

Student Guide

“I Am the Greatest” by James Bird

“I Am the Greatest”

By James Bird

PERSONAL NARRATIVE



Guiding Question

What might failure teach us that success cannot?

Preview Key Concepts and Skills

Instructions: As you read the text, explore key concepts and skills to help you understand the author’s craft. Learning more about the intentional choices authors make will help you write your own narrative in a more powerful way.

Before You Read

- Complete the [Quick Journal](#) (Student Guide)
- Complete the [Build Your Vocabulary](#) activity (Student Guide)
- Read the **Overview** in “I Am the Greatest” by James Bird (Online)
- Complete **Connect** (Online) and the [Share Your Personal Connection](#) reflection (Student Guide)

Read

- **Read** “I Am the Greatest” by James Bird (Online)
- Complete the **Check** section of “I Am the Greatest” by James Bird (Online)
- Complete the **Pause and Reflect** (Online) and [Share Your Reflections](#) activity (Student Guide)

Analyze

- Complete **Analyze** in “I Am the Greatest” by James Bird (Online)
- Complete **Determining Theme and Author’s Message in a Personal Narrative** lesson (Online)
- Complete [Apply Your Learning](#) (Student Guide)
- Review **Verbs** lesson (Online)
- Complete [Write to Impress](#) (Student Guide)

Write

- **Summarize** “I Am the Greatest” by James Bird (Online)
- Complete [Appreciate the Author’s Craft](#) (Student Guide)
- Complete **Develop** step (Online) and [Share Your Plan](#) (Student Guide)
- Complete your **Draft** for “I Am the Greatest” by James Bird (Online)
- **Review** your Draft for “I Am the Greatest” by James Bird (Online)

What might failure teach us that success cannot?

Instructions: Describe a time when you failed at something. What did you learn from that experience? What did the experience of failing teach you that succeeding might not have?

Example: I failed my first math test in middle school because I didn't study. It taught me that, in middle school, I need to study for tests and get help from my math teacher if I don't understand something. Had I passed, I might not have ...

[illegible]

Build Your Vocabulary

Map a Word: *ancestors, failure, self-awareness*

Instructions: Analyzing vocabulary will help you better understand, discuss, and write about a text. Complete the analysis of vocabulary terms for the selection. Use a dictionary if necessary. Fill in as many parts as you can.

Vocabulary Word and Definition

Part of Speech

Root Word or Origin

Picture of Vocabulary Word

Synonym (similar or like word)

Antonym (opposite word)

Sentence Using Vocabulary Word

Focus Words

Grade 8, Unit 1, Module 2

Focus Words (Assessed in Reading Comprehension)

- Catastrophe (noun): disastrous event
- Daunting (adj.): intimidating, creating the feeling that something is not achievable
- Ejected (verb): forced someone or something to leave
- Faulty (adj.): defective or imperfect
- Stunned (verb): shocked with disbelief and unable to react

Vocabulary is a gateway to comprehension.

[Link to Unit Vocabulary Slides](#)

Share Your Personal Connection

Think-Pair-Share

Instructions: Open the lesson for “**I Am the Greatest**” by James Bird.

1. **Think:** After reading about the topic in the **Overview**, think about your experiences related to the topic. Respond to the Personal Connection in the **Connect** section on your own.
2. **Pair & Share:** With a partner, group, or a trusted listener, share the parts of your response that you feel comfortable sharing.
3. **Reflect:** If time permits, reflect on your experience with others. What ideas did others share that you hadn't considered? How were your ideas alike?

Share Your Reflections

Instructions: During or after you have finished reading, go back and find the questions in the text marked **Pause and Reflect**. These questions will help you connect the text to yourself, to other texts, or to the world around you.

Use the space on the left below to answer the reflection questions. Then, discuss your answers, noting how they were similar or different.

Record "Pause and Reflect" answers here:

Record discussion reflections here:

Apply Your Learning

Determining Theme and Author's Message in a Personal Narrative

Instructions: After reviewing **Determining Theme and Author's Message in a Personal Narrative** as a group, discuss: *What message is the author trying to convey about self-confidence through the challenges assigned by his mother?*

At the beginning of this story, how would you describe the author's self-image? What examples from the text illustrate this?

What do each of his mother's challenges have in common? Which challenge sticks out to you as being particularly transformative for the author, and why?

On Day 6, what realizations does the author begin to have? What begins to feel different for him?

Overall, based on the author's reflections on Day 7, what do you think the author's message is about self-confidence, resilience, and failure?

Personal Reflection: What moments do you recall in your own life where you experienced a setback or a failure? How did you respond?

Write to Impress

Understand Active vs. Passive Verbs

Active verbs place the emphasis on the subject performing the action, while passive verbs focus on the subject receiving the action.

Read the passage:

Antonio was fair, lean, and lanky, while Felix was dark, short, and husky. Antonio's hair was always falling over his eyes, while Felix wore his black hair in a natural Afro style.

Active: Felix wore his black hair in a natural Afro style.

The subject, Felix, is performing the action.

Passive: Antonio's hair was always falling over his eyes.

The subject, Antonio's eyes, is receiving the action.

Active vs. Passive Verbs

Instructions: Review the Direct Instruction **Verbs**. Using the chart below, revise the sentences by using **active verbs** rather than **passive verbs** to make the sentences more dynamic and engaging. Then explain how you changed the sentence from passive to active.

Chloe's birthday present was given by Kayla.

*Example: Kayla gave the birthday present to Chloe.
Kayla is the subject performing the action of giving the present.*

The school play was performed by eighth graders from Mr. Meyer's class.

The new puppy was taken on its first walk by my neighbor.

For more active verb practice, click [here](#) to access Quill's lessons

Appreciate the Author's Craft

Bird does a masterful job of establishing setting, point of view, and characters in his narrative. The narrative techniques he uses bring readers into his world in an engaging and descriptive way.

Instructions: Below is part of the rubric that you will use as you develop your own personal narrative at the end of the unit. Under each row of the rubric shown, find an example or two from the text that show how the author accomplishes the Advanced level. Copy the sentences or phrases into the page.

	Advanced
Establishing Setting, Point of View, and Characters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This narrative clearly establishes a well-developed context and a point of view and skillfully introduces a narrator and/or characters/people.
Your examples from the text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Narrative Techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This piece of writing includes a variety of narrative techniques such as engaging dialogue, strategic pacing, vivid descriptions, and effective reflection to develop experiences, events, and/or characters/people. This narrative uses precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events vividly and thoroughly.
Your examples from the text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Share Your Plan

Once you have completed **Develop**, Share Your Plan with others. Listen to how they respond to the same question. Ask questions and give feedback to help strengthen your partners' reasons and evidence and reasoning. Listen to your peers' ideas and incorporate their feedback into your writing.

Instructions: Based on evidence from the text, respond to the following prompt: *Using evidence from the text, what message is the author trying to convey about self-confidence through the challenges assigned by his mother?*

Share Your Plan	Listen to peers and record valuable ideas
Claim:	Claim:
Evidence/examples:	Evidence/examples:
Reasoning/Elaboration/Analysis (Explaining why you chose that evidence):	Reasoning/Elaboration/Analysis (Explaining why you chose that evidence):