

### Focus Question:

*What can a gymnast do?*

### Book Summary

Text Type: Nonfiction/Informational

Maya is a gymnast who loves to balance, flip, climb, and bend. *I Am a Gymnast* introduces students to twelve-year-old Maya and the gymnastics routine that keeps her happy and strong. The book can also be used to teach students how to compare and contrast as well as to ask and answer questions to better understand the text.



### Lesson Essentials

#### Instructional Focus

- ☐ Ask and answer questions to understand text
- ☐ Compare and contrast ideas
- ☐ Describe information provided by photographs
- ☐ Discriminate short vowel /a/ sound
- ☐ Identify short vowel a
- ☐ Recognize and use verbs
- ☐ Place words in alphabetical order

#### Materials

- ☐ Book: *I Am a Gymnast* (copy for each student)
- ☐ Compare and contrast, short vowel a, verbs worksheets
- ☐ Discussion cards
- ☐ Book quiz
- ☐ Retelling rubric

#### Vocabulary

Boldface vocabulary words also appear in a pre-made lesson for this title on [VocabularyA-Z.com](http://VocabularyA-Z.com). (\*) word appears in the lesson but not the book.

- **High-frequency words:** *can, do, on*
- **Words to Know**  
**Story critical:** *balance* (v.), *beam* (n.), *gymnast* (n.), *split* (n.), *stretch* (v.), *trampoline* (n.)
- **Academic vocabulary:** *compare* (v.)\*, *contrast* (v.)\*

### Guiding the Reading

#### Before Reading

##### Build Background

Write the words *happy* and *strong* on the board and read them aloud to students. Discuss with students the meaning of each word. Invite them to work in small groups to discuss what they do in their lives to stay happy and strong. Provide each group with a sheet of chart paper to record and illustrate their discussions. Invite volunteers to share their discussions and posters with the class.

##### Introduce the Book

- Give students their copy of *I Am a Gymnast*. Guide them to the front and back covers and read the title. Have students discuss what they see on the covers. Encourage them to offer ideas as to what type of book it is (genre, text type, and so on) and what it might be about.
- Show students the title page. Discuss the information on the page (title of book, author's name).

#### Introduce the Reading Strategy:

##### Ask and answer questions

Explain to students that engaged readers consider what they know and don't know about a topic before beginning to read. Create a KWLS chart on the board and explain each column to students. Invite students to share their knowledge about gymnastics and record this information in the *K* column. Ask students what questions they have about being a gymnast and record these questions in the *W* column. Point out that the *L* column is to record what they have learned and the *S* column is for information they still want to know that is not included in the book.

#### Introduce the Comprehension Skill:

##### Compare and contrast

- Write the words *compare* and *contrast* on the board and read them aloud to students. Have students turn to a partner and discuss the meaning of each word. Invite students to share their discussions with the class. Explain that to compare means to look at the way things are the same and to contrast means to look at how things are different.

### Guiding the Reading (cont.)

- Create a Venn diagram on the board and label the right circle *soccer* and the left circle *football*. Invite students to share how soccer and a football are similar and different. Model how to record their responses in the Venn diagram. Explain to students that using this graphic organizer will help them to better understand and remember what they have read.

### Vocabulary

Have students turn to the “Words to Know” box on the copyright page. Point out that these words can be found in the story and that understanding the meaning of each word will help them better understand what they read. Read the words aloud to students, and as a group, discuss the meaning of each word. On the basis of the definitions discussed, have students work in groups to illustrate each vocabulary word on a poster. Have students share their posters with the class.

### Set the Purpose

- Have students read to find out more about gymnastics. Write the Focus Question on the board. Invite students to look for evidence in the book to support their answer to the question.
- Have students make a small question mark in their book beside any word they do not understand or cannot pronounce. These can be addressed in a future discussion.

### During Reading

#### Text-Dependent Questions

As students read the book, monitor their understanding with the following questions. Encourage students to support their answers by citing evidence from the book.

- *What does Maya do before doing gymnastics?* (level 1) page 4
- *What is a split?* (level 1) page 5
- *How is balancing on a beam the same as flipping on the bars? How is it different?* (level 2) pages 8 and 9
- *Why does gymnastics make Maya happy and strong?* (level 3) multiple pages
- *How do you know Maya loves gymnastics?* (level 3) multiple pages

#### Text Features: Photographs

Explain that photographs are helpful when reading because they provide the reader with important information about the topic. Have students work in small groups to review the photograph on page 5. Ask students: How does this photograph give you more information about Maya doing a split? How does this photograph give you more information than the words in the book? Have students review other

photographs in the book and discuss as a class why the author chose to include each one.

### Skill Review

- Review the questions listed in the *W* column of the KWLS chart with students. Ask volunteers to share information from the book that answered their questions and record this information in the *L* column. Invite students to share new questions that arose as they read and record them in the *W* column. Remind students that not all questions will be answered in the book and this information should be listed in the *S* column. Have students discuss where they might be able to locate more information about athletes.
- Model evaluating details to compare and contrast. **Think-aloud:** *As I read, I pause often to think about how the different activities Maya does in the book are the same and how they are different. Comparing and contrasting helps me remember and understand what I have read. For example, when I compare Maya doing a split and a handstand, I notice that there are several differences. For example, in a split, Maya’s legs and feet are on the ground, but in the handstand, her feet and legs are in the air. I will record this information in the Venn diagram where the circles overlap to show how these activities are different.*
- Have students work in small groups to identify similarities between a split and a handstand. Invite each group to share their findings and record this information in the Venn diagram.
- Model how to complete the **compare-and-contrast worksheet**. Have students work with a partner to compare their findings.

### After Reading

Ask students what words, if any, they marked in their book. Use this opportunity to model how they can read these words using decoding strategies and context clues.

### Skill Review

#### Graphic Organizer: Compare and contrast

Review the compare-and-contrast worksheet that students completed. Have students share their responses with the class.

### Comprehension Extension

**Discussion cards** covering comprehension skills and strategies not explicitly taught with the book are provided to be used for extension activities.

### Response to Focus Question

Have students cite specific evidence from the book to answer the Focus Question. (Reasons should include the following: *Gymnasts can do splits, handstands, backbends, climb ropes, and so on.*)

### Guiding the Reading (cont.)

#### Comprehension Checks

- Book quiz
- Retelling rubric

### Book Extension Activities

#### Build Skills

##### Phonological Awareness: Short vowel /a/ sound

- Say the word *hand* aloud to students, emphasizing the short vowel /a/ sound. Have students say the word aloud and then say the /a/ sound. Have students practice saying the short vowel /a/ sound to a partner.
- Read pages 6 and 7 aloud to students and have them put their hands on their head each time they hear a word containing the short vowel /a/ sound.
- Say the following word pairs and have students work with a partner to identify the word in each set that contains the short vowel /a/ sound: *kit/cat*, *pat/pit*, *fan/fun*, *hat/hit*.
- **Check for understanding:** Say the following words one at a time and have students jump when they hear a word that contains the short vowel /a/ sound: *raft*, *jump*, *stack*, *bars*, *mask*, *raise*, *flat*, *snack*, *same*.

##### Phonics: Short vowel a

- Write the words *happy* on the board and read it aloud with students.
- Have students say the /a/ sound aloud. Then, run your finger under the letters in the word *happy* as students say the whole word aloud. Ask students to identify which letter represents the short vowel /a/ sound in the word *happy*.
- Repeat with the word *back*. Ask students how the words *happy* and *back* are the same (*they both contain short vowel a*).
- Write the following words on the board, leaving out the short vowel a: *pass*, *sat*, *nap*, *mat*, *bath* and *cat*. Invite volunteers to come to the board and add the short vowel a to each word and read the word aloud.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students work with a partner to reread the book and circle all the words containing the short vowel a. Review students' findings as a class.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [short vowel a worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their answers.

##### Grammar and Mechanics: Verbs

- Review or explain that *verbs* are words that name actions. Have each student name one verb and record it on the board. Select several verbs for the class to act out.

- Have students read the first sentence on page 8 aloud with you. Ask them to identify the verb (*balance*).
- Write several sentences from the book on the board. Invite volunteers to come to the board and circle the verb in each sentence. Have the class say each verb aloud.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students reread the book with a partner and underline all of the verbs. Invite each group to share one verb from the book and have the rest of the class act it out.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [verbs worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their answers.

##### Word Work: Alphabetical order

- Write the words *flip*, *balance*, and *split* on the board and read them aloud to students. Explain that words can be placed in alphabetical order. Point out that when putting words in alphabetical order, the words are organized by where the first letter of each word appears in the alphabet. Review the alphabet with students pointing to each letter as it is named. Model how to place the words in correct order.
- Write the following word sets on the board: *jump*, *stand*, *run*; *beam*, *stretch*, *gymnast*; *strong*, *happy*, *love*. Underline the first letter of each word. Have students work with a partner to discuss which word in each set would come first in alphabetical order and why. Have students share their findings with the class.
- **Check for understanding:** Write the following words on flashcards and distribute them to volunteers: *handstand*, *backbend*, *split*, *rope*, *climb*, *gymnast*. Invite the volunteers to the front of the class and have them hold each flashcard so it is visible to the entire class. Invite two volunteers to the front of the class to help arrange the students in correct order. Have the remainder of the class give a thumbs-up signal if the words have been placed in correct alphabetical order. Repeat this process with another set of words and new volunteers.

##### Connections

- See the back of the book for cross-curricular extension ideas.