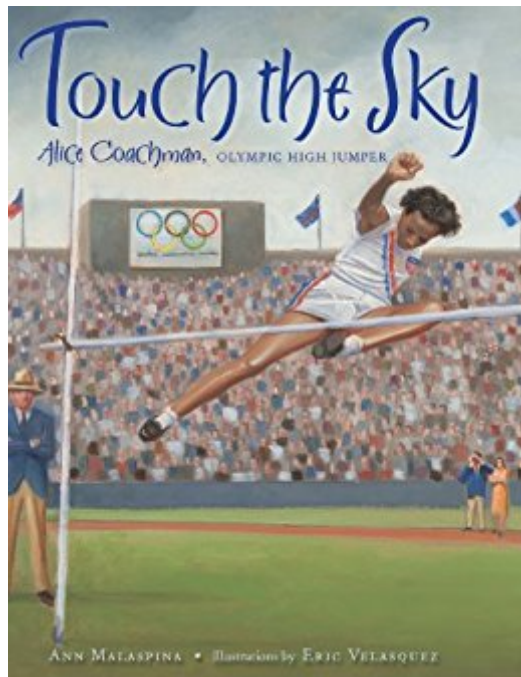




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# Touch The Sky: Alice Coachman, Olympic High Jumper



## Synopsis

Bare feet shouldn't fly. Long legs shouldn't spin, Braids shouldn't flap in the wind. "Sit on the porch and be a lady," Papa scolded Alice. In Alice's Georgia hometown, there was no track where an African American girl could practice, so she made her own crossbar with sticks and rags. With the support of her coach, friends, and community, Alice started to win medals. Her dream to compete at the Olympics came true in 1948. This is an inspiring free-verse story of the first African American woman to win an Olympic gold medal. Photos of Alice Coachman are also included.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Young Alice Coachman, growing up in segregated Albany, Georgia, in the 1930's, just couldn't help herself. She wanted to soar and touch the sky. "Bare feet shouldn't fly. / Long legs shouldn't spin. / Braids shouldn't flap in the wind. / 'Sit on the porch and be a lady,' Papa scolded Alice," this book about the future Olympic athlete begins. When she watched boys doing the high jump at a track meet, "Alice's feet tingled, wanting to try." We see Alice's dreams growing bigger as she gets

older, until finally the high school coach needed a jumper for a track and field tournament in Alabama. Her family was too poor to afford proper clothes for the competition, so her teachers pitched in and bought her shoes, shorts, and bright white socks. For the first time, she competed with the best black athletes in the South. In 1939, she won her first national medal, and soon she was asked to enroll at Tuskegee, where she'd be able to train with the best. Alice worked hard to pay her school fees. Alice dreamed of the Olympics, but with the world consumed by war there were no games to enter. Could she still compete in 1948? Would she achieve her dream of a gold medal in the high jump--and finally touch the sky? Written in a simple yet poetic style, this book captures the spirit of a true American heroine and a pioneer in sports, one who is not widely known today. It's a real "girl power" story, as well as a tale about overcoming prejudice. The stunning large format oil paintings, by illustrator Eric Velasquez, with their vibrant colors and sweeping compositions, capture the intensity of Alice's story, and especially of her jumping. An author's note shows photographs of the real Alice and her teammates and tells about what happened to Alice after her triumph at the Olympics. A bibliography is also included.

Already at a young age, Alice Coachman liked nothing better than to race down the dirt road in her home town and soar high above the ground when playing basketball during school recess. It did not take long before her skills gained notice, and Alice was invited to enroll at Tuskegee Institute and join their track and field team. Not only did Alice dominate in the high jump at U.S. competitions, she wound up winning first place at the 1948 Olympics and becoming the first African American woman to win an Olympic gold medal. Intertwined with this informative biography are several economics lessons, including the difficulties experienced by vulnerable households during the Great Depression, and the barriers faced by African Americans in businesses and communities across the country before the Civil Rights movement. The lyrical prose and striking images make Alice Coachman's story more accessible for young children who otherwise may miss the opportunity to learn about this influential athlete.

I'm an illustration fanatic, and this book is a delight for the eyes. Too bad that Alice Coachman's inspirational story is told in free verse. Notice for authors and publishers: It's time for paragraphs. We want our kids to read and write paragraphs.

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