



Classroom Guide for **ALLIE'S BASKETBALL DREAM**

by **Barbara E. Barber**
Illustrated by **Darryl Ligasan**

Reading Level

*Reading Level: Grades 2-3

Interest Level: Grades 1-4

Guided Reading Level: J

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: 3.1/.5

Lexile™ Measure: 450

*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Themes

Self-Esteem, Self-Confidence, Sports, Friendship, Father-Daughter Relationship, African American Interest

Synopsis

Basketball is Allie's favorite sport; she's loved it ever since her father took her to a professional game at Madison Square Garden. When her dad gives her a basketball of her own, Allie tries her new ball out on the courts of a neighborhood playground. However, the boys on a nearby court laugh at her, and her friends make it clear that they think basketball is a boy's game. Worst of all, Allie misses most of her shots. Still, she keeps on trying, and eventually makes a great shot and wins the approval and admiration of her friends, the older boys, and best of all, her father.

Background

Playground basketball is a popular form of recreation in many communities, and especially in urban and inner-city areas. In addition to organized competition sponsored by schools, park districts, youth centers, and religious organizations, many youngsters and adults play neighborhood games in parks, alleys, driveways, backyards, and playgrounds. As noted in a *Booklist* review of Lee & Low's *Strong to the Hoop*: "Playground basketball is always about a rite of passage: proving yourself able to play at the next level. It's a metaphor for life in the larger world, of course, but it's also an intense, image-rich world of its own."

Barbara E. Barber, author of *Allie's Basketball Dream*, loved to play basketball and other sports when she was growing up. She based the character of Allie on herself.

Teaching Tip

Girls' and women's basketball has become increasingly popular in recent years. Enhance this interest among girls by bringing in articles from the sports pages of local and national newspapers featuring women's basketball.

BEFORE READING**Prereading Focus Questions**

Before sharing the book with students, you may wish to tap prior knowledge and motivate students with questions such as the following.

1. Do you have a favorite sport that you play at home or in a park or playground? Why do you like this sport? What is the best part about playing it?
2. Have you ever imagined yourself as a pro at something? What was it? What do you think you would have to do to achieve this status?
3. What do you know about basketball? Do you enjoy playing it? Why? Do you like to watch it? Why?
4. Who are some well-known basketball players you know? How do you think these players got where they are today? What do you think it takes to play basketball well?

Teaching Tip

Although *Allie's Basketball Dream* takes place in an outdoor playground, basketball is the world's most popular indoor sport. High school, college, and professional seasons are typically during the winter months in North America. Consider using *Allie's Basketball Dream* as part of a focus on winter sports.

Exploring the Book

Write the book title *Allie's Basketball Dream* on the chalkboard. Talk about the use of the word "dream." Ask students if they think a dream can become a goal. What might they have to do to make that happen? Have students tell what they think this book is about.

Display the book cover and ask students to discuss the picture and talk about what the girl is doing. What are the other kids in the illustration doing? What is the dog doing? How does the cover show action?

Setting a Purpose for Reading

Ask students to read to find out if Allie achieves her dream. Also have students write one or two questions of their own that they think the story might answer.

After students have read the book, ask them to think about these questions: In what ways am I like Allie? If this book were about me, what would be different about the dream and the way I pursued it?

VOCABULARY

The following words from the book have special meanings in basketball. Write the words on the chalkboard and ask students to use each in a sentence about basketball.

hoop	rim	shot	passed	court
dribble	shoot	rim	basket	missed

Next, have students work in pairs to find each word in a dictionary. Ask them to write two sentences using each word, one sentence about basketball and once sentence about another topic. For example:

The ball hit the rim and bounced off.

The rim of the glass had a small chip in it.

AFTER READING**Discussion Questions**

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation. Encourage students to refer to back to the book to support their responses.

1. Why does Allie's father give her a basketball?
2. How does Allie react when the boys laugh at her?
3. Why doesn't Julio want to play basketball with Allie?
4. Why doesn't Allie want to trade balls with Buddy?
5. What made Allie decide to become a professional basketball player? How was she influenced by her cousin Gwen?
6. Why does Allie end up playing with Domino?
7. Why do Allie's friends finally decide to join her?
8. Why doesn't Allie give up even though she misses many shots?
9. Why is it important for Allie to show her father what she can do?
10. How do you think the older boys on the playground will act the next time Allie goes there? Why?

Literature Circles

If you use literature circles during reading time, students might find the following suggestions helpful in focusing on the different roles of the group members.

- The **Questioner** might use questions similar to those in the Discussion Question section of this guide to help group members explore the book.
- The **Passage Locator** might look for lines and illustrations that suggest how characters in the book are feeling.

- The **Illustrator** might draw an event in the story that is in a different style or medium than that used for the illustrations in the book.
- The **Connector** might find other books about basketball and explore how the stories are similar and different.
- The **Summarizer** might provide a brief summary of the pages that the group is discussing.
- The **Investigator** might find out about current professional men and women basketball players who got started playing in pick-up playground games.

*There are many resource books available with more information about organizing and implementing literature circles. Three such books you may wish to refer to are: *Getting Started with Literature Circles* by Katherine L. Schlick Noe and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 1999), *Literature Circles: Voice And Choice in Book Clubs and Reading Groups* by Harvey Daniels (Stenhouse, 2002), and *Literature Circles Resource Guide* by Bonnie Campbell Hill, Katherine L. Schlick Noe, and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 2000).

Reader's Response

Use the following questions or similar ones to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to what they have read. Suggest that students respond in reader's journals, oral discussion, or drawings.

1. What is the most exciting part of the story? Why do you think so?
2. What is your impression of playground basketball? What kind of person would excel at it? Is it a game you would enjoy? Why do you think so?
3. What could you learn from Allie? What advice do you think she might give you about pursuing a dream? Why?
4. Make a list of words you would use to describe what Allie is like. Is this a picture of someone you would admire? Why or why not?
5. Suppose you are going to give *Allie's Basketball Dream* an award? What kind of award would you give it? Why?

Other Writing Activities

You may wish to assign students to complete one or more of the following writing activities. Set aside time for students to share and discuss their work.

1. Have students pretend they are sports writers for a newspaper. Let each interested student write a feature story about the playground scene in *Allie's Basketball Dream*, being sure to include some of the basketball terms from the book.
2. Have students read *Strong to the Hoop* and then make a chart comparing this book to *Allie's Basketball Dream*. What do both of the main characters have in common? How are they different? How do the stories differ? How do the illustrations differ? and so on.
3. Have students write some questions they would like to ask the author, Barbara E. Barber, or the illustrator, Darryl Ligan, during an imaginary radio, television, or podcast interview.

4. Ask small groups of students to explore how a playground game of four-on-four basketball and a college or professional basketball game are alike and different. Some things they might compare are: number of players on a team, location of games, scoring, rules, how disputes are settled. Encourage each group to use written and graphic representations (charts, posters, graphs, and so on) to present their findings.
5. Invite interested students to write another chapter in Allie's story. Ideas to consider might include: Does Allie improve? How rapidly? How often does she play basketball with her father? Do her friends join her on the court? Is she ever invited to play with the older boys?

ELL/ESL Teaching Strategies

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English language learners or who are learning to speak English as a second language.

1. Use the illustrations in the book to help students identify concrete nouns such as ball, basket, rim, firehouse, dog, skateboard, volleyball, trophy.
2. Read aloud a sentence and have students repeat the sentence after you, pointing to each word as they speak.
3. Assign each English language speaker to a classroom book buddy who is a strong English speaker/reader. As partners read the pages together, have the English speaker teach simple phrases such as: I don't understand. Please repeat that sentence. Speak slowly. I have a question. Thank you. Encourage ELL students to use these phrases to communicate their needs when reading.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

To help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas, you might try one or more of the following activities.

Math

1. Teach, or have students explain, how a professional basketball game is scored. Compare this to the scoring in another sport students enjoy, such as baseball or football.
2. Have students collect basketball charts and records from newspapers. Teach a mini-lesson on reading charts. Have students make up and answer questions based on the charts.
3. Have students find out the measurements for a regulation basketball court. Then have them draw to scale a diagram of a court.

Science

You may use this book to teach a mini-lesson on the five senses. Write the senses—sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch—on the chalkboard. Then give the following examples from the book:

Sight: Allie looks before she aims.

Sound: Allie loves the sound of the basketball on the sidewalk.

Taste: Allie tastes the bubblegum from Buddy.

Smell: Domino sniffs the basketball.

Touch: Allie hugs her basketball.

Challenge students to find other ways that the senses are suggested in the book.

Drama

Students will enjoy acting out some of the basketball terms from the story. You may wish to conduct this activity in the gym or on the playground. Have students work in small groups to dramatize the following:

- Dribble and bounce.
- Shoot a basket.
- Make a slam dunk.
- Catch the ball.
- Chase the ball.
- Take aim

Art

Have students observe closely the illustrations by Darryl Ligasan. Draw attention to the different perspectives he uses and the distortions they create. Talk about why an artist might do this. Ask students to figure out where the artist might be sitting to draw some of the scenes. Ask guiding questions such as: Is he looking down on the scene? Is he looking up at the characters? Encourage students to try drawing sports or other pictures from different perspectives.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Barbara E. Barber is also the author of Lee & Low's *Saturday at The New You*, a Bank Street College Best Children's Book of the Year selection. Barber has published more than sixty poems and her work has appeared in publications such as *The Writer*, *The New York Daily News*, and the anthology *Lions, Lizards and Ladybugs*. Barber enjoyed playing sports such as basketball, volleyball, and touch football while growing up. She says, "I learned early on that practice makes perfect." Currently Barber lives in New York City with her husband and their son.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Darryl Ligasan has been drawing since his early childhood. Ligasan is a native of the Philippines and now lives in New York City. He works as an illustrator and designer and teaches at New York's School of Visual Arts. He uses a computer, canvas, and paper to create his colorful illustrations. Ligasan is also the illustrator of *Caravan*, published by Lee & Low Books.

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RESOURCES ON THE WEB

Learn more about *Allie's Basketball Dream* at

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/9/hc/allie_s_basketball_dream

Also by Barbara E. Barber

Saturday at The New You:

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/102/pb/saturday_at_the_new_you

Also by Darryl Ligasan

Caravan:

<http://www.leeandlow.com/books/361/pb/caravan>

Order Information

On the Web:

<http://www.leeandlow.com/p/ordering.mhtml> (general order information)

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/9/hc/allie_s_basketball_dream
(secure on-line ordering)

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