorable teammate. When his brief career was cut short because of an injury, his teammate helped organize a yearly game in Stokes's honor to raise money to help pay his medical bills. As we read this book, think about the different ways Maurice Stokes made a difference and how he inspired others.*



**Reflection Questions for Educators and Caregivers**

1. Who were some influential trailblazers for you? What impact did they have on you? When and how did you learn about or encounter them?
2. In this story, Jack Twyman takes action to support his teammate and friend. How are you a model for children by taking action to support those in your community? How else might you do this?

Anti-Bias Education Tenets	Social-Emotional Learning Competencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Empathy &amp; Understanding</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Healthy Complex Identities</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Respect Across Differences</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Notice, Name, &amp; Reject Bias</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Responsiveness &amp; Action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Self-Awareness</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Self-Management</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Awareness</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Responsible Decision Making</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relationship Skills</li> </ul>

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### **Reader's Note**

When Maurice Stokes was drafted into the NBA in 1955 for the Rochester Royals, he quickly became known for his skill, knowledge of the game, and sportsmanship, and was named Rookie of the Year and an All-Star during his first season. He was a leader from the start of his short career and an inspiration for basketball players everywhere, particularly young, Black players. Maurice Stokes as a trailblazer and inspiration continues to be important today, especially for Black and Brown youth to see a story of someone who looks like them so positively honored and revered so highly.

After Stokes's injury, his family visited him in the hospital when they could. A teammate, Jack Twyman (also from Pittsburgh), visited regularly. To help children understand the distance between the two cities, show them Cincinnati and Pittsburgh on a map and talk about the distance, making sure to point out this was also in the time before cell phones, the internet, and video calls.

Jack Twyman decided to help raise money to help pay for Stokes's expensive medical care, and he organized the Maurice Stokes Benefit Game.

This story provides children with a portrayal of friendship across differences and how to take action to help others. It also showcases positive interracial friendships during the 1950s-1960s when racial division and discrimination persisted in the United States.

Be sure to check out the **More About Maurice Stokes** section at the back of the book for more information about Maurice Stokes's life and legacy.

### **Discussion Questions (\*essential questions in bold)**

- 1. What did Stokes's teammates love so much about playing with him? How was he a good teammate?**
- 2. A trailblazer is someone who is the first to do something and shows others it is possible. How was Stokes a trailblazer for Black athletes?**
3. When Stokes was in the hospital, why did he feel cut off from the world?
- 4. What did Twyman admire about Stokes? Who is someone you admire? Why?**

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5. A benefit is a social or entertainment event that raises money for a person, group, or cause. What was the benefit game for?
  - a. Have you ever been to a benefit? Who or what was money being raised for?
6. Determination refers to working hard and being set on meeting certain goals. How did Stokes show determination? How did the people in Stokes's life show determination to help him?
  - a. What other examples of people showing determination can you think of? Who helped them?
7. **Despite his basketball career being cut short, how did Maurice Stokes make an impact?**

### **Journal Prompts and Activities**

1. **Journal Prompts:**
  - a. What does it mean to be a good teammate in the following places: on a sports team, in school, and at home? Who is someone you think is a good teammate? What qualities do they have that make them a good teammate?
  - b. How do you think someone learns to be a good teammate? Give some examples from your own life.
2. **Activity for Educators: "Honoring the Teammates in Our Classroom"**
  - a. With students, brainstorm a list of qualities that make someone a good teammate in the classroom (encourage others, make work fun, include everyone, etc.). From the list, choose 4-6 qualities they would like to practice honoring with each other.
  - b. Divide the class into small groups (one for each quality of a good teammate). Provide arts and crafts materials of your choice, and assign each group the task of creating an award to represent their quality of a good teammate.
  - c. For the next week, invite students to nominate each other for the different awards. You can set up a way to nominate by having students fill out a little slip of paper and putting it in a box or basket or have them send you a message. Encourage children to look extra hard for

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classmates being good teammates, and encourage where necessary. At the end of the week, read the nominations to the class and celebrate the teammate awards by posting names next to the awards or letting students take pictures holding the award. These can also be shared with families.

### **3. Activity for Caregivers: "Honoring Teammates in Our Lives"**

- a. With children, talk about what it means to be a good teammate to family and friends. Brainstorm a list of qualities.
- b. Ask children to list people in their lives they consider to be a good teammate and that possess the qualities you talked about.
- c. Encourage children to honor the people they listed, and assist them, as needed, in sending a note, making a card, or making them a special treat to express their gratitude.

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Millbrook Press®

An imprint of Lerner Publishing Group, Inc

ISBN: 9781728492490

Ages 7-11 | Grades 2-5

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