

Charles R. Smith Jr.

WINNING WORDS

Sports Stories and Photographs

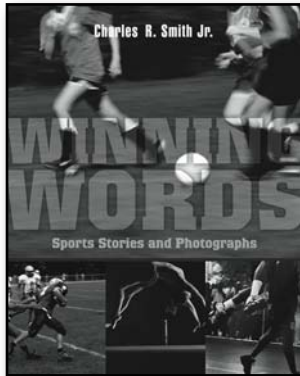


Teachers' Guide

WORDS TO LIVE BY

Winning Words Teachers' Guide

About the Book



Winning Words is a compilation of six sports stories, each one ending with a quote from a famous person. Author Charles R. Smith Jr. has assembled a wonderful tribute to what motivates an athlete in various situations — whether it's pressure, competition, or

pushing oneself to the limit. He delves into the mind of each athlete, revealing the unique attributes that allows each one to succeed. He also uses the sports stories as a way to teach life lessons, leaving the reader with influential words to live by.

In the Classroom

Each inspirational story depicts an important message about motivation, achievement, and dreams. In a classroom discussion, explore with your students themes of leadership, teamwork, cooperation, and even failure as they apply not only to sports activities but to everyday situations as well.

Pre-reading Activity

Invite students to name their favorite athlete. Then ask, What makes that person exceptional? What attributes does that person have that you wish you possessed? Do you see any of yourself in that person? As students respond to your questions, keep a running list, on the board or on chart paper, of some of their key words and phrases (such as *competitive* or *never gives up*). Have students refer back to that list during the activities below.

Divide and Conquer

Divide the class into six groups and assign a different chapter to each. Ask each group to read the appropriate chapter and write its inspirational quote on small poster paper. Then have the groups take turns presenting their chapters to the rest of the class by reading the quote aloud and offering a verbal chapter summary. Invite students to have fun with this activity and be as creative as possible—they might choose, for example, to act out a scene or set it to music.

Chart It Out

Ask students to summarize the book by creating a four-column chart such as the one below.

Chapter Title	Sport	Theme	Quote
"Don't Say It"	Baseball	Concentration	"Concentration is the ability to think absolutely nothing when it is absolutely necessary." —Ray Knight

You may have students create the chart on the board by taking turns in class or ask them to make individual charts on paper. Then begin a detailed classroom discussion about the meaning of each quote and how it relates to the chapter it illuminates.



Not Seeing Is Believing

Have students research the author of each quote, either in small groups (as in the first activity) or individually. Point out that one of the six authors is not an athlete, and ask why that person's quote is still relevant to the chapter's theme. Then ask, What makes Helen Keller so inspirational? Use students' answers as a springboard for discussing broader themes of motivation and perseverance. Ask students how traits that prove beneficial in sports might also apply to challenges and adversity in a more general sense.

A List of Champions

In a class discussion or writing assignment, ask students to think of sports that are not in the book but require similar focus and skill and to name a famous athlete who has been successful in each sport. Encourage students to consider both sports in which the athlete is competing against himself or herself (such as golf) and team sports (such as hockey). For each sport that students name, have them list reasons why the athlete connected to that sport has been triumphant. Challenge students to list as many adjectives as they can think of (such as *fearless* or *determined*). Match this list to the list created in the pre-reading activity above and note any similarities.

Quote of the Day

Just as *Winning Words* revolves around six meaningful quotations, students might have fun starting each day with a different famous quote, drawing from a variety of themes. You might choose to drive this activity yourself by writing a daily quote on the board to be discussed and/or researched, or you might ask students to take turns finding a quote of interest and sharing it with the rest of the class. Encourage students to keep a journal of favorite quotes to reflect on and use as inspiration or to incorporate into future writing activities.

I Think, Therefore I Am

Five of the six stories in *Winning Words* are written in the first person, each one portraying the internal dialogue of the athlete, who is digging deep for that extra motivation and drive. Using these stories as a model, ask students to write a sports story from their own life using a first-person perspective. You may want to conduct mini writers' workshops to allow students to practice before moving on to the larger writing assignment. Have them note the impact of a creative title, such as "Makes Me Wanna Holla," and encourage them to come up with snappy titles for their own pieces.

Sports Illustrated

In his author's note at the end of the book, Charles R. Smith Jr. explains that each sport depicted in the stories has its own energy and rhythm, which he has aimed to capture in his photographs. Read aloud the fifth paragraph of the author's note, in which he describes his technique. Then, as an art activity, have students use various media—such as charcoal, pastels, collage, or paint—to illustrate a sport of their choice. Encourage them to express the essence of the sport through their artwork.

Post-reading Discussion

In his author's note, Charles R. Smith Jr. discusses the impact of sports, and the lessons they teach, on his own life. In a class discussion, ask students how they can relate their own athletic skills or experiences to other life situations. Ask, What is the difference between simply making a mistake and becoming inspired by your mistake? Finally, ask students who has inspired them in their own lives, and how that inspiration may affect their personal goals and dreams.





**“Have fun, always
set goals, but
never set limits.”
—Shannon Miller**



**“You are
never a loser
until you
quit trying.”
—Mike Ditka**



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