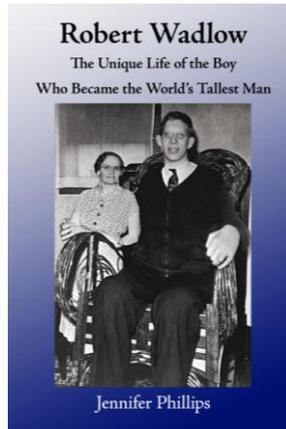


Robert Wadlow - The Unique Life of the Boy Who Became the World's Tallest Man

Reference Guide



Imagine being the tallest person in the world. As a child. You just keep growing and growing and growing...six feet...seven feet...eight feet up. The world is made in miniature and you must constantly endure.

The crush of public attention is relentless. Some people are kind, some are mean. All are curious.

This may sound like a tale from long ago, but this is the inspirational true life story of young Robert Wadlow. The victim of an overactive pituitary gland, Robert lived from 1918 to 1940. He stood just shy of 9 feet tall by the time of his death at age 22.

Robert didn't choose his situation, but his accomplishment was in how he handled it.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ **People are different in many ways. Robert Wadlow stood out because he was extra tall compared to typical Americans.**

What are other ways a person can feel different? Can this change based on the region or country where you live?

- ❖ **Extra tall people sometimes hear remarks such as, "How's the weather up there?" These comments may sound more amusing than they really are.**

What else might people say or ask others without thinking about how it feels?

- ❖ **Most people feel different in some way.**

What do you find different about yourself? If it bothers you or makes it harder for you to do something, what helps you cope?

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Links

For more information and photos of Robert: Alton Museum of History & Art, www.altonmuseum.com.

For 1930s news film reels showing Robert: www.criticalpast.com and www.britishpathe.com (type in Robert Wadlow to search).

Other Readings about Height (Short & Tall)

Bauer, Joan. *Stand Tall*. Putnam Juvenile, August 2002. Fiction for ages 9-12 about a taller-than-usual boy nicknamed Tree.

Catrow, David and Lovell, Patty. *Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon*. Putnam Juvenile, August 2001. Picture book for younger readers.

Cohen, Arianne. *The Tall Book: A Celebration of Life from On High*. Bloomsbury USA, June 2009. For grown-ups. Takes you into the modern-day world of tall people, the pros and the challenges.

Klise, Kate. *Stand Straight, Ella Kate. The True Story of a Real Giant*. Dial Books for Young Readers, April 2010. A fictionalized biography about Ella Kate Ewing, who grew to more than 8 feet tall. Suitable for ages 6-8.

Schwartz, John. *Short: Walking Tall When You're Not at All*. Flash Point/Roaring Brook Press, April 2010. Non-fiction. Suitable for grades 7 and up.

Worton, Barbara. *Too Tall Alice*. Great Little Books, March 2009. Suitable for up to 12 years old.

What Influences Height?

Genetics. Scientists believe family genes are the primary contributor to our height. Many genes and variations are involved, though, so how tall your parents are doesn't always help predict your height. It gets complicated fast. Researchers are still working to better understand which genes and how they work.

Environment. Our living conditions as we grow up, including nutrition, also impact how tall we grow.

Our Endocrine System. The health of this system in our body, which releases growth hormones, can also play a role.