

Success Stories

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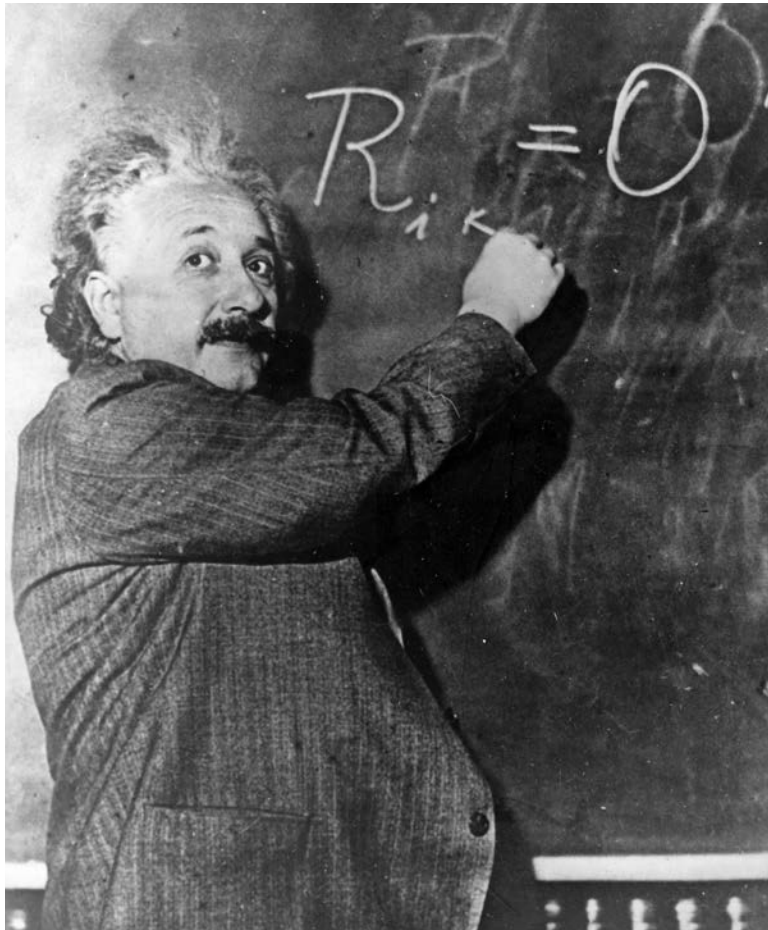
Success Stories



Written by Kira Freed

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Correlation

LEVEL Z

Fountas & Pinnell	U-V
Reading Recovery	N/A
DRA	50

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The three people featured in this book—Gloria Estefan, Dikembe Mutombo, and Albert Einstein—are all immigrants who moved to the United States. The circumstances that caused them to leave their countries of origin are very different, as are the areas in which they became influential. Yet their stories have two common threads: remarkable success and a strong commitment to making a contribution toward the betterment of humanity.



Gloria Estefan performs at the third annual Women Rock! Girls & Guitars, a benefit to increase breast cancer awareness, October 10, 2002.

Gloria Estefan

Gloria Estefan (Gloria Maria Milagrosa Fajardo at birth) was born in Havana, Cuba, on September 1, 1957. When she was 16 months old, her family fled the Communist government of **dictator** Fidel Castro and moved to Miami, Florida. She and her mother lived in a Miami **ghetto**.

Her father, who had been a Cuban soldier, was involved in the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, which was an unsuccessful attempt by Cuban **exiles**, backed by the United States government, to overthrow the Cuban government. Gloria's father was captured and imprisoned in Cuba for 18 months. After his release, he moved his family to Texas. Later he served in Vietnam for two years, after which the family returned to Miami in 1968.

Gloria grew up with the responsibilities of a caretaker on her shoulders. She took care of her younger sister, Rebecca, while their mother worked days and attended school at night, and she also took care of her father after he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Doctors thought his illness might be connected to a toxic chemical called Agent Orange that he was exposed to while serving in the military during the Vietnam War. The chemical was used to destroy trees and shrubs where enemy soldiers were hiding, and as a result, American soldiers were also exposed to it. Gloria cared for her father after school until she was 16, when he entered a veterans' hospital. During those long years of caretaking, Gloria took **refuge** in playing the guitar and singing in her room.

She entered the University of Miami in 1975 on a partial scholarship to study psychology and completed a bachelor's degree in 1978. Although she loved music, she was incredibly shy and could not imagine herself performing in public. One day her mother took her to a Cuban wedding where she met her future husband, Emilio Estefan, and his Cuban-American band, the Miami Latin Boys. Before long, she became an accompanist and occasional lead singer of the band.

Emilio—the group's leader and keyboard player—helped Gloria to break through her shyness. Over time, she began to sing more often and to add her own pop songs to the group's **repertoire**. The group, eventually renamed Miami Sound Machine, began releasing albums, and starting in 1984 their success began to skyrocket. At first their rising fame was supported by an exclusively Hispanic audience, but they soon became recognized by a widely mixed following that enjoyed pop, dance, soul, and Latin music. As the group became more popular, it was called Gloria Estefan and the Miami Sound Machine (to highlight her importance in the group) and eventually just Gloria Estefan.

In 1989, Gloria released her first solo album, *Cuts Both Ways*. A year later, she was in a very serious accident when a semi truck collided with her tour bus. She broke her back and was not expected to recover fully, but with great determination and hard work in physical therapy, she did recover. The shower of loving support from her many fans helped to keep her spirit strong.

She celebrated her recovery with the release of the album *Into the Light* and a year-long tour. She wanted to give something back to all the people who had cared about her after the accident. In 1992, she organized a benefit concert and raised three million dollars for the victims of Hurricane Andrew.

Gloria Estefan, with her son Nayib (right), after her 1990 accident recovery



Many successes, honors, and awards marked the following years. Today, Gloria Estefan is one of the most successful entertainers in the world. Her concerts are sold out, and her records sell by the millions.



In spring of 2010, Gloria Estefan helped organize a march in Miami, in support of The Ladies In White, protesting the Cuban government's treatment of people who speak out against it.

Her life has been strongly shaped by her family's roots as Cuban exiles, and she continues to speak out against the **tyranny** of Castro's government. Like many other exiled people around the world, she fiercely defends her culture's traditions while condemning the oppression that drove her family from their homeland. Her music and her life reflect her Cuban roots and her American upbringing, and she continues to attract an audience of millions from both cultures.



Dikembe Mutombo (left) and Tyrone Hill (right) hold the trophy presented to the Philadelphia 76ers in 2001 when they defeated the Milwaukee Bucks to win the NBA Eastern Conference Finals.

Dikembe Mutombo

Dikembe Mutombo was born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly called Zaire), in one of the poorest neighborhoods in the capital city of Kinshasa. He knows firsthand what it is like to be poor. Good fortune and talent led him to an amazingly successful basketball career in the United States. He promised to use his success to help children around the world who are growing up in poverty.

He came to the United States to attend Georgetown University on a scholarship and had plans to become a medical doctor. But Mutombo also loved basketball and felt that, with his 7'2" height, he could play professionally one day. In his second year at Georgetown, the coach asked him to play on the university team. He decided to change his academic goals and play ball. Mutombo graduated in 1991 with degrees in linguistics (the study of language) and diplomacy (the study of relations between nations). He speaks four European languages and five African dialects **fluently**.

Mutombo's career with the National Basketball Association (NBA) began in 1991. He was chosen to play for the Denver Nuggets after graduating from college. The eighth-ranked Nuggets beat the top team, the Seattle Sonics, in one of the most surprising playoff upsets ever.

He later signed a contract to play for the Atlanta Hawks. After joining the Hawks, Mutombo blossomed into the league's most dominant defensive player. He regularly led in blocked shots and also became one of the best rebounders. He won three Defensive Player of the Year awards. But what he really craved was a chance to win a championship.

When Atlanta traded him to the Philadelphia 76ers in 2001, he finally had that chance. He collected his fourth Defensive Player of the Year award in 2001, and during that year his team reached the NBA finals against the Los Angeles Lakers. Although Mutombo's team played well, the Lakers won the title. Mutombo continued to shine as one of the league's most consistently effective players. He was a true star of his game and a crowd favorite. A knee injury in 2009 prompted his retirement from professional play and allowed him to devote his full attention to many **humanitarian** projects.

Rather than bask in his sports achievements, Mutombo has used his star power to ignite support for health and education projects in the United States, in Congo, and around the world. In the United States, he has been involved with an NBA program called Strong STARTS (Strong Schools Taking Action to Reach Troubled Students), a program that helps teens with emotional problems to succeed in school. While playing for the Atlanta Hawks, he was involved in their Team Up program, which encourages students to get involved in community service, such as working in soup kitchens and homes for senior citizens.

In 1997, Mutombo established the Dikembe Mutombo Foundation. Its purpose is to improve conditions in his native country. In Congo, children die every day from illnesses that are prevented in countries with widespread **immunization** programs. Mutombo has worked to educate people in Congo about the importance of immunization and routine health care. Starting with a \$22 million construction donation from Mutombo, the foundation built a new \$30-million research center and 300-bed hospital in Kinshasa.



Dikembe Mutombo acknowledges cheers as he appears with Congo's President Joseph Kabila (right), after inaugurating the Biamba Marie Mutombo Hospital in his hometown, Kinshasa, Congo in July 2007.

Named after his mother, the Biamba Marie Mutombo Hospital treats an average of 100 people a day and provides hundreds of jobs for the area. When U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited the hospital in 2009, she told university students after the visit that Mutombo's commitment to public service stands as an example for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and for all of Africa.

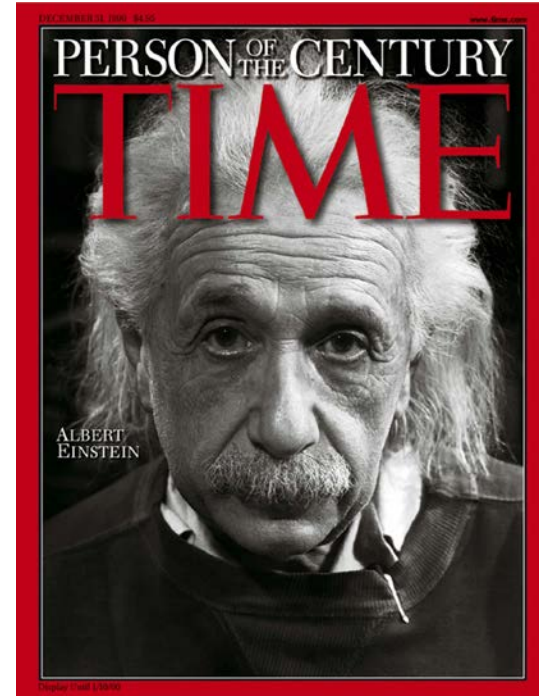
Mutombo's effect is far-reaching. He has traveled all over Africa teaching free basketball clinics and donating uniforms and equipment for teams. He provided funding and uniforms that allowed Congo's women's basketball team to attend the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta.

Once awarded for his skill at sport, Mutombo is now recognized for his ability to bring people together for common good.

The United Nations acknowledged his worldwide connections by naming him its first Youth Emissary. He continues to work with young people all over the world and speaks on behalf of the poverty-fighting organization CARE. In 2010, Mutombo was awarded the "Sports For Good" award for his work in Congo. Dikembe Mutombo is an outstanding example of an immigrant who has used his good fortune and opportunities to give something back to his country and to the rest of the world.



Dikembe Mutombo, of the Philadelphia 76ers and a United Nations Development Program Youth Emissary, is greeted by U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan in June, 2001.



Albert Einstein

How would you like to be so famous for your intelligence that when people hear the word "genius," they think of you? That's what happened to Albert Einstein. Many of his schoolteachers disliked him and thought he had no potential. Yet he became famous around the globe, and his ideas changed how we understand the world of physics—the science of matter, energy, motion, and force. He is also famous for his wild hair and, more importantly, for his passionate beliefs about world peace.

Einstein was born in Germany on March 14, 1879, to a Jewish family that owned a small shop that manufactured electrical equipment. While most children were talking by the age of two, Albert didn't begin talking until he was three. And when he entered school, he did not do well. He disliked the structure and routine imposed on students in the German schools. He found schoolwork dull and boring, and he showed little interest in classroom learning. Still, he was quick to grasp mathematics and taught himself difficult math concepts even before entering secondary school.

After several business failures, Einstein's family left Germany for Italy when Albert was 15 years old. He stayed behind in Germany but left after failing an entrance exam to a technical school where he had hoped to study to become an electrical engineer. He joined his family in Italy for a year and later completed his secondary education in Switzerland. He went on to a Swiss college and completed a program that certified him to teach math and physics. However, he was unpopular with his professors, who refused to recommend him for a teaching position.



Einstein's passport. The map's yellow areas show European countries where Einstein lived before he moved to the United States.

The late 1800s were a time of many negative prejudices, feelings, and actions against Jewish people. These attitudes, called **anti-Semitism**, were especially strong in Germany. Like many people who **emigrate** to escape **religious oppression**, Einstein left Germany because of the strong climate of anti-Semitism. In 1900, he became a citizen of Switzerland.

In 1902, Einstein got a job in a Swiss patent office where he worked for seven years. He spent his free time studying physics and playing the violin. In 1905, he earned a Ph.D. in physics from the University of Zürich. During those years, he published many professional papers on physics. His unpopular ideas were not accepted by his colleagues until experiments later proved them correct. Because Einstein's ideas were ahead of his time, few people understood them, and few people understand them today. Yet he went on to become a famous physicist and developed new thinking about how matter and energy behave.

Einstein studied many things related to physics. Before Einstein, ideas about atoms were based mainly on **speculation**. Einstein used mathematics to prove the existence of atoms. He also showed how the energy from light turns into electrical energy when it hits certain metals. For centuries before Einstein's time, scientists had disagreed about the nature of light. His work allowed them to move forward in their understanding of how these principles work.

One of Einstein's most famous theories was about how the rate of motion of an observer affects the measurement of time. For example, imagine you are on a train traveling at 60 miles per hour. You toss a ball to your brother at a speed of 15 miles per hour. To both of you, the speed of the ball will be just that—15 miles per hour. But to your mom and dad, who are on the platform at the train station, the speed of the ball's movement is the speed of the toss (15 miles per hour) plus the speed of the train (60 miles per hour), for a total of 75 miles per hour.

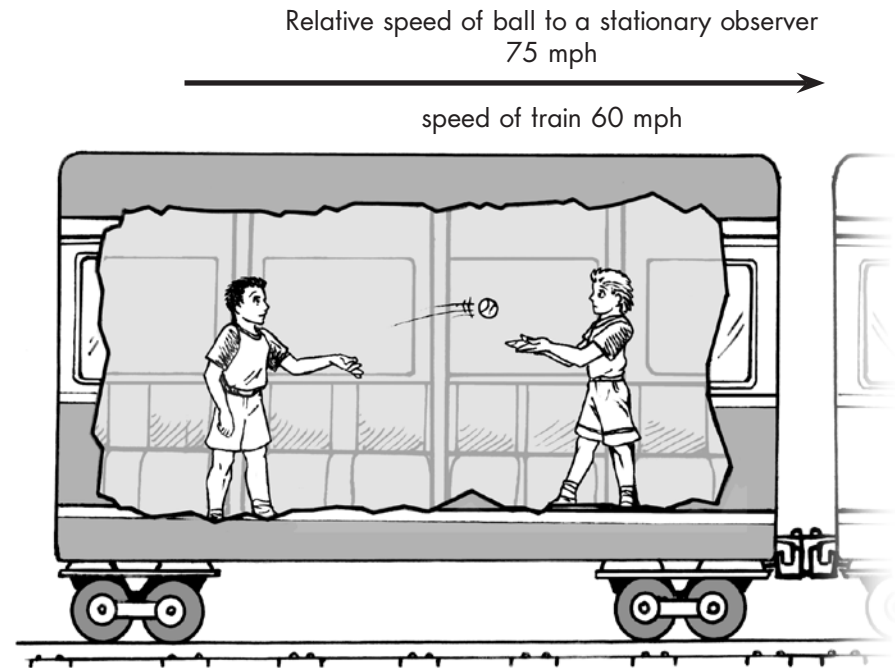


Illustration of how the ball's speed is different depending on whether the observer is inside or outside the train

This idea led Einstein to many other ideas about light, speed, and motion. These ideas are too numerous and too complicated for this book (see Explore More on page 23), but his work revised earlier ideas about motion and time that had been around for centuries. It introduced, and proved, many ideas about motion and time being relative—that is, that they are not constant in all circumstances.

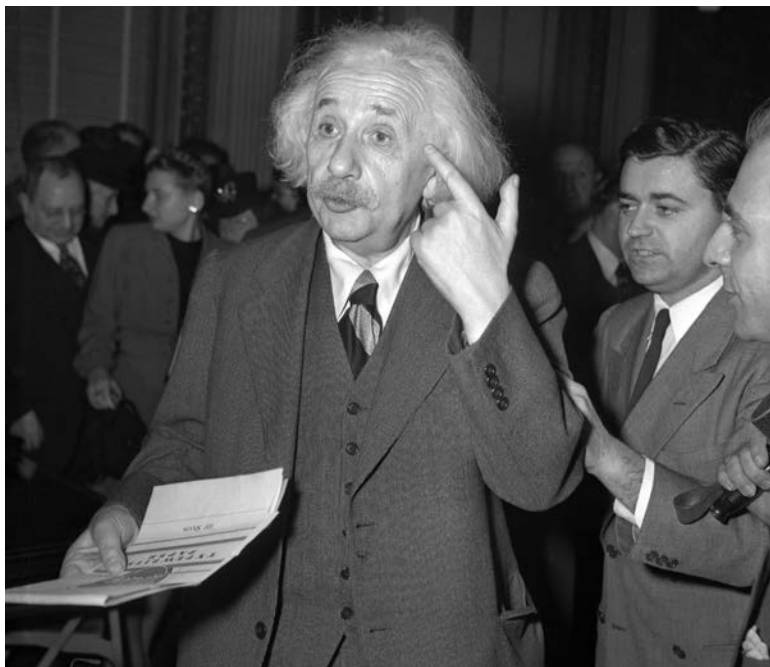
In addition to these ideas about relativity, Einstein is perhaps best known for his famous equation $E = mc^2$. E is energy, m is mass (or matter), c is the speed of light, and c^2 means “ c squared” or c multiplied times itself. This equation means that a tiny amount of matter can be converted into a huge amount of energy. This is the basis for how nuclear power works—a tiny amount of radioactive fuel such as uranium is converted into an enormous amount of heat energy.

These and other ideas brought Einstein fame in the scientific world. In 1909, he began the first of several teaching positions at universities in Europe. He was given many honors and awards, including the Nobel Prize in physics in 1922. After lecture tours in the United States, the Far East, Spain, and South America, Einstein was

again teaching in Germany when the Nazi Party won a critical election in 1925. He strongly disagreed with the Nazis’ social and political beliefs. In 1932, after his third lecture tour in the United States, Princeton University offered Einstein a part-time teaching position that would alternate with his work in Germany. He accepted and moved his family to New Jersey at the end of the year. In January of 1933, Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany and Einstein never returned to Germany. He became a U.S. citizen in 1940.



Albert Einstein, his secretary, Helen Dukas, left, and his daughter, Margaret Einstein, take the oath of U.S. citizenship.

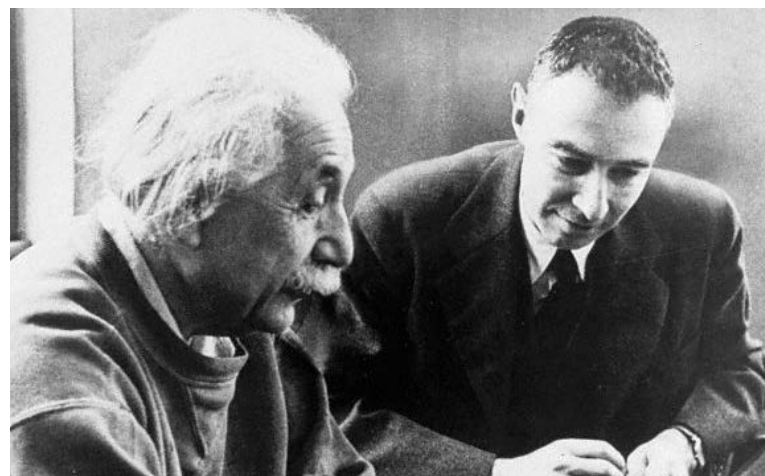


Einstein often spoke on behalf of the establishment of Israel as a separate Jewish state, peaceful solutions to international tensions, and nuclear disarmament by all nations.

Einstein was a passionate supporter of peace and **disarmament**. During World War I, he was one of the few German scholars who spoke out against Germany's involvement in the war. After the war, he was criticized harshly for his pacifist (peaceful) values.

After World War II, Einstein's plea for international disarmament increased. Although he had helped to develop the first atomic bomb, he spoke against further development or use of nuclear weapons by any nation.

Einstein died on April 18, 1955, in Princeton, New Jersey, at the age of 76. One of his legacies was the demonstration, through his own example, that one needn't be a genius in every area of life to make significant contributions. He did not speak until the age of three, failed a school entrance exam, did not excel in college, and was so absentminded that he had difficulty remembering his own address. Yet despite these shortcomings, he made enormous contributions to the understanding of how the physical world works. For those contributions, and for his vision of a peaceful world, he deserves the recognition and unique level of respect he has been accorded.



Einstein talks with physicist Robert Oppenheimer, the director of the secret Manhattan Project (to design and build an atom bomb). When he first emigrated to the United States, Einstein helped to initiate the project, and worked with Oppenheimer, but later protested against all nuclear armament.

Explore More

On the Web

In the address window, type: *www.google.com*

Then type: *Gloria Estefan*. Click on “Google Search.”

- Read the colored links. Click on one that looks interesting.
- To explore other links, click the “back” arrow on the top left until you get back to the page with the links that Google found.
- Then try searching using other words from this Leveled Reader, such as: *Dikembe Mutombo*, *Albert Einstein*, *disarmament*, *CARE*, or *Bay of Pigs Invasion*.

Books about Albert Einstein

Goldenstern, Joyce. *Albert Einstein: Physicist and Genius*. Berkeley Heights, NJ: Enslow Publishers, Inc., 1995.

McPherson, Stephanie Sammartino. *Ordinary Genius: The Story of Albert Einstein*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Carolrhoda Books, Inc., 1995.

Parker, Steve. *Albert Einstein and Relativity*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1994.

Glossary

anti-Semitism (<i>n.</i>)	prejudice or discrimination against Jews (p. 16)
dictator (<i>n.</i>)	a ruler with absolute power, especially one who rules tyrannically (see <i>tyranny</i>) (p. 4)
disarmament (<i>n.</i>)	the reduction of armed forces and weapons (p. 21)
emigrate (<i>v.</i>)	to leave a country to settle elsewhere (p. 16)
exiles (<i>n.</i>)	people forced to leave their country of origin, either because conditions are horrible or because the government has sent them away (p. 5)
fluently (<i>adv.</i>)	speaking and writing a language easily, smoothly, and expressively (p. 10)
ghetto (<i>n.</i>)	a section of a city where many members of a minority live, usually in poverty (p. 4)
humanitarian (<i>adj.</i>)	devoted to promoting the welfare of humanity, especially by eliminating pain and suffering (p. 11)
immunization (<i>adj.</i>)	inoculating or vaccinating against a disease (p. 12)
legacies (<i>n.</i>)	anything handed down by someone upon their death, such as money, property, or a message to humanity (p. 22)
refuge (<i>n.</i>)	a place of safety, comfort, or protection (p. 5)
religious oppression (<i>n.</i>)	the unjust treatment of a particular religious group (p. 16)
repertoire (<i>n.</i>)	the collection of songs, roles, plays, or operas that a group knows and can perform (p. 6)
speculation (<i>n.</i>)	based on ideas and theories, but not proven (p. 17)
tyranny (<i>n.</i>)	oppressive and unjust government; cruel and unjust use of power or authority (p. 8)