

Tallchief: America's Prima Ballerina
Discussion Guide
Grades K-3

Before Reading: to activate schema, build background knowledge, and set a purpose.

- Activate prior knowledge: What does the word “tribal” mean related to indigenous nations, lands, and people?
- Frontload vocabulary: barre, prima ballerina, forbidden, graceful, reservation, troupe

During Reading: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections.

- What do think was the reason that women were not allowed to dance in tribal ceremonies?
- What was the reason that Maria Tallchief’s family decided to move to Los Angeles?
- What do you think were the reasons Maria Tallchief chose dance over piano?
- Do you think Maria Tallchief became a role model? Think of reasons why as you read.

After Reading: to summarize, question, and reflect.

Make a chart of three (3) other prima ballerinas in addition to Maria Tallchief, past & present. Read about their childhood, their passion for ballet, and their challenges in achieving their dance goals. Compare & contrast the four (4) prima ballerinas.

If your students enjoyed this book...

- Encourage them to continue to discuss it and refer to it in other lessons and conversations.
- Let them explore more about the topic by reading other books with similar themes, structure, characters, or content.