

# American Sporting Heroes

Our world is full of sporting heroes who have achieved incredible things across a range of sports. Read on to learn more about four American sporting heroes.

## Jesse Owens

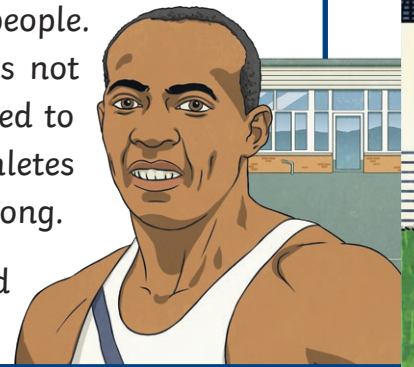


Jesse Owens was born on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1913. He is known for winning four Olympic gold medals in track and field events.

In 1935, Jesse took part in a total of 42 different sporting events and won them all. This amazing achievement earned him a place at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, Germany.

During the 1936 Olympics, Germany was being ruled by Adolf Hitler. After his success, Jesse Owens was called a hero by many people. However, lots of people believe that Jesse's success was not what Hitler wanted to happen. This is because he wanted to use the Olympics to show how his group of white athletes were better than everyone else and Jesse proved him wrong.

Today, there is a school in Berlin that has been named after Jesse.



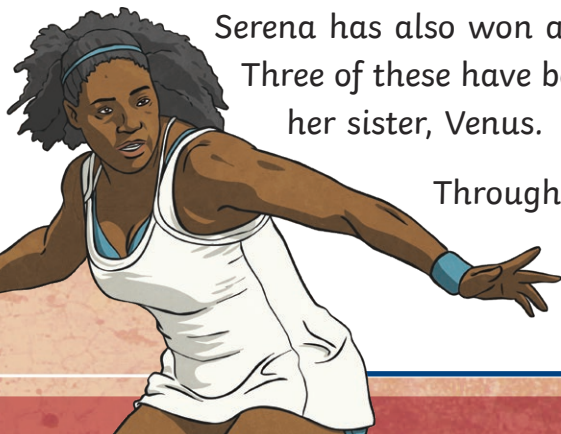
## Serena Williams

Serena Williams is a famous tennis player who was born on 26<sup>th</sup> September 1981. In total, she has won more Grand Slam tennis tournaments than any other player.

Serena's father started teaching her how to play tennis when she was three years old. By the time she was ten, Serena was the number one tennis player in the ten and under division.

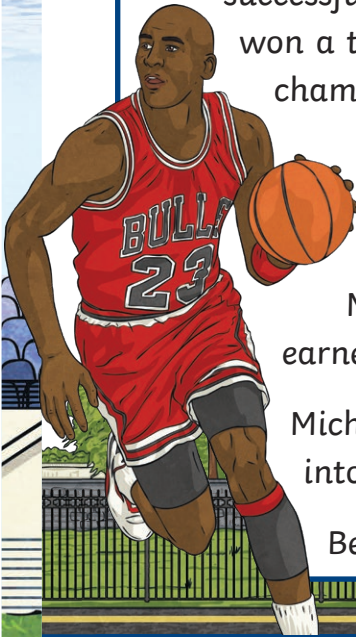
Serena has also won a total of four Olympic gold medals. Three of these have been in doubles tournaments alongside her sister, Venus.

Throughout her career, Serena has suffered many injuries. Each time, she has returned to the game and proven what an incredible, talented player she is.



## Michael Jordan

Michael Jordan was born on 17<sup>th</sup> February 1963 and is a successful basketball player. Throughout his career, he won a total of six NBA (National Basketball Association) championships with his team.



When Michael was at university, he joined the basketball team. In 1982, they won the championship and, a few years later, Michael joined the NBA team, the Chicago Bulls. Michael continued learning while playing basketball and earned a degree in geography in 1985.

Michael is 1.98 metres tall and can jump over a metre straight up into the air!

Before retiring in 2003, Michael played in 1,072 NBA games.

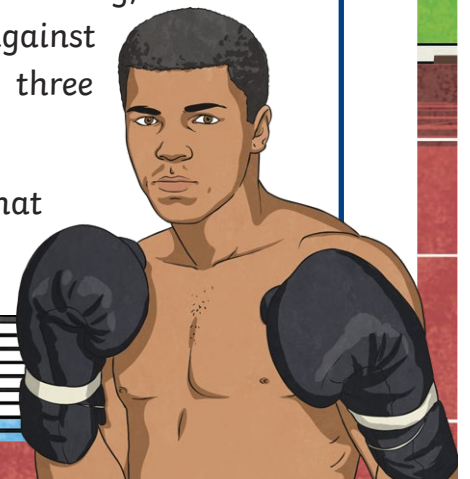
## Muhammad Ali

Muhammad Ali was a successful boxer who has a total of 56 victories. He was born on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1942 and was named Cassius Marcellus Clay Jr.

When he was 12, Muhammad's bike was stolen. The police officer who helped Muhammad also trained young boxers in his spare time. He invited him along to the gym to join in and, by 1954, Muhammad had won his first boxing match.

In April 1967, Muhammad was summoned to join the military. He refused and openly said that he did not support the Vietnam War. This objection led to him being found guilty of refusing to serve in the military, which was against the law. While Muhammad argued against the decision, he was unable to box and missed over three years of competitions.

In 1998, Muhammad was given an important award that celebrated his work to promote peace.



# Questions

1. Who was born on 17<sup>th</sup> February 1963? Tick one.

- Jesse Owens
- Serena Williams
- Michael Jordan
- Muhammad Ali

2. Draw **four** lines and complete each sentence.

Jesse Owens...

was a famous boxer.

Serena Williams...

is a famous basketball player.

Michael Jordan...

is a famous tennis player.

Muhammad Ali...

was a famous track and field athlete.

3. Where were the 1936 Olympics held?

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4. Look at the section on **Muhammad Ali**.

Find and copy one word that means the same as **called**.

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5. Fill in the missing words.

Serena has won a total of \_\_\_\_\_ Olympic \_\_\_\_\_ medals.

6. Summarise what you have learnt about **Michael Jordan** using 20 words or fewer.

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7. Which sportsperson would you most like to meet? Explain your answer.

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8. Why do you think that the author has chosen to use the words **Sporting Heroes** in the title? Explain your answer.

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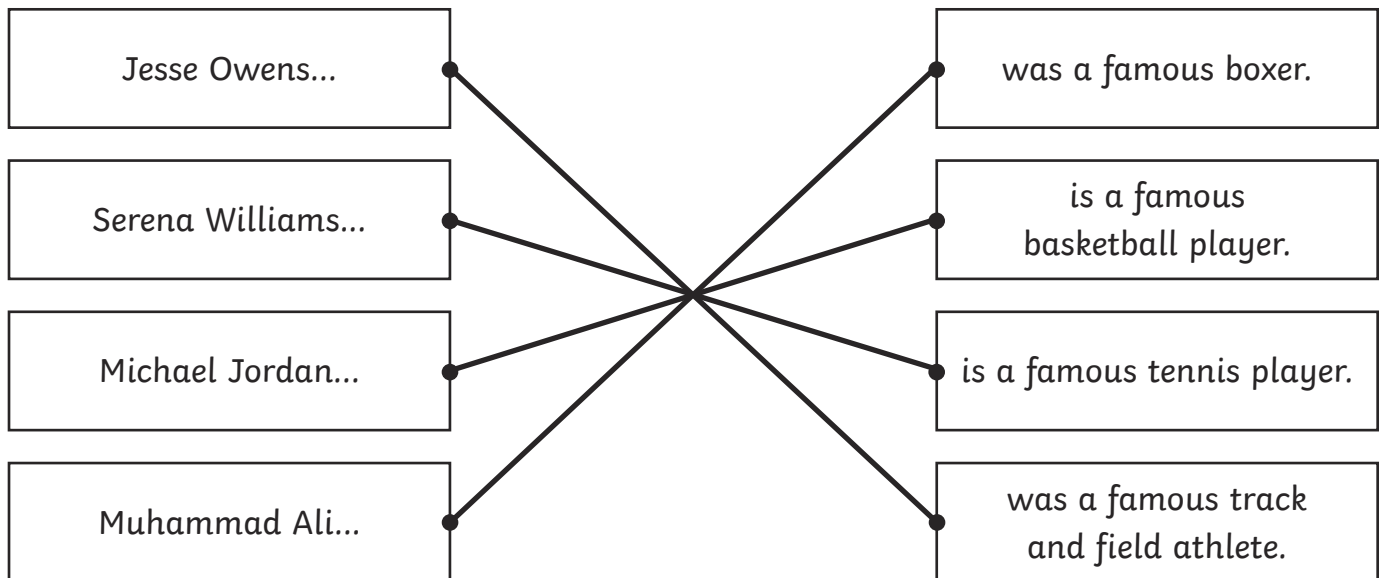
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# Answers

1. Who was born on 17<sup>th</sup> February 1963? Tick one.

- Jesse Owens
- Serena Williams
- Michael Jordan**
- Muhammad Ali

2. Draw **four** lines and complete each sentence.



3. Where were the 1936 Olympics held?

**The 1936 Olympics were held in Berlin, Germany.**

4. Look at the section on **Muhammad Ali**.

Find and copy one word that means the same as **called**.

**summoned**

5. Fill in the missing words.

Serena has won a total of **four** Olympic **gold** medals.

6. Summarise what you have learnt about **Michael Jordan** using 20 words or fewer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Michael is a basketball player who won six NBA championships. He is very tall and played for the Chicago Bulls.**

7. Which sportsperson would you most like to meet? Explain your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I would most like to meet Serena Williams because she sounds really inspiring and I would like her to teach me how to play tennis as well as she does.**

8. Why do you think that the author has chosen to use the words **Sporting Heroes** in the title? Explain your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the author has chosen to use the words 'Sporting Heroes' in the title because all of these people have achieved incredible things and the word hero shows that. Jesse Owens was even called a hero by many people after winning four gold medals.**

# American Sporting Heroes

Our world is full of sporting heroes who have achieved incredible things across a range of sports. From tennis players to boxers, read on to discover more about four American sporting heroes.

## Jesse Owens



Jesse Owens was born in Alabama on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1913. In total, Jesse won four Olympic gold medals in track and field events.

At the age of nine, Jesse and his family moved to Ohio. Amazingly, throughout 1935, Jesse competed in a total of 42 different sporting events and won them all. This success earned him a place at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin.

During the 1936 Olympics, Germany was being ruled by the dictator Adolf Hitler. After winning four gold medals, Jesse Owens was labelled as a hero by many people in Berlin. Today, lots of people believe that Jesse's success was a devastating blow to Hitler, who wanted to use the Olympics to show how his select group of white athletes were superior to everyone else.

Visitors to Berlin today can find both a school and a street named in honour of Jesse.



## Serena Williams

Serena Williams is a famous tennis player who was born on 26<sup>th</sup> September 1981 in Michigan. In total, Serena has won more Grand Slam titles than any other player. These are made up of 23 singles titles and 14 doubles titles with her sister, Venus.

When she was three, Serena's father started teaching her how to play tennis. Under Richard Williams's instruction, Serena was ranked as the number one tennis player in the ten and under division.

In addition to numerous Grand Slam titles, Serena has also won four Olympic gold medals. Three of these have been in doubles tournaments alongside Venus.

Through the years, Serena has suffered many injuries. Each time, Serena has returned to the game and proven what an incredible, talented player she is.





## Michael Jordan

Michael Jordan was born on 17<sup>th</sup> February 1963 in New York. He is often referred to as one of the greatest basketball players of all time and boasts an impressive six NBA (National Basketball Association) championship wins with his team.

When Michael was at university in North Carolina, he joined the basketball team. With Michael on their team, they won the championship in 1982. A few years later, Michael joined the NBA team, the Chicago Bulls. Although this meant that he had to leave school early, Michael continued studying while playing basketball and earned a degree in geography in 1985.

Michael is 1.98 metres tall and is well known for his ability to score slam dunks during a game. Incredibly, he can perform a vertical jump of just over 1 metre.

In total, Michael played in 1,072 NBA games before retiring in 2003.



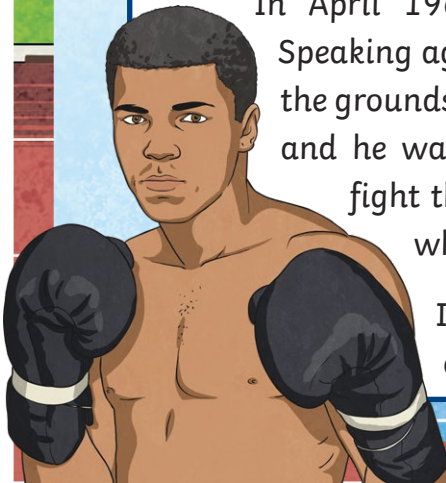

## Muhammad Ali

Muhammad Ali was a successful heavyweight boxer with a total of 56 victories. He was born on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1942 and was named Cassius Marcellus Clay Jr.

When he was 12, Muhammad's bike was stolen. After telling the police officer who dealt with the case how angry he was at the thief, Muhammad was invited to a local gym. Here, the police officer, Joe Martin, trained young boxers in his spare time. With Joe's training, Muhammad won his first amateur match in 1954.

In April 1967, Muhammad was summoned to join the military. Speaking against what he saw as unnecessary violence, he refused on the grounds of being a 'conscientious objector'. This claim was rejected and he was found guilty of refusing to enlist. While he worked to fight the decision, he wasn't able to compete in boxing matches, which led to over three years of missed competitions.

In 1998, Muhammad was given an important award that celebrated his work to promote peace.





# Questions

1. What sport is Michael Jordan famous for taking part in? Tick one.

- athletics
- tennis
- basketball
- boxing

2. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order that they happened in.

- Serena Williams was born.
- Muhammad Ali won his first boxing match.
- Michael Jordan retired from playing basketball.
- Jesse Owens was born.

3. Fill in the missing words.

Muhammad Ali is a successful \_\_\_\_\_ boxer with a total of \_\_\_\_\_ victories.

4. Look at the section on **Serena Williams**.

Find and copy one word which means the same as **lots of**.

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What event led to Muhammad Ali meeting Joe Martin?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Summarise what you have learnt about Jesse Owens using 20 words or fewer.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Explain why some people might describe these sportspeople as **inspirational**.

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8. Which of the four sports that were mentioned would you most like to try?  
Explain your answer.

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9. What evidence can you find that the author is impressed by these sportspeople?

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# Answers

1. What sport is Michael Jordan famous for taking part in? Tick one.

- athletics
- tennis
- basketball**
- boxing

2. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order that they happened in.

- 3** Serena Williams was born.
- 2** Muhammad Ali won his first boxing match.
- 4** Michael Jordan retired from playing basketball.
- 1** Jesse Owens was born.

3. Fill in the missing words.

Muhammad Ali is a successful **heavyweight** boxer with a total of **56** victories.

4. Look at the section on **Serena Williams**.

Find and copy one word which means the same as **lots of**.

**numerous**

5. What event led to Muhammad Ali meeting Joe Martin?

**Muhammad Ali's bike being stolen led to him meeting Joe Martin.**

6. Summarise what you have learnt about Jesse Owens using 20 words or fewer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Jesse won four gold medals at the Olympics. In Berlin, there is a school and a street named after him.**

7. Explain why some people might describe these sportspeople as **inspirational**.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Some people might describe these sports people as inspirational because they have all worked hard and been incredibly successful. Muhammad Ali also stood up for what he believed in and won an award for promoting peace, which is inspirational.**

8. Which of the four sports that were mentioned would you most like to try?  
Explain your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I would most like to try basketball because it sounds really fun. I also want to carry on learning and Michael Jordan was able to do this while still playing basketball.**

9. What evidence can you find that the author is impressed by these sportspeople?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Throughout the text, the author has used words like 'success', 'hero' and 'incredibly'. They have also described Serena Williams as an 'incredible, talented player' which shows that they are impressed with everything that these sportspeople have achieved.**

# American Sporting Heroes

Our world is full of incredible sporting heroes who have achieved amazing things across a range of sports. From tennis players to boxers, read on to discover more about four American sporting heroes.

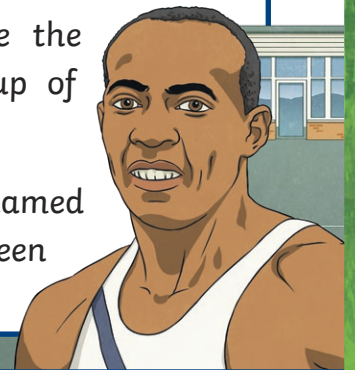
## Jesse Owens

Jesse Owens was born in Oakville, Alabama on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1913. An incredible track and field athlete, Jesse won a total of four Olympic gold medals.

At the age of nine, Jesse and his family moved to Cleveland, Ohio where his sporting talents began to be noticed at school. Throughout 1935, Jesse competed in a total of 42 different track and field events and won them all. This incredible feat earned him a place at the 1936 Olympics which were held in Berlin.

At the time of the 1936 Olympics, Germany was under the rule of a dictator, Adolf Hitler. After winning gold medals in four separate events, Jesse Owens was heralded as a hero by the residents of Berlin. Many people believe that Jesse's incredible performance was a devastating blow to Hitler, who wanted to use the Olympics to showcase the superiority of his select group of white athletes.

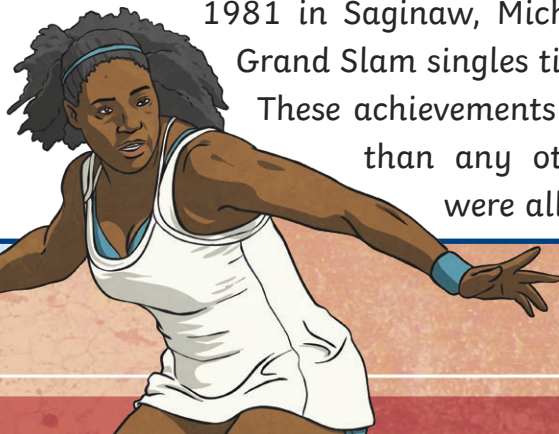
Visitors to Berlin today can find both a school and a street named in honour of Jesse. In addition, a memorial park has been opened in Alabama to celebrate his amazing achievements.



## Serena Williams

Serena Williams is a famous tennis player who was born on 26<sup>th</sup> September 1981 in Saginaw, Michigan. In total, Serena has won 23 Grand Slam singles titles and 14 Grand Slam doubles titles.

These achievements mean that Serena has won more titles than any other player since professional athletes were allowed to join the tournament in 1968.



At the age of three, Serena's father started teaching her how to play tennis. Wanting his daughters to be successful, Richard Williams taught himself how to coach tennis using a variety of books and videos. By the age of ten, Serena was ranked as the number one tennis player in the ten and under division.

In addition to numerous Grand Slam titles, Serena has also won four Olympic gold medals. Three of these have been in doubles tournaments alongside her sister, Venus.

Through the years, Serena has suffered many injuries. These have often led to speculations of retirement. However, each time, Serena has returned to the game and proven what an incredible, talented player she is.



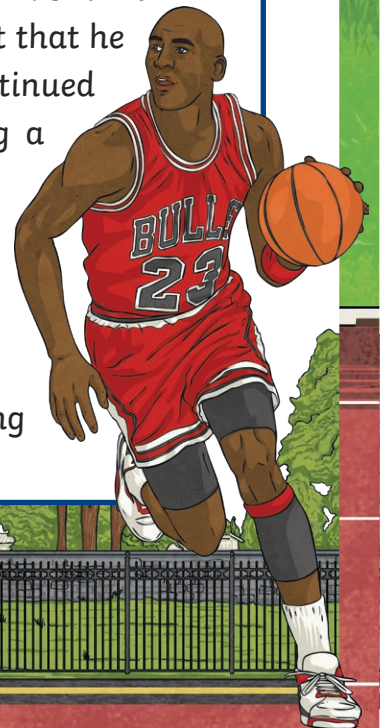
### Michael Jordan

Michael Jordan was born on 17<sup>th</sup> February 1963 in Brooklyn, New York. Having won a total of six NBA (National Basketball Association) championships with his team (the Chicago Bulls), Michael is often referred to as one of the greatest basketball players of all time.

Michael was introduced to basketball at a young age by his father, James Jordan. Attending university in North Carolina, Michael joined the basketball team and helped lead them to win the championship in 1982. In 1984, Michael joined the Chicago Bulls. Although this meant that he left school before he could complete his degree, Michael continued studying while playing basketball; this led to him earning a degree in geography in 1985.

At a height of 1.98 metres tall, Michael is well known for his ability to score slam dunks during a game. Incredibly, he can perform a vertical jump of just over 1 metre.

In total, Michael played in 1,072 NBA games before retiring from basketball in 2003.



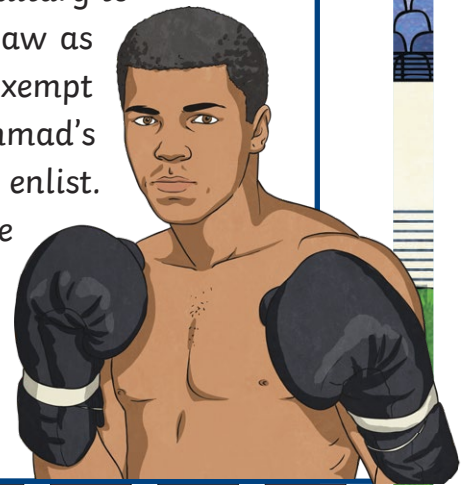
## Muhammad Ali

Born Cassius Marcellus Clay Jr on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1942, Muhammad Ali is a world-renowned heavyweight boxer with a total of 56 victories.

At the age of 12, Muhammad's bike was stolen. Hearing the boy proclaim how angry he was at the offender, the police officer on the case, Joe Martin, invited Muhammad along to a local gym. Here, Joe used his spare time to train young boxers. Tutored by Joe, Muhammad won his first amateur match in 1954.

In April 1967, Muhammad was summoned to join the military to fight in the Vietnam War. Outspoken against what he saw as unnecessary violence, he refused to enlist and asked to be exempt on the grounds of being a 'conscientious objector'. Muhammad's claim was rejected and he was found guilty of refusing to enlist. While appealing the conviction, he wasn't able to compete in boxing matches, which resulted in over three years of missed matches. In 1971, the conviction was overturned.

In 1998, Muhammad was given an award to celebrate his promotion of peace in developing countries.



# Questions

1. Who was Joe Martin? Tick one.

- a tennis player
- a basketball player
- a lawyer
- a police officer

2. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order that they happened in.

- Michael Jordan joined the Chicago Bulls.
- Muhammad Ali was given an award for his promotion of peace.
- Jesse Owens competed in the Berlin Olympics.
- Professional athletes were allowed to join the Grand Slam.

3. **...Jesse Owens was heralded as a hero by the residents of Berlin**

Write another word that means the same as **heralded**.

\_\_\_\_\_

4. How many track and field events did Jesse Owens win in 1935?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Fill in the missing words.

A memorial park has been opened in \_\_\_\_\_ to celebrate \_\_\_\_\_  
amazing achievements.

6. Argue that Muhammad Ali wouldn't have become a successful boxer had his bike not been stolen.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



7. Compare the careers of Serena Williams and Michael Jordan.  
How are they similar?

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8. Which sportsperson would you most like to meet? Tick one.

- Jesse Owens
- Serena Williams
- Michael Jordan
- Muhammad Ali

What would you ask them about? Fully explain your answer.

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9. Summarise what you have learnt about Muhammad Ali using 20 words or fewer.

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10. Imagine that you are Jesse Owens.  
Explain how you feel after winning four gold medals.

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# Answers

1. Who was Joe Martin? Tick one.

- a tennis player
- a basketball player
- a lawyer
- a police officer**

2. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order that they happened in.

- 3** Michael Jordan joined the Chicago Bulls.
- 4** Muhammad Ali was given an award for his promotion of peace.
- 1** Jesse Owens competed in the Berlin Olympics.
- 2** Professional athletes were allowed to join the Grand Slam.

3. ...**Jesse Owens was heralded as a hero by the residents of Berlin**

Write another word that means the same as **heralded**.

**Accept any appropriate synonym, such as: labelled; called; named; announced.**

4. How many track and field events did Jesse Owens win in 1935?

**Jesse Owen won a total of 42 different track and field events in 1935.**

5. Fill in the missing words.

A memorial park has been opened in **Alabama** to celebrate **Jesse Owen's** amazing achievements.

6. Argue that Muhammad Ali wouldn't have become a successful boxer had his bike not been stolen.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: When Muhammad Ali's bike was stolen, he met the police officer, Joe Martin who invited him to train as a boxer. Unless Muhammad had thought of becoming a boxer before, he would never have started training had he not met Joe as a result of his bike being stolen.**

7. Compare the careers of Serena Williams and Michael Jordan.  
How are they similar?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Both Serena Williams and Michael Jordan were taught their sport by their fathers. They have both worked incredibly hard and are considered to be one of the best at their sport. Serena Williams has won the most Grand Slam titles and Michael Jordan is often referred to as one of the greatest basketball players of all time.**

8. Which sportsperson would you most like to meet? Tick one.

**Accept any ticked response provided that a full answer is given below.**

What would you ask them about? Fully explain your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I would most like to meet Michael Jordan and I would ask him about how he managed to study at the same time as playing basketball. This is because it doesn't say in the text how he managed to do both things and I think that it is very impressive.**

9. Summarise what you have learnt about Muhammad Ali using 20 words or fewer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Muhammad is a famous boxer who started training when he was 12. He won 56 matches in total.**

10. Imagine that you are Jesse Owens.

Explain how you feel after winning four gold medals.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I feel amazing and proud. There were some people who didn't think that I could do this but I worked hard and have achieved four gold medals for the US team.**