



**Classroom Guide for**  
**Silent Star: The Story of Deaf Major**  
**Leaguer William Hoy**  
Written by Bill Wise  
Illustrated by Adam Gustavson

### Reading Level

\*Reading Level: Grades 3–4

Interest Level: Grades 1–6

Guided Reading Level: N

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: 5.4/ .5

\*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

### Themes

Sports (baseball)/Sports History, Disability/Deafness, Deaf Athletes, Trailblazers, Discrimination, Dreams and Aspirations, Childhood Experiences and Memories, Overcoming Obstacles/Adversity, Persistence/Determination, Achieving a Goal, Peer Teasing

### Synopsis

William Hoy loved baseball. Growing up in the 1860s and 1870s, he dreamed of one day playing in the major leagues. A far-off fantasy for many boys, fulfilling this dream was even more of a long shot for William, who was deaf.

Striving to find his place in a hearing world, Hoy became a shoemaker. He took pride in his work, but baseball was still his real love. When an amateur team coach saw him playing behind the shoemaker's shop, Hoy dazzled the coach with his hard-hitting skills. Moving from amateur clubs to the minor leagues and eventually to the majors, Hoy proved himself again and again—overcoming obstacles and becoming a star both on and off the baseball diamond.

A historic moment in his career came when Hoy eventually batted against the deaf pitcher, Luther Taylor. This would be the first and only time a deaf batter would face a deaf pitcher in a major league game.

After retirement from the major leagues, Hoy continued to serve as a role model and leader in the deaf community. He led a successful dairy farm business for more than twenty years and coached in deaf baseball leagues.

*Silent Star: The Story of Deaf Major Leaguer William Hoy* is a tribute to one of the most inspirational figures in baseball history. A talented player with a standout record, Hoy is a

shining example that success in life should not be measured by differences but by drive and determination.

## BACKGROUND

*On “dumb” vs. “deaf”:* One of the original meanings of the word *dumb* was “lacking the power of speech,” and during the time William Hoy lived (1860s—1960s), the word was used to refer to a person who did not speak. The nickname Dummy was sometimes given to such a person. Today, using *dumb* is derogatory, and the nickname is offensive to those who are deaf. *Deaf* is the term of identity that is embraced by the community of deaf people who communicate with sign language.

*On William Hoy (from the Afterword):* Of the tens of thousands of players who have made their careers in major league baseball, William Ellsworth “Dummy” Hoy (1862–1961) ranks in the top twenty-five in the following all-time career statistics: stolen bases, assists by an outfielder, and double plays by an outfielder. Hoy threw right-handed and batted left-handed, and racked up numerous statistics that remain impressive when compared with those of many of baseball’s all-time greatest players. Some baseball historians credit Hoy with influencing the use of hand signals by umpires. Hoy’s involvement began when he played on the Oshkosh team and developed a method for following the home plate’s umpire calls. Other historians contend that umpires began using hand signals several years after Hoy left the game.

*On Baseball in the 19th Century:* Since the mid-nineteenth century, baseball has been nicknamed and regarded as America’s Pastime. With European influences brought by various immigrant communities over time, the game evolved from a children’s game to professional leagues. Baseball migrated from farms to the cities in the nineteenth century and had distinct versions in Massachusetts, New York, and Philadelphia, among others. The New York version eventually dominated and most resembles modern-day baseball. The first World Series was held in 1903. Racial segregation (“the color line”) in baseball was established, implicitly and explicitly, in the 1880s and Jackie Robinson in 1947 was the first African American to break the color line in major league baseball when he joined the Brooklyn Dodgers.

*Biographies on William Hoy:* This is the first and only children’s book about William Hoy currently available. In fact, there are no adult biographies about William Ellsworth Hoy.

## BEFORE READING

### Pre-reading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

1. Take a look at the front and back cover. Take a picture walk. Ask students to make a prediction. Do you think this book will be fiction or nonfiction? How do you know? What clues do the author and illustrator give you to help you know whether this book will be fiction or nonfiction?
2. What do you know about stories that are biographies? What kinds of things happen in biographies? What are some things that will not happen in biographies? Why do authors write biographies? How do you think their reasons differ from authors who write fiction? What are some of the characteristics of a biography?

3. What does it mean to be deaf? What types of challenges do people who are deaf face?
4. What do you know about baseball? How do you play? How do you score points to win? What are some positions on a team? What does the person playing each position do?
5. Why do you think I chose this book for us to read today?

### Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

Read and talk about the title of the book. Ask students what they think the title means. Then ask them what they think this book will most likely be about and who the book might be about. What places might be talked about in the text? What do you think might happen? What information do you think you're going to learn? What makes you think that?

Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, afterword, illustrations, and photographs.

### Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out who William Hoy was, what the title *Silent Star* refers to, and why the author, Bill Wise, would want to share this story with children.

### VOCABULARY

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below. Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

#### BASEBALL SPECIFIC

umpire/ump	major league baseball	base runner	home plate
pitcher's mound	minor league baseball	batting average	outfielder
batter's box	strike one, two, three	ground ball	base hit

#### ACADEMIC

erupted	commotion	rural	infection
personable	handkerchiefs	apprentice	toiling
read lips	American Sign Language	tedious	diligently
temporarily	amateur	marveled	distinguished
unnerved	rapid	abruptly	bewildered
dazzled	dismal	anticipated	dumb
derogatory	offensive	consistently	crammed
superb	opposition	admired	stance
unleashed	historic	obstacles	

## AFTER READING

### Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite evidence with their answers.**

#### Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1 and 3)

1. What happened on the first four pages of the book? What did we learn about William Hoy? What did he do? How did the crowd react? Why did they react that way? What was William Hoy's historic accomplishment?
2. What is meningitis? What was the consequence of William Hoy's illness? What did he do to overcome this obstacle? How do you know?
3. What did you learn about William Hoy's childhood? What obstacles did he face? How did he react?
4. What parts of William Hoy's life changed when he went to the Ohio School for the Deaf? What parts stayed the same? What was his favorite part of the experience?
5. What is American Sign Language? How did it help William Hoy?
6. What was William Hoy's dream? Did he think his dream was realistic? Why or why not?
7. What big thing happened to William Hoy in June 1885? How did this big thing change William Hoy's life?
8. Who was Luther Taylor? Why was hitting against him an important moment for William Hoy and baseball? What happened when they met on the playing field?
9. What did William Hoy do after he retired from baseball? How did his life change? What things remained important to him?

#### Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strand 6)

1. At what point in William Hoy's life did the author, Bill Wise, choose to begin? Why do you think he chose to start there and not at the chronological beginning? How did this choice affect how you read the story?
2. What did the author do to make the first four pages in the text exciting? What words did he use and what details did he choose to include to help create this mood of excitement?
3. What perspective did the author use to tell William Hoy's story? First person? Second person? Third person? What tone did Bill Wise use in his writing? Formal or informal? How did these choices affect how you read the story?
4. How do you think William Hoy felt about the way others treated him as a child? How do you know?
5. How did William Hoy's experience at the Ohio School for the Deaf shape him as a person? Was it a positive or negative experience? What makes you think that?
6. How did the coach for the amateur baseball team react to William Hoy as a baseball player? As a person? Why do you think he reacted in this way? How do you know?
7. How did the public react to William Hoy as a baseball player? How did William Hoy respond? How did he change the way he played baseball to accommodate his deafness? How did this change impact the way baseball was played?
8. What did the word "dumb" mean in the late 1800s? What does it mean today? How has the meaning of the word changed over time? How did William Hoy feel about being called "Dummy?" If he were living and playing today, do you think he would have the same reaction or a different reaction? What makes you think that?

9. What information from the text do you predict that you'll remember the longest? Why? What makes you think that?
10. Why do you think Bill Wise wanted to write this story for children? What is the lesson/moral/author's message of the story? What do you think Bill Wise wanted readers to walk away thinking and feeling? Why do you think he wanted readers to respond this way?

### Literature Circles

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

If you use literature circles during reading time, students might find the following suggestions helpful in focusing on the different roles of the group members.

- The **Questioner** might use questions similar to the ones in the Discussion Question section of this guide.
- The **Passage Locator** might look for lines or sentences in the story that explain new vocabulary words.
- The **Illustrator** might create a diagram of a baseball field and label the different positions team members play.
- The **Connector** might find other books written about famous athletes with disabilities.
- The **Summarizer** might provide a brief summary of the group's reading and discussion points for each meeting.
- The **Investigator** might look for information about deafness and the hearing-impaired.

\*There are many resource books available with more information about organizing and implementing literature circles. Three such books you may wish to refer to are: GETTING STARTED WITH LITERATURE CIRCLES by Katherine L. Schlick Noe and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 1999), LITERATURE CIRCLES: VOICE AND CHOICE IN BOOK CLUBS AND READING GROUPS by Harvey Daniels (Stenhouse, 2002), and LITERATURE CIRCLES RESOURCE GUIDE by Bonnie Campbell Hill, Katherine L. Schlick Noe, and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 2000).

### Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3, Craft & Structure, Strands 4–6, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and make personal connections to the book. Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. Describe William Hoy. What were his defining characteristics? How did he demonstrate these characteristics in his lifetime? How you would describe him to someone who knew nothing about him?
2. What in the story reminds you of a moment in your own life? Which parts of the story did you connect to the most? Which parts of the story did you connect to the least? Why?
3. Think about how the book ended. Why do you think the author chose to tell us about how William Hoy spent his time after he left major league baseball? What additional

information did we learn about William Hoy? Why do you think the author chose to include the Afterword? What additional information did we learn about William Hoy?

4. Have students write a book recommendation for this story explaining why they would or would not recommend this book to other students.
5. William Hoy had a big dream to one day be a baseball player. What dream do you have? What will you need to do to achieve that dream? Why is it important to study people who achieved their dreams?

### **ELL Teaching Activities**

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
  - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
  - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about what they admire about a character or central figure in the story.
5. The story contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

### **INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES**

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Student who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

### **Social Studies**

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

1. Ask students to research baseball in the late 1800s. How was the game played? Who were the important players? Who was allowed to play and who wasn't? Why did baseball become such a popular sport for so many? Research why baseball was an important part of the American experience.

2. Have students compare and contrast the book about William Hoy with other sports biographies, including those about [Jim Thorpe](#), [Joe Louis](#), [Louis Sockalexis](#), [Marcenia Lyle](#), and [Duke Kahanamoku](#). How were these leaders' experiences similar? What character traits did they share that allowed them to overcome obstacles? What legacies did they leave behind? How did they change people's minds and society?

### **Social Studies/Sports**

1. Ask students to research other important deaf athletes and their contributions to their sport and to the deaf community as a whole.

### **Math**

#### **(Mathematics, Operations and Algebraic Thinking)**

1. Statistics are a huge part of understanding baseball. Introduce students to the general concepts of batting averages. What is a good batting average? What is a poor batting average? Ask students to research their favorite baseball players and present that information in a variety of ways (charts, graphs, rankings, etc.).
2. Have students compare how Hoy's batting average improved from one season to the next. What was the difference between Hoy's first season in minor league baseball and his second season?
3. Baseball stats and Hoy's life lend themselves to concrete word problems. Consider creating word problems such as: If Hoy was born in 1862 and died in 1961, how old was he when he passed away? If Hoy started playing in the major leagues in 1888 and retired from baseball in 1902, how many years did he play in the major leagues? How many years ago did Hoy last play baseball? If Hoy were alive today, how old would he be?

### **Science**

#### **(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)**

1. Ask students to research the following questions: What is deafness? What are some of the causes? What are some of the symptoms? What are some of the challenges that people with hearing limitations deal with on a daily basis?
2. There are many resources and science experiments that explain the biomechanics of pitching. Additionally, have students practice throwing a baseball and determining how body position and physics affect the speed and accuracy of a pitch. Check out this science experiment at [Science Buddies](#). Other science experiments and games can be found at [Science Buddies](#) and at [Exploratorium](#).
3. Study the human anatomy in relation to baseball. What muscles are involved in throwing and hitting a baseball? How do athletes train to improve their games?

### **Home-School Connection**

#### **(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)**

#### **(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3)**

#### **(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strand 2 and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strand 7)**

1. Invite students to interview their parents or grandparents about athletes or celebrities they saw in their lifetimes who had to overcome obstacles. What challenges did that person face (racism, sexism, ableism, ageism, etc.)? How did the sports or entertainment community react? How did spectators and fans react? What character traits did those people need to succeed?
2. Invite students to interview a local sport league coach, referee, former athlete, or current high school/college athlete. How did that person get to where he or she is

today? Who helped the person get there? What qualities did it take to achieve success? What advice does he or she have for someone following a dream?

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Bill Wise** is the author of Lee & Low's *Louis Sockalexis: Native American Baseball Pioneer*, winner of the Carter G. Woodson Book Award and the Children's Book Award from the International Reading Association. An avid baseball fan, Wise first heard about William Hoy when he was a child. Years later, after further research, Wise was inspired to bring Hoy's remarkable story to young readers in *Silent Star: The Story of Deaf Major Leaguer William Hoy*. In addition to writing books, Wise teaches eighth-grade math and language arts. He and his family live in Gorham, Maine.

### ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**Adam Gustavson** has illustrated more than twenty highly-praised books for children, among them *The Yankee at the Seder*, recipient of a Sydney Taylor Book Award Honor. In spite of his lack of baseball-playing skill, Gustavson enthusiastically embraced William Hoy's story and spent months researching baseball rules, uniforms, and stadiums in use during Hoy's lifetime. Gustavson is also a part-time art educator at the college level. He lives in West Orange, New Jersey, with his wife and their two sons. His website is [adamgustavson.com](http://adamgustavson.com).

### Book Information

\$18.95, HARDCOVER

978-1-60060-411-9

40 pages, 7-3/4 x 10-3/4

\*Reading Level: Grades 3–4

\*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Interest Level: Grades 1–6

Guided Reading Level: N

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: 5.4/.5

Themes: Sports (baseball)/Sports History, Disability/Deafness, Deaf Athletes, Trailblazers, Discrimination, Dreams and Aspirations, Childhood Experiences and Memories, Overcoming Obstacles/Adversity, Persistence/Determination, Achieving a Goal, Peer Teasing

### RESOURCES ON THE WEB

Learn more about *Silent Star: The Story of Deaf Major Leaguer William Hoy* at [http://www.leeandlow.com/books/436/hc/silent\\_star\\_the\\_story\\_of\\_deaf\\_major\\_leaguer\\_william\\_hoy](http://www.leeandlow.com/books/436/hc/silent_star_the_story_of_deaf_major_leaguer_william_hoy)

Copyright © 1997-2013 The Active Learner  
Lee & Low Books, all rights reserved.  
For questions, comments and/or more information  
please contact us at [general@leeandlow.com](mailto:general@leeandlow.com)  
act us at [general@leeandlow.com](mailto:general@leeandlow.com)