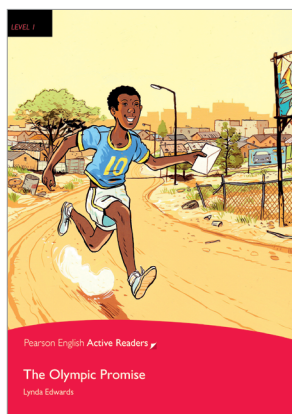


Olympic Promise

Lynda Edwards



Summary

Nelson is a young African boy who loves running. Most of his friends are poor and don't have a job, but Nelson does have a job. He delivers letters for people in his neighbourhood. One day, as Nelson is running past a football game, a tall white man notices how fast Nelson can run. The next morning, the white man visits Nelson and his Granny Sarah. The man's name is Ken Banks and he wants to train Nelson to run in a marathon. He takes Nelson to a big, new town. Nelson has never seen so many people, cars or so much money before. He now lives with a lot of other runners in a big building. Although he is excited, he is also homesick. However, Nelson is now famous and begins to forget about his old life. He even invents a story that he comes from a rich family. On the day before the marathon, Nelson feels unwell. He phones his Granny to ask her to forgive him for not keeping in touch. She reassures him that winning the race is not as important as taking part, and she asks him to promise to smile on television. Nelson starts the race well, but later begins to feel sick. He falls over but eventually makes it into the stadium. He hasn't won the race but he gives a big smile to the television and his Granny and friends.

Background and themes

Pride: Nelson is proud he has fulfilled a promise to his grandmother and his friends and family are proud of him. Ken tries to recover some lost pride by training an Olympic winner, something he failed to be himself, but is disappointed in the end.

Poverty and wealth: There is a sharp contrast between the lives of Nelson and his friends and that of Ken and the people in the big, new town.

Discussion activities

Chapters 1–2

While reading (p. 3, after 'It was a football game.')

- Write:** Put the students in pairs and ask them to write down all the names of sports that they know in English. Put their suggestions on the board and add some of your own.

After reading

- Discuss:** Put the students in groups and ask them to discuss the following questions: *Do you like sport? Which sports do you like/play? Do you watch sport on television? Is your country good at sports?*

Chapters 3–4

While reading (p. 8, after 'He's famous.')

- Game:** Put the students in groups of four and tell them they are going to play a game of twenty questions. Student A thinks of a famous person they know about. Then the other three students have to ask Student A questions about the famous person to guess who he or she is. Student A can only respond 'yes', 'no' or 'sometimes' to the questions. Student A wins if the others can't guess in twenty questions.

After reading

- Write and guess:** Write *The boys and girls in Nelson's home were all students.* on the board. Elicit which word is wrong from the students (runners not students). Now students choose a sentence from Chapters 3–4 and rewrite it changing one word. Students walk around the classroom reading out their sentences and the other students have to identify and correct the mistake.

Chapters 5–6

While reading (p. 12, after 'Here, drink this.')

- Role play:** Put the students in pairs and tell them they are going to act out a conversation between Ken and Nelson. Ken has to insist that Nelson drinks the water and Nelson has to refuse angrily. See Discussion activities key for a suggested start.

After reading

- Write and guess:** Put students in pairs and ask them to choose a short paragraph from Chapters 5–6. Tell them to write it again, making five changes to words in the text. Students then read out their paragraphs to the other students, who have to identify the mistakes.