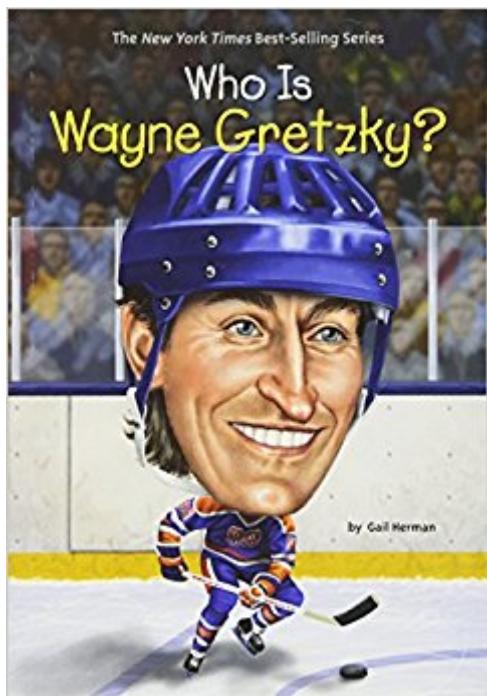


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Who Is Wayne Gretzky? (Who Was?)



Synopsis

After breaking or tying more than sixty records in hockey, it's no wonder that Wayne Gretzky is known as "The Great One." Born in Brantford, Ontario, on January 26, 1961, in a nation obsessed with the sport, he threw himself into the game practically from the time he first laced up a pair of skates. When he retired from the NHL in 1999, he had led several teams to Stanley Cup victories, competed in the Olympics, and changed the way hockey was played forever. Known for his love for family and as a truly decent human being, Wayne Gretzky is revealed as more than a sports legend in this easy-to-read biography.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gail Herman has written several biographies for young readers, including Who Was Davy Crockett? and Who Was Jackie Robinson?

Who Is Wayne Gretzky? A A A A A Fifty in fifty. That means scoring fifty goals in fifty hockey games. A A Maurice "The Rocket" Richard, of the Montreal Canadiens, was the first National Hockey League player to do it, in the 1944-1945 season. A A Ten years

passed. Twenty. Thirty. It seemed no other hockey player could pull off the feat. Finally New York Islander Mike Bossy tied the record thirty-six years later. How much time would pass before someone else scored fifty goals in fifty games? One season later, Wayne Gretzky, just twenty years old, skated onto the ice. The place: Northlands Coliseum in Edmonton, Canada. The date: December 30, 1981. Wayne was the center for the Edmonton Oilers. He was about to face off against the Philadelphia Flyers. It had been an amazing season for Wayne. By the thirteenth game, he had thirteen goals. After thirty-five games, he had thirty-eight goals. And after thirty-eight games? He had a whopping forty-five. Now he was ready for game thirty-nine. No one ever had scored fifty goals in less than fifty games. Just five more goals and Wayne would do it. On this gusty winter day, Wayne felt lucky. Somehow he knew he could score and score big. In the first period he scored two goals, one right after the other. By the end of the second period, he scored again for a hat trick: three goals altogether. Five minutes into the third period, Wayne slid the puck around a rushing defender. He shot, lifting the puck high in the air. He scored! His fourth goal of the game! Now Wayne had forty-nine goals. Could he make it fifty? With ten minutes left, Wayne shot and shot again. Each one was stopped by the Flyers' goalie. Only seconds remained. The game was close: Oilers, 6; Flyers, 5. Philadelphia pulled its goalie off the ice. An offensive player skated out, to try to tie the game. It was a risk. Philadelphia left their net wide open. Wayne took off down the ice. Grant Fuhr, the Oilers' goalie, pushed the puck to right wing Glenn Anderson. "Pass it to me!" Wayne shouted from the Flyers' zone. Three seconds were left on the clock. Wayne got the puck. A defender charged. Two seconds left. Wayne zipped around the Flyer. He shot. Goal! Wayne had done it. Fifty goals in only thirty-nine games. Teammates mobbed Wayne. The hometown crowd went crazy. Wayne Gretzky didn't just break the record. He destroyed it! By game fifty, he had sixty-one goals. And by the end of the season, Wayne scored ninety-two goals in eighty games for another record. Wayne would go on to break or tie more than sixty records. Most goals in a season and most goals in a career. Most assists in a season and most assists in a career. Most career points. (In hockey, players earn a point for each goal or assist.) If you only counted Wayne's assists, he could still have the most points of any player. Ever. Wayne retired in 1999. He hasn't played for years. Yet many of his records still stand—including fifty goals in thirty-nine games. He probably holds the record for holding the most records of any professional athlete. Wayne wasn't the biggest or fastest or strongest. But the way he played—his style and smarts—would change the game. Wayne Douglas Gretzky was a different kind of hockey.

player, almost from the time he could walk. Chapter 1: Growing Up Gretzky In Canada, hockey is THE sport. When Canadian children dream of being a pro athlete, most don't think of baseball or football. They dream of hockey, and playing for glory in the National Hockey League. It's said Canadian children grow up on skates. Wayne Gretzky did. He started skating when he learned to walk. Wayne was born on January 26, 1961, in Brantford, a small city in the province of Ontario, Canada. In Brantford, it snows for almost half the year. There's lots of time to skate outdoors. When Wayne was two, his dad bought him his first pair of skates. Walter Gretzky strapped them on for little Wayne. Together, they stepped onto the frozen Nith River. Walter helped Wayne slide along the ice. According to Walter, "He'd never ever been on skates before. I put him on the ice. He literally skated. Just skated." And that's where it all began—on the river running right past the Gretzky family farm. Walter Gretzky had grown up on the farm, outside town. He too grew up playing hockey. He met Wayne's mom, Phyllis, when he was a teenager. Phyllis went to the games he played. And Walter watched Phyllis play softball. Sports were always a part of their lives. The two married in 1960, and moved to a small house in Brantford. The city is known as the birthplace of the telephone. It's where Alexander Graham Bell worked on his landmark invention. The first telephone factory was built there, too. Phones were big business. And many people worked for Bell Canada. Walter was a lineman for the company. In 1961, Walter was working above a manhole. A phone cable had caught, and Walter was trying to loosen it. He pulled. Suddenly, a heavy frame flew out of the manhole. It hit Walter on the head, cracking his helmet. The next thing he knew, he was lying facedown on the street. Everything was spinning. He had a fractured skull. The accident left Walter deaf in one ear. He had constant headaches. But Walter Gretzky didn't let that stop him. How could he? He and Phyllis had a growing family. After Wayne, Walter and Phyllis had four more children: Kim, Keith, Brent, and Glen. On weekends, they'd all troop out to the family farm to visit their grandparents. Every Sunday after church, Grandma Gretzky made a huge dinner. She was born in Poland. So she served traditional Polish food like pierogi, a kind of dumpling. And every Saturday night, from the time Wayne was little, the family gathered around the TV. They watched a show called Hockey Night in Canada. While the TV was on, Wayne and Grandma had their own face-off. Grandma, the goalie, sat in a chair. Toddler Wayne skated across the floor, shoeless. Using a tiny hockey stick, he'd shoot a rubber ball or rolled-up sock between Grandma's legs. Wayne was hooked on hockey. In town, Walter took Wayne to park rinks. Wayne never wanted to leave. Poor Walter waited for hours in the freezing cold. When Wayne was four,

Walter had an idea. He'd turn their backyard into a skating rink. First he cut the grass very short. Then he turned on the sprinkler. He let it run all night long. In the morning, the ground was covered in a layer of ice. It was a rink! Now Walter could sit in his warm kitchen and watch Wayne out the window. The family called it "Wally Coliseum." Wayne wanted to learn everything about playing hockey. So Walter set up empty detergent bottles. He taught Wayne to weave around them. He ran through drills. "Go where the puck is going," he told Wayne again and again. "Not where it's been." Sometimes Wayne used a tennis ball instead of a puck. It taught him control. But Wayne wanted to play in real games. He begged his father to find him a team. Wayne was too young, his parents thought. He was only five. Back then, players had to be at least ten. But Wayne kept begging. So his parents tried to sign him up for the Brantford Atom league team. They were turned away. Wayne didn't give up. He kept practicing. And he kept after his parents. The next year Wayne turned six. This time, he was allowed to try out. Wayne was small—even for his age. But all those drills paid off. His skills made him stand out. And he made the team!

My 8 year old LOVED this book! He is a hockey super fan and also likes the fun-to-read "Who Is" series. This one is, by far, his favorite (Who Is Jackie Robinson is a close 2nd). They are well-written, interesting books that even I, an adult and former elementary school teacher, enjoy reading with him. There are so many things to stop and talk about if you want to have deeper discussions, and they also do well on their own without any talk. The authors clearly understand how to relate adult figures to younger children. Our only gripe is that there is no "Who is Bobby Orr".

9 year old son loves hockey and hates to read. He read this book in an evening and that is saying a lot. It's a struggle to get him to read anything

ordered this for my nephew for his birthday. he thought it was okay. he's five. but this kid loves hockey. he eats, sleeps hockey.

Great book for kids (ages 6-10) to learn the basics about Gretzky. Good choice for book reports.

My son loves the book and is a huge fan of Wayne Gretzky to the point of having his hockey jersey the same number as Wayne's.

My son loved this book. Great history for a young hockey player and perfect for a 9 year old working on his reading skills.

My son loves reading and he loved this book so much he did a school report on Wayne Gretzky. He even got his little brother to read it.

Best Mommy/ Son time night reading in a long time. we would read a chapter a night and he would LOVE going to bed to hear more.Followed up with a video documentary on WG and he is in AWE. Loves the "Lady Bing" award!

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