

Wat Takes His Shot

written by Cheryl Kim

illustrated by Nat Iwata

About the Book

Genre: Biography/Memoir

Format: Hardcover, 40 pages

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Reading Level: Grade 4–6

Interest Level: Grades 4–6

Guided Reading Level: T

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

Themes: Biography/Memoir, Courage, Discrimination, Dreams and Aspirations, Families, Fathers, History, Identity, Self Esteem and Confidence, Nonfiction, Overcoming Obstacles, Persistence and Grit, Resilience, Teamwork, Pride, Determination, Sports, Sports History, Utah History, United States History, World War II, Japanese American Interest, Asian/Asian American Interest

Resources on the web:

leeandlow.com/books/wat-takes-his-shot

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

SYNOPSIS

The stirring biography of Japanese American basketball star Wataru Misaka--the first person of color to play in the NBA!

As a kid, Wataru Misaka channeled his endless energy into playing sports. Every Sunday, he raced to the park where his Japanese American community came together to play basketball. Wat wasn't the tallest on the team, but he was fast and loved the game! Encouraged by his father to always do his best, Wat applied this mentality to every aspect and challenge in his life.

Wat was a college student when the US government forced more than 122,000 Japanese Americans living on the West Coast into incarceration camps during WWII. He overcame racism and segregation to join his college's basketball team but despite Wat's impressive skills, he was treated as an outsider because he was Japanese American. Wat kept his eye on the ball, and his team-player mentality made him shine on and off the court. He became an inspiration to his Japanese American community. After helping Utah University's basketball team win the national championship in 1947, Wat was drafted by the New York Knicks, making him the first person of color to play in the NBA.

Wat's motivational story of rising to any challenge and bringing your best to everything you do is a reminder of the power we each have to inspire others--if we just take our shot!

BACKGROUND

Author's Note from Cheryl Kim

"I remember when "Linsanity" made headlines in the NBA and the pride our family felt to see an Asian American athlete breaking stereotypes. It led me to discover that the first person to break racial barriers in professional basketball was a man named Wataru Misaka. I wondered why I hadn't heard of him.

As I began to research his life, what struck me about Wataru was not only what he had accomplished, but the time period in which he accomplished it. At a time when Japanese Americans were being imprisoned and treated unjustly, what was his inspiration and motivation to keep going? I knew that to write this story, I first had to reach out to Wat himself.

Even at the age of ninety-three, Wat was willing to share his experiences with me and read an early version of the manuscript. He attributed his persistence and can-do attitude to being raised with the Japanese tradition of *gambatte*. In English, I can translate into "do your best" or "hang in there!" and there are different forms and usages of the word when spoken. The more formal and polite usage is "*Gambatte, kudasai*" or "Please try your best." *Gambatte* was his life's motto.

Wat was seventeen when nearly 122,000 Japanese Americans with at least "one drop of Japanese blood" living along the West Coast were forced to move into government incarceration camps. They lost everything and were imprisoned for four years with a lack of food, medical care, and basic privacy.

Wat's teammate Masateru "Tut" Tatsuno, from California, was one of about 4,000 students who avoided incarceration because they were granted special permission to attend a university, as long as it was not on the West Coast. This opportunity was the result of work done by the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council. Tut's brother, Dave Tatsuno, lived in the Topaz Relocation Center and smuggled his camera inside. He secretly recorded everyday life in the community, including the interaction between Wat and Tut during their visit. From birthday parties to religious services, his rare footage captured ordinary moments in dire conditions.

Within the confinements of the incarceration camps, Japanese Americans came together to design and build sports fields and courts, organize Girl and Boy Scouts, create art and music schools, plant gardens, form volunteer groups, and so much more. They created hope from a place of despair and formed a community within a place of desolation.

After visiting the Topaz Relocation Center, Wat said he felt immense gratitude for the opportunities and chances he was given. He didn't take anything for granted. Wat also said, "It was a real strange experience to be free—not from prejudice, but free—and playing the game I loved in my home state, while others were being treated like criminals."

While Wat spoke some Japanese, he would later learn the language in the Military Intelligence Service Language School. He was sent to Japan a few months after the bombings to interview survivors. While there, he met an uncle for the first time. His uncle's home barely escaped the blast,

but Wat witnessed the complete and utter destruction caused by the bomb. Over the next few months, thousands more died from burns and radiation sickness. Wat returned from Hiroshima with a heavy heart. "I was a man without a country," Wat said. "To the Japanese, I was an invader. Americans didn't trust me because I was Japanese."

Wat disagreed with how the US government ended the war, but he still considered the United States his home. He also knew he couldn't change the past but could only move forward. Despite enduring racism, he fought for his right to play the game he loved.

Even when Wat's basketball career ended, he continued to live an active life, championing for his community and the next generation. He served on several boards, was president of the Japanese American Citizens bowling league for twenty years, and was a member of the Japanese Church of Christ. Even in his nineties, he backpacked into the Wind River Range (Rocky Mountains) every year, golfed once a week, and bowled twice a week.

My hope is that this story encourages young readers—especially those who feel marginalized or whose value feels diminished due to race, abilities, or other differences—to continue taking their shots. Racism, rejection, and exclusion are very real issues that continue to impact our world. Yet, in the midst of it all, persistence, an enduring spirit, and triumph can grow from adversity. Like Wat, we can still choose to bounce back from the challenges and pursue resilience.

"Gambatte—persistence, triumph over adversity, enduring spirit, resilience . . . guided much of my effort and attitude." —Wataru Misaka

"As I look back on the honors Wat has been given, many allude to his team spirit and his effort to do his best to make the team succeed rather than gain personal glory." —Katie Misaka (Wat Misaka's wife), former teacher and librarian

Japanese American incarceration and concentration camps, adapted from the backmatter of *Baseball Saved Us*

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 during World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which enabled the evacuation and incarceration of all those of Japanese ancestry in the United States. 120,000 people, most of whom were American citizens, were sent to ten concentration camps for four years (1942–1946). The camps were in isolated areas throughout the West. A map of the camps is available from the Japanese American National Museum (<https://www.janm.org/education/resources#general-resources>). According to PBS's "The Children of the Camps Project," half of the 120,000 sent to camps were children (<https://www.pbs.org/childofcamp/history/index.html>). Japanese Americans lost their property and savings while incarcerated.

When referring to the camps, we recommend reading "Euphemisms, Concentration Camps And The Japanese Internment" from NPR Public Editor (<https://www.npr.org/sections/publiceditor/2012/02/10/146691773/euphemisms-concentration-camps-and-the-japanese-internment>). We also recommend consulting the nonprofit organization, Densho, who provides terminology that more accurately represents the history of the Japanese American WWII incarceration (<https://densho.org/terminology/>).

For additional teacher resources, please check out:

- Teaching with Primary Resources: Japanese American Internment Teacher's Guide" from The Library of Congress, includes photographs (<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/japanese-american-internment/>)
- Teach About the Incarceration (<https://densho.org/teach/>)
- "Japanese Relocation and Internment During World War II" from the US National Archives and Records Administration (<https://www.archives.gov/research/alic/reference/military/japanese-internment.html>)
- "Bearing Witness to Japanese American Incarceration" from Facing History & Ourselves (<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/bearing-witness-japanese-american-incarceration>)
- "The Japanese American Internment, How Young People Saw It" from Smithsonian Center for Learning and Digital Access (https://smithsonianeducation.org/educators/lesson_plans/ja_internment/index.html)

Additional titles to teach about World War II

- *The School the Aztec Eagles Built* written by Dorinda Makanaonalani Nicholson www.leeandlow.com/books/theschool-the-aztec-eagles-built
- *A Place Where Sunflowers Grow* written by Amy Lee-Tai, illustrated by Felicia Hoshino www.leeandlow.com/books/aplace-where-sunflowers-grow
- *Flowers from Mariko* written by Rick Noguchi & Deneen Jenks, illustrated by Michelle Reiko Kumata www.leeandlow.com/books/flowers-from-mariko
- *Heroes* written by Ken Mochizuki, illustrated by Dom Lee www.leeandlow.com/books/heroes
- *Passage to Freedom* written by Ken Mochizuki, illustrated by Dom Lee www.leeandlow.com/books/passage-to-freedom
- *Baseball Saved Us* written by Ken Mochizuki, illustrated by Dom Lee www.leeandlow.com/books/baseball-saved-us/teachers_guide
- *Irena's Jars of Secrets* written by Marcia Vaughan, illustrated by Ron Mazellan www.leeandlow.com/books/irenas-jars-of-secrets
- *Quiet Hero: The Ira Hayes Story* written and illustrated by S.D. Nelson www.leeandlow.com/books/quiet-hero
- *Step Up to the Plate, Maria Singh* written by Uma Krishnaswami www.leeandlow.com/books/step-up-to-the-plate-maria-singh
- *The Story of Car Engineer Soichiro Honda* written by Mark Weston, illustrated by Katie Yamasaki www.leeandlow.com/books/the-story-of-car-engineer-soichiro-honda
- *The Wakame Gathers* written by Holly Thompson, illustrated by Kazumi Wilds www.leeandlow.com/books/the-wakame-gatherers

Selected Bibliography from the Backmatter

For more information about sources used in *Wat Takes His Shot*, see the Author Sources section at the back of the book.

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- Who are your favorite athletes? Do you have a favorite athlete? What sport do they play? Why do you like this athlete?
- What are sports or activities that are meaningful to you? How do you practice? What does it mean to work on that sport or activity? How do you improve, and what do you do to get better?
- What does it mean to have a passion? Do you have a passion? What is it? Why do you like to do that particular activity? How does it make you feel?
- What does it mean to be persistent? How do you demonstrate persistence even though something may be challenging? Why is it important to be persistent? Do you think persistence can be learned? How so?
- What do you know about World War II? What were some of the most significant events in World War II?
- Was there a time when you took a chance on something? What did you do? What was the end result? Was it worth taking a chance? How are taking chances important in your life?
- Is there a family member or friend that helped to encourage you to pursue your hobby and/or interests? What did they do to support you? Why were they helpful?
- What does it mean to have a dream? What are some of your life dreams and goals? What inspires you? What are your passions? Why do you have those dreams?
- What kinds of qualities are important for a person to have if they want to achieve an important goal?

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Book Title Exploration: Talk about the title of the book, *Wat Takes His Shot*. Ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think

might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?

Book Walk: Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, author's dedication, and Author's Note at the end. Display the book and analyze the cover. What do students notice in the illustrations?

Read Cheryl Kim's Biography: Read about Cheryl Kim on the jacket back flap. Encourage students to think about what could have been her inspiration for writing *Wat Takes His Shot*. You can also read more about Cheryl online at [cherylkimbooks.com](https://www.cherylkimbooks.com)

Read Nat Iwata's Biography: Read about illustrator Nat Iwata on the jacket flap. Have students look at his different artwork and compare styles across books. You can read more about Nat online at www.iwataillustration.com.

Encourage students to stop and jot in their reading notebooks during the read-aloud when they: learn new information, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or see new words.

Have students write feeling(s) in their notebook during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote that feeling down and have them write a journal entry about it.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- how the title fits the theme(s) of the story
- who Wataru Misaka is and why he's an inspiration to the Japanese American community
- how Wat's childhood influenced his basketball career
- who helped and motivated Wat during his childhood and during his basketball career
- how the war impacted Wat and his community
- how Wat demonstrated persistence, resilience, and courage in the face of racism and prejudice
- how Wat channeled his drive and dedication through basketball
- how Wat left a lasting impact on the basketball world and how his legacy is important today

Encourage students to consider why the author, Cheryl Kim would want to share this story about Wataru Misaka with young people.

VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

Content Specific

bamboo, Issei, Nisei, Sansei, generation, Gambatte, tournament, opponents, racism, executive order, possessions, incarceration camps, segregated, barracks, sergeant, relocation center, segregated, pine planks, starter, advisory board, hoopsters

Academic

overcome, dribbled, barely, towered, darted, whizzed, blared, aggressively, draped, devastation, opposition, blared, hounded, high-arcing, devastation, counseling

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. How did Wat manage to stay active during his childhood?
2. Who would Wat play basketball with every Sunday?
3. Why did Wat and his community have to for their own basketball league?
4. What would Wat's father tell him when he would miss a shot?
5. What did Wat do in junior high? How did Wat compare to his teammates?
6. What happened after Wat turned 15? How did this impact Wat and his family?
7. What happened on December 7, 1941? How did this event affect Wat and his community?
8. Why did the US government move Japanese Americans to the Topaz War Relocation Center?
9. What challenges did Wat overcome during his time in college?

10. What would people yell at Wat when he played? How did this make Wat feel?
11. How did Wat play in the final game of the year? What was the outcome of the game?
12. What did Wat and his teammates receive in honor of their big win?
13. Where did Wat go with Tut? Why?
14. Describe the Topaz camp. Who was being held at the camp? Why is the camp important to Wat and Tut? What did the championship represent to the community in Topaz?
15. What happened next basketball season? What did Wat join? What did he learn?
16. What occurred on August 6 and August 9, 1945? Where did the military send Wat?
17. What did Wat do after the war? What did Wat feel upon his return home?
18. How were Wat's white teammates received after the war?
19. How did Wat respond to his doubts and the opposition he received?
20. Why wasn't Wat allowed to go to the away games?
21. How did Wat play when they finally let him play at a home game? What did this mean for Wat?
22. Where was the final game of the season? Who was Utah's opponent?
23. What was Wat's mission during the game? What happened by the second half?
24. What was the result of the game?
25. What team did Wat join in 1947? Why was this a historical event?
26. What was Wat's experience with the Knicks?
27. What did Wat decide to pursue instead of joining the Harlem Globetrotters?
28. How did Wat perform in the corporate world? What all did he accomplish?
29. Who did Wat pave the way for in the professional basketball world?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What does the title *Wat Takes His Shot* mean to you after reading the book? Why do you think the author chose this particular title?
2. What was the overall theme or lesson you learned from reading *Wat Takes His Shot*?
3. How did Wat pave the way for Asian American players in the professional basketball world?
4. How did Wat use persistence and determination to achieve his goals? What lessons did Wat learn along the way that influenced his life?
5. How did Wat's father inspire him to always do his best? What saying did he always remind himself of?

6. How did the war impact Wat and the Japanese American community in the United States? What was Wat's experience during his time in the US military?
7. How did Wat confront adversity? What would he focus on during difficult times? How is Wat an inspiring and influential person to this day?
8. How was Wat's father influential in Wat's life and career? How did Wat's father encourage him during his childhood? How did Wat's father continue to inspire and motivate him even after his death?
9. In what ways did Wat overcome the many different obstacles in his life, starting at an early age? What were the different techniques and ways that Wat overcame barriers that he often faced?
10. How would you describe Wataru Misaka to a person who had never heard of him? What are some of the qualities you would use to describe him? What are the most important things to say about Wat and his life and legacy?
11. Explore the structure of this text. Does the story describe events chronologically, as comparison, cause and effect, or problems and solutions? Why do you think the author structured the text the way she did? How does this story compare to other texts you have read?

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. What is one big thought that you have after reading this book? What is your takeaway from this book? What would you tell a friend about this book?
2. What do you think Cheryl Kim's message is to the reader? Think about possible motivations behind the Kim's intentions to write this book.
3. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kind of connections did you make between the story and your own life? What do Wat's experiences, thoughts, and feelings mean to you?
4. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while reading *Wat Takes His Shot*? Why did you make those connections?
5. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make between the text and art in the book and what you have seen happening in the world, such as on television, in a newspaper, or online? What in this book made you think of that?
6. What does resilience mean to you after reading this book? How did Wat's passion for a better life fuel his success? Why is resilience important? How do you demonstrate resilience in your own life?
7. Why is Wataru Misaka an essential person to learn about? How did Wataru's determination

help him pave the way for professional Asian American basketball players?

Multilingual Learners Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are multilingual learners (ML).

1. Assign ML students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
4. Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
5. Have students work in pairs to tell what they learned about one of the poems. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
6. Have students give a short talk about what they identified with most from *Wat Takes His Shot* and why. Did they learn something new that they hadn't known before?
7. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose Multilingual Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.
8. Consider consulting www.multilinguallearningtoolkit.org/ for more ideas on how to support Multilingual Learners.

Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. Which illustration in *Wat Takes His Shot* do you think best shows an emotion? Explain which

emotion you think it is. How does the artist portray that emotion?

2. Choose an emotion such as happiness, fear, hope, sadness, and so on. Find the emotion in *Wat Takes His Shot* and illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *Wat Takes His Shot*
3. What are the ways that Wat demonstrates perseverance throughout the story? Create a chart of the different times that Wat encountered an obstacle and what he did to overcome it.
4. Wat experienced adversity during his life. How does he demonstrate resilience in *Wat Takes His Shot*? What are the different strategies he uses when he is feeling defeated?
5. What gives Wat confidence to pursue his dreams? What kept Wat going during difficult moments?

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Have students think about expository nonfiction versus narrative nonfiction.** How was reading *Wat Takes His Shot* different from reading a newspaper article about Wat? Have students read excerpts from The Guardian article, “Wat Misaka: the Japanese American Star who broke the NBA’s color barrier” (<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/article/2024/may/28/wat-misaka-the-japanese-american-star-who-broke-the-nbas-color-barrier>). Have students create a Venn Diagram with the headings, “Narrative Nonfiction: “Wat Takes His Shot” and “Expository Nonfiction: ‘Wat Misaka: the Japanese American Star who broke the NBA’s color barrier’” Students can compare and contrast the different formats of the texts and the information they learn in both.
- **Have students come up with a list of questions to interview author Cheryl Kim.** What do students want to know about the process behind writing a children’s book? How did Cheryl come up with the idea to *Wat Takes His Shot*? What was it like to write her first picture book? Why did she choose Wataru Misaka to write about? What did she like about

writing a book? What was challenging? Consider contacting Cheryl Kim online at <https://cherylkimbooks.com/> and inviting her to your school, library, or other relevant setting for an author visit.

- **Consider using *Wat Takes His Shot* as an anchor text to teach students about biography writing.** ReadWriteThink's "Writer's Workshop: The Biographical Sketch" has tips and step-by-step instructions on how to ease students into writing biography and the different techniques and strategies that are used to make engaging and informative stories (<https://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/writers-workshop-biographical-sketch>). Afterwards, have students select a picture book biography in their classroom or have them search for one of their interest online and create their own book about that historical figure. Have students conduct a research study about their own historical figure from a picture book of their choosing to simulate the process behind *Wat Takes His Shot*. Have students identify the different features in *Wat Takes His Shot* that would help to inform their own book about their historical figure. What kinds of information do they need to research? How should they present it in the book? What images, diagrams, or photographs would be helpful to their reader?
- **Students can write a piece about a hobby that's meaningful to them.** Do students have a hobby, such as a sport or another activity, that their family members or friends do that is also important to them? Wat loved playing basketball. Students can write a small moment piece or another reflection on their hobby, how it makes them feel, how they practice, and why it's meaningful to them. If possible, students can show off the hobby to the class or bring in an artifact that demonstrates their hobby to the class.
- **Tell students to imagine they will be interviewing Wataru Misaka for a local newspaper or talk show.** Ask students to develop a list of five interview questions they want to ask. What do they want to learn about his childhood, his time at college in Utah or his experience playing on the Knicks? Lead a class discussion, creating a combined list of questions and then narrowing that list down to ten questions.
- **How has a family member or friend close to you impacted your life? Wat's father would tell him "Gambatte. Do your best" when he would miss shots.** This shaped how Wat tackled difficult moments on the court. Have you had a family member or other person who really changed your life? What were some things that person did that were significant to you? Students can write a poem, essay, or display their work in any other visual format that works best for their learning needs.
- **Have students read the Author's Note from Cheryl Kim located in the back of the book.** Students can write a journal entry in response recording their reactions from reading the Author's Note. What did the Author's Note make them think about? What new information did they learn about Wataru Misaka as well as the author? What resonated

with students the most after reading the Author's Note? What questions would they like to ask Cheryl Kim about her process of writing *Wat Takes His Shot*, communicating with Wat's family, and conducting research while writing?

- **Conduct a biography unit featuring Lee & Low's books on athletes.** Titles include *Paul Robeson* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/paul-robeson>), *Game, Set, Match Champion Arthur Ashe* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/game-set-match-champion-arthur-ashe>), *Surfer of the Century* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/surfer-of-the-century>), *Louis Sockalexis* (www.leeandlow.com/books/louis-sockalexis), *Jim Thorpe's Bright Path* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/jim-thorpe-s-bright-path>), *The Last Black King of the Kentucky Derby* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-last-black-king-of-the-kentucky-derby>), and *Sixteen Years in Sixteen Seconds* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/sixteen-years-in-sixteen-seconds>), *Catching the Moon* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/catching-the-moon>) and *Marvelous Mabel* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/marvelous-mabel>). Students can examine the following questions during the unit and chart their findings in a graphic organizer or visual presentation format of their choosing with photographs, newspaper articles, and other documentation about the person: Who was this person? What was their impact? Why was this person important for both the sport and society? What was their legacy and how is it relevant today?

Social Studies/Geography

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Have students conduct a research project on Asian American athletes.** Students can focus on the following questions: What sport does this athlete play? What is their platform and what issues do they care about? How did they become a professional athlete? What obstacles did they have to overcome to become a professional athlete? How have they made a difference in their sport? Resources online include BuzzFeed's "31 Asian American Pacific Islander Athletes Who Are The Greatest At Their Sport" (www.buzzfeed.com/kasimkabbara/the-best-asian-american-and-pacific-islander-athletes-of), Complex's "10 Asian American and Pacific Islander Athletes You Should Know" (<https://www.complex.com/sports/a/justin-block/10-asian-american-and-pacific-islander-athletes-you-should-know>), NBC News' "7 Asian American sports trailblazers who changed the games" (<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/7-asian-american-sports-trailblazers-who-changed-games-n1006201>) and NCAA's "Celebrating AAPI Heritage Month with Stories of student-athletes" (<https://www.ncaa.org/news/2022/5/26/features-aapi.aspx>). Students may share their athlete in a visual presentation of their choosing, using reputable resources from books and websites.
- **Conduct a research study on the racism against Asian American athletes and the**

history of exclusion in the sport. Wataru Misaka fought against racism and discrimination in basketball throughout his life and how Asian American athletes still experience racism today. Have students consult the following articles from the NBA (<https://www.nba.com/news/jeremy-lin-asian-americans-tired-of-being-told-they-dont-experience-racism>), The Guardian (<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/25/sports/figure-skating-worlds.html>), NBC News (<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/asian-american-olympians-share-anti-asian-hate-affected-rcna1474>), and NBC News (<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/jeremy-lin-reflects-lessons-he-s-learned-asian-american-chasing-n1268202>). What did students learn about racism against Asian American athletes? What are some of the racism and discrimination that these athletes face? What are they doing to combat the racism and discrimination in their sport? How are Asian American athletes speaking out? Students can put together their findings in a critical essay and relate what they learned to *Wat Takes His Shot*, and how Wat was fighting for these issues during his lifetime.

- **Encourage students to select a resource from the “Author’s Sources” section at the back of *Wat Takes His Shot*.** Students can examine the piece, whether it’s a book, video, photograph, or website, and write a reaction to how they think the author and illustrator were informed by this information and how it helped develop the text. Have students consider what kind of resource it is, how they know that it contains accurate and correct information, and why research is critical in developing a book. The Library of Congress has a lesson plan for further information about teaching students about using primary sources (<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/>).
- **Have students create a timeline of Wataru Misaka’s life from the biography and elaborate on the events that happened during the time period.** To help students understand the historical context of Wat’s life, encourage them to research the events in the book by gathering photographs and other primary source documents about the particular events mentioned and creating a timeline. Display both enlarged timelines in the front of the class so that students have easy access to both the dates and events. Students may work in groups in different years (i.e. 1930–1940) and then add their events and findings to the class timeline.
- **Have students conduct a study of the start of War World II and the impact of the war on Japanese Americans.** The following organizations have resources, strategies, and additional texts on how to teach about WWII in the classroom to incorporate in your own unit:
 - Densho, Introduction to WWII Incarceration (<https://densho.org/learn/introduction/>)
 - The New York Times, Teaching Japanese-American Internment Using Primary Resources (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/07/learning/lesson-plans/teaching-japanese-american-internment-using-primary-resources.html>)
 - National Park Service, Japanese Americans at War (<https://www.nps.gov/wwii/learn/historyculture/japanese-americans-at-war.htm>)

- Smithsonian Magazine, Eighty Years After the U.S. Incarcerated 120,000 Japanese Americans, Trauma and Scars Still Remain (<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/eighty-years-after-us-incarcerated-japanese-americans-trauma-scars-remain-180979519/>)
- PBS, How a Public Media Campaign Led to Japanese Incarceration during WWII, (<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/citizen-hearst-japanese-incarceration/>)
- History, Bombing of Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (<https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/bombing-of-hiroshima-and-nagasaki>)
- The National WWII Museum, The Most Fearsome Sight: The Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima (<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/atomic-bomb-hiroshima>) and Japanese American Incarceration Education Resources (<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/japanese-american-incarceration-education-resource>)
- **Complete the PBS unit of study, *Injustice at Home: the Japanese American Experience of the World War II era*** (<https://gpb.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/injustice-at-home/injustice-at-home-the-japanese-american-experience-of-the-world-war-ii-era/>). Students can watch the different video resources included in the unit of study. Afterwards, students can answer the guiding questions for each video. Educators, consider following the support materials provided by PBS for this unit of study (https://static.pbslearningmedia.org/media/media_files/2c486691-5cd9-43d5-ac53-5437f47415a1/f471bc7b-8cb2-4df0-afe2-4d4cc7d4ebd1.pdf).
- **Follow the lesson from The Asian American Education Project on Japanese American Incarceration and the US Constitution** (<https://asianamericanedu.org/2.1.1-japanese-incarceration-camps-elementary-lesson-plan.html>). Guide students through the lesson to construct an essay describing the impact of the incarceration camps on Japanese Americans and how the constitutional rights of Japanese American were violated.

Art/Media

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Have students create a drawing, painting, or other visual representation of a sport or hobby that they care about.** Why did students choose this sport or hobby? Students can create posters, paintings, or other visual representations of sport or hobby that they're passionate about, and then display their work in small groups or for the whole class to see.
- **Encourage students to select an illustration that resonated with them the most from *Wat Takes His Shot*.** Have students write a reflection about the illustration. What stood out to them? How did it make them feel? What did it make them think about? How did the

illustrator, Nat Iwata, capture the words of Cheryl Kim?

- **Suggest that students study the illustrations in the book.** What mood(s) do the illustrations create? What do the characters' faces show about how they feel? How do students think the artist felt about the story?
- **Have students conduct an illustrator study on Nat Iwata.** Nat Iwata's other title at Lee & Low is *Sumo Joe* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/sumo-joe>). What kind of style does he use in his artwork? What do you think his process is for creating the illustrations for a children's book?
- **As a follow-up activity, have students come up with questions to interview Nat Iwata.** What is his process behind creating the illustrations for a children's book? What medium did he choose to create the illustrations? Why? How did he capture Wat on the court in his illustrations? Consider contacting Nat Iwata for a school visit (iwataillustration.com).
- **Write and design a commemorative plaque for Wataru Misaka.** What would you want to say about Wataru Misaka in a paragraph? What were the most important parts of his life, and what would you want to share with visitors? What was Wat passionate about, and what is his legacy? Why should people learn about Wataru Misaka? Students can create artwork for their plaque to display around the classroom.
- **Ask students to create portraits of people who are their personal role models in their sport or hobby they enjoy through drawing, collage, or photograph.** In writing, students should describe what actions and qualities they admire about this person. How do they relate to this person? What do they admire about the way that they play their sport or create their art? Why is it important for students to connect with people they admire in their sport or art?

School-Home Connection

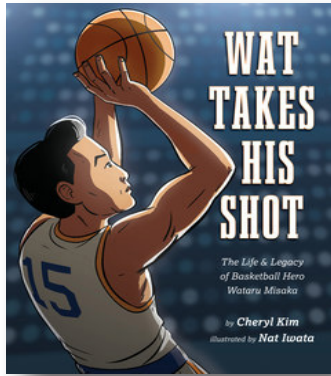
(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Encourage students to interview family members and/or caregivers about a favorite or impactful childhood memory.** How did that event influence the family member? How did it affect the person's life moving forward? Consider having students, if comfortable, share their findings with a partner, a small group, or whole class. Similarly, ask students to speak with family members about how their traditions are special to them. What is unique about each family's traditions? How did it influence them throughout their lives?
- **Have students bring home *Wat Takes His Shot* and share the book with other family members and/or caregivers.** Ask students to start a discussion about what their families learned from and connected with in the text.
- **If accessible, have students and families/caregivers research titles featuring Asian athletic figures who have made a lasting impact on the world.** What did they learn about these figures? What do they admire about them? What is their legacy today?

- **Have family members and/or caregivers share sports that they enjoy watching or playing.** What sports do they like? Do they play this sport, or do they like to watch? Why do they like this sport? How does it make them feel? Students can share their findings with the class.



Ordering Information

🌐 General Order Information:

leeandlow.com/contact/ordering

🔒 Secure Online Ordering:

leeandlow.com/books/wat-takes-his-shot

☎ **By Phone:** 212-779-4400

✉ **By Mail:**

381 Park Ave S, #1401
New York, NY 10016

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cheryl Kim is an elementary school teacher from San Jose, California, and teaches second grade at an international school in Thailand. She received the SCBWI Kate Dopirak Craft and Community Award for her original manuscript for *Wat Takes His Shot*. When she's not teaching or writing, she enjoys watching professional basketball with her husband and sons. Visit her online at cherylkim-books.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Nat Iwata has worked as an art director, 3D artist, illustrator, professor, and animator on everything from video games to children's books. His debut picture book, *Sumo Joe*, was called "a refreshing new take on the martial arts genre" by Kirkus Reviews. Like Wat, Nat is also Japanese American, about 5' 7" tall, but lousy at basketball. He lives in Washington state with his wife and three boys, all of whom serve as an endless source of encouragement and inspiration. You can visit him online at iwataillustration.com.

REVIEWS

"Readers of all ages, especially those who love basketball, will rejoice over

"Wat's" triumphs." – Starred Review, *School Library Journal*

"Solid, stirring fare for sports fans." – *Kirkus Reviews*

"In paneled digital illustrations, Iwata's use of blurred backgrounds and inset scenes centers the visual narrative and adroitly moves events forward with dramatic side lighting." – *Publisher's Weekly*

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