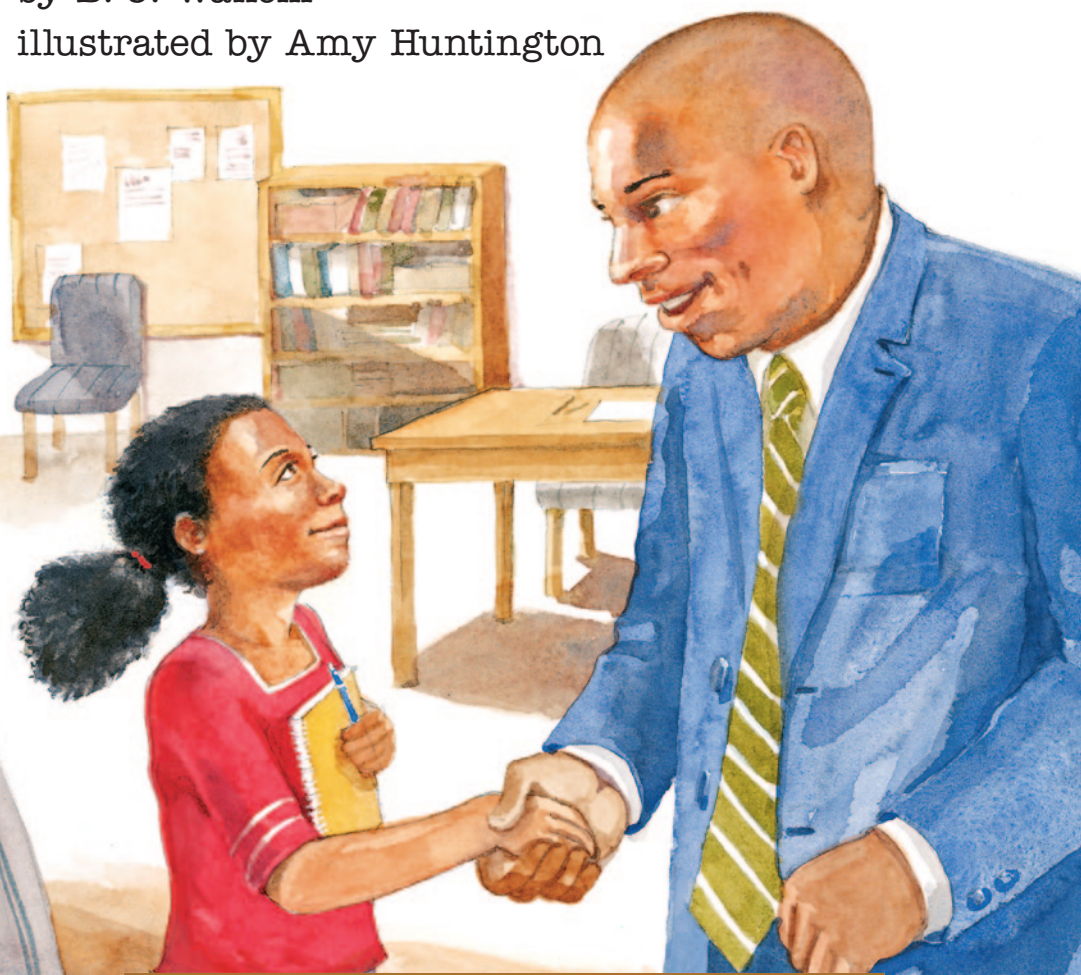


The Big Interview

by B. J. Wallom

illustrated by Amy Huntington



HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT

The Big Interview



by B. J. Wallom

illustrated by Amy Huntington



HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT

Copyright © by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying or recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner unless such copying is expressly permitted by federal copyright law. Requests for permission to make copies of any part of the work should be addressed to Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, Attn: Contracts, Copyrights, and Licensing, 9400 South Park Center Loop, Orlando, Florida 32819.

Printed in the U.S.A.

ISBN: 978-0-547-89057-9

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 XXXX 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12

4500000000

A B C D E F G

If you have received these materials as examination copies free of charge, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt School Publishers retains title to the materials and they may not be resold. Resale of examination copies is strictly prohibited.

Possession of this publication in print format does not entitle users to convert this publication, or any portion of it, into electronic format.

Brenda Taylor woke at sunrise. This was her big day. She couldn't stop thinking about it. She imagined what she would say—and what *he* would say.

Brenda was a reporter for her school newspaper. Today, she would interview Rashad Fuller, the star linebacker for the Blue Bay Pelicans pro football team. Fuller, a community hero, visited his old elementary school every year.

Brenda had asked the editor of the school paper if she could interview Fuller this year. He **granted** her request.



Brenda practices for her interview with Rashad Fuller.



Brenda imagines being a tennis champion.



For the fifth grader, this was a dream come true. Brenda idolized many athletes. She wanted to follow in their footsteps. Right now, her sport was tennis. Sometimes, Brenda would lie in bed late at night and think about winning the championship at Wimbledon. Her parents arranged for her to have tennis lessons once a week. In return, she always had to finish her homework.

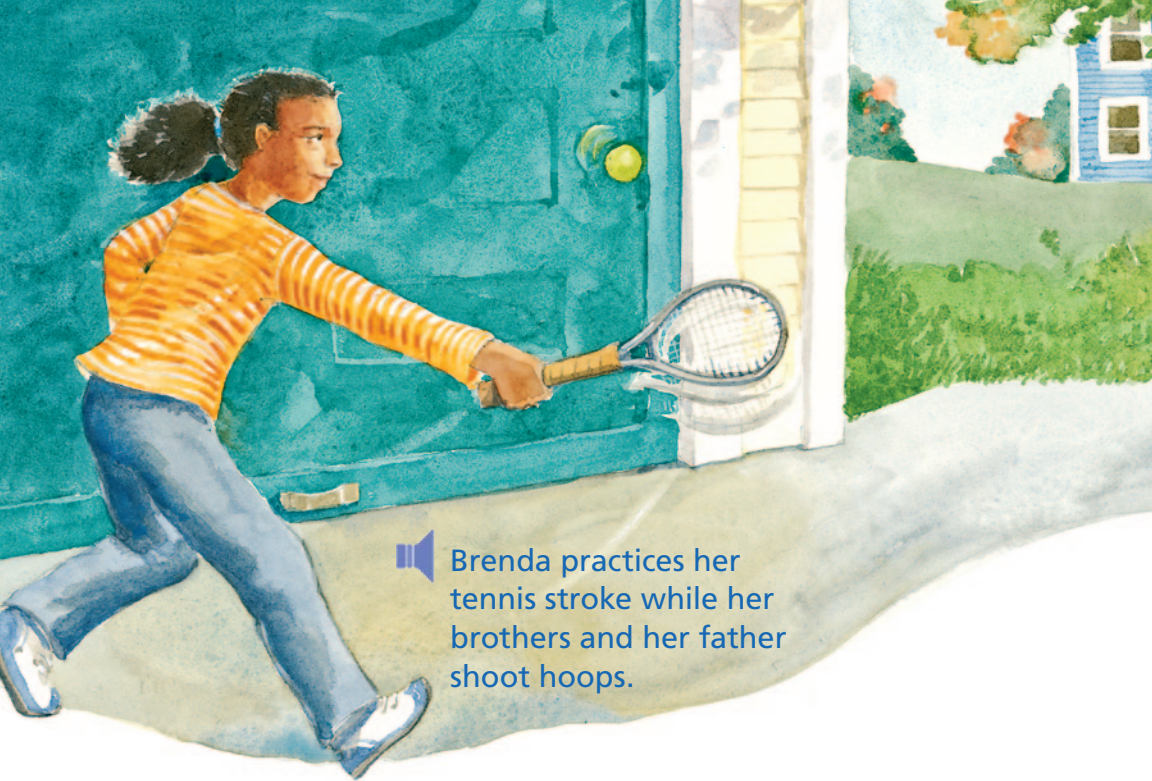


When Brenda came home with the news of her big interview, her two older brothers began giving her questions to ask Fuller.

“What does he eat?” Brandon said.

“How often does he lift weights?” Bryan said.

Brenda’s big interview seemed to be on everyone’s mind.



Brenda practices her tennis stroke while her brothers and her father shoot hoops.



The interview was important to everyone—except Brenda’s father. He would have been just as excited if her interview was with the school principal. Dr. Philip Taylor believed sports were an important part of life. He encouraged his children to stay fit and play sports. But he wanted his children not only to take care of their bodies, but also to develop their minds.

“Work hard in all areas, and many things are possible,” he often said. “You cannot be dependent on just one thing.”



At breakfast that morning, Brenda's father asked, "Are you ready for your big moment?"

"Yes, Dad," she said, "I'm in good shape."

Fuller was known by nearly everyone in Blue Bay. He was the only Pelicans player who had been born in the city. Because he had done so much for the children of Blue Bay, the city council had even passed an ordinance making his birthday Rashad Fuller Day.

"I think it's great that you look up to Rashad," Dr. Taylor said. "Just keep in mind there are many role models in our community." Dr. Taylor often told his children how the words of one great individual had changed his life.


When Dr. Taylor was young, Arthur Ashe, the great tennis player, visited his school. Ashe was already famous for his tournament victories.

During his visit, Ashe **urged** students to choose doctors, engineers, and teachers as role models, *not* athletes. He said that it was very difficult to become a professional athlete. Understanding this was important for many young people who thought sports were the way to wealth and fame. Ashe told students to set high goals and study hard. If they did, many other rewarding careers would be open to them.

Young Philip Taylor listened and learned. He continued to play sports. But his studies began to come first.




Arthur Ashe holds his Wimbledon trophy high.

 Brenda and her brothers were all too familiar with their father's story. Once more, they listened politely as he recalled the day Arthur Ashe visited his school.


Then the Taylor children rushed off to school. Brandon and Bryan were, as usual, wearing their Pelicans jerseys.

At school, Brenda was greeted like a celebrity.


 "Ask him how I can become a professional football player," her friend Darren Johnson said.

"Find out how much money he makes," Sandra Sanchez said.


"Ask him what kind of car he drives," Jimmy Shapiro said.

 Brenda's friends tell her what to ask Rashad Fuller.



 Brenda's head was filled with ideas. Finally, the hour arrived. She was called from her classroom to meet with Rashad Fuller in the principal's office.

Brenda was surprised when she walked into the office. Fuller wasn't what she expected. He didn't look like the player she saw on TV. That player was huge. He ran all over the field. He made big plays. He shared high fives with his teammates.

 Rashad Fuller looked like someone who worked in a bank. He was wearing a blue suit. He looked serious but seemed friendly and polite. For some reason, he reminded Brenda of her father.

"Hello," Brenda said. She shook Rashad Fuller's hand. "I'm Brenda Taylor."




Brenda tries to stay cool when she meets Rashad Fuller.



 Brenda started the interview by asking Fuller how he got started in sports.

“I was always good at football,” he said. “In high school, it became obvious that I was better than the other boys. Football became the most important thing in my life.” He told Brenda how his fame spread. Colleges around the country talked to him. He was offered athletic scholarships. He chose the University of Michigan.

 But in his senior year of high school, Fuller injured his knee. He was unable to play any more that year. “That’s when I met my hero, my role model,” Fuller told Brenda.

“Who was that?” she asked him. “Ronde Barber? Marcus Allen?” They were all-star pro footballers when Fuller was in high school.

“No,” Fuller said. He smiled. “My hero was Dr. Philip Taylor. He treated my knee.”

“My dad?” Brenda blurted out.


 “Dr. Taylor is your father?” Fuller asked.
Brenda nodded.

“Yes, you do look like him,” Fuller smiled.


Her father was Rashad Fuller’s inspiration!
Brenda naturally wanted to hear more. “Why was my dad your hero?” she asked.

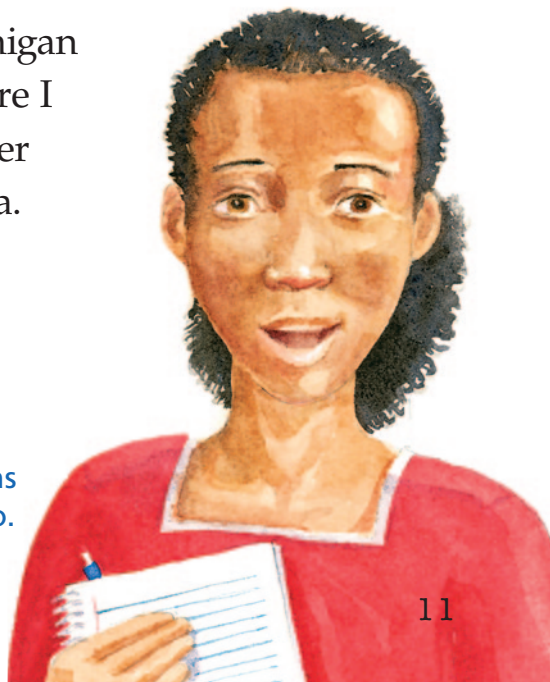
“Because he said that all things were possible if I worked hard,” Fuller said.

Brenda smiled. “That sounds very familiar,” she said.

 Fuller told Brenda how her father had advised him to become the best football player he could. But Dr. Taylor also told Fuller to take advantage of other opportunities.

“He explained that Michigan was a great university where I could study for a career after football,” Fuller told Brenda.

 Brenda is amazed to learn her dad was Rashad Fuller’s hero.





Rashad Fuller's high school team



“But what about sports?” Brenda blurted out. “My friends all want to be like you.”

Rashad Fuller's answer shocked her. “They’ll probably never be like me,” he said.

He told Brenda how lucky he was. He said that of the 60 players on his high school team, only six went on to play football in college. Of the 100 players on his college team, only three had careers as professional football players.



Yet, Fuller continued, many of his college teammates had successful careers outside of sports. One owned a computer company. Another former player was a judge. Several teammates were police officers. Fuller also told Brenda that after four years of playing professional football, he knew his time was running out.

🔊 “I’m 26 years old,” Fuller said. “I can’t imagine playing past 30.” He mentioned his knee, which had already required four operations. “If my knee gets hit hard again, I may need another. But I’m ready for my next job.”

Brenda asked him what that might be.

“At Michigan, I studied to become a doctor like your father,” he said. “When I retire from football, I’m going to medical school.”

🔊 Brenda’s next comment surprised her. It just popped out, a **violation** of all rules of good reporting.

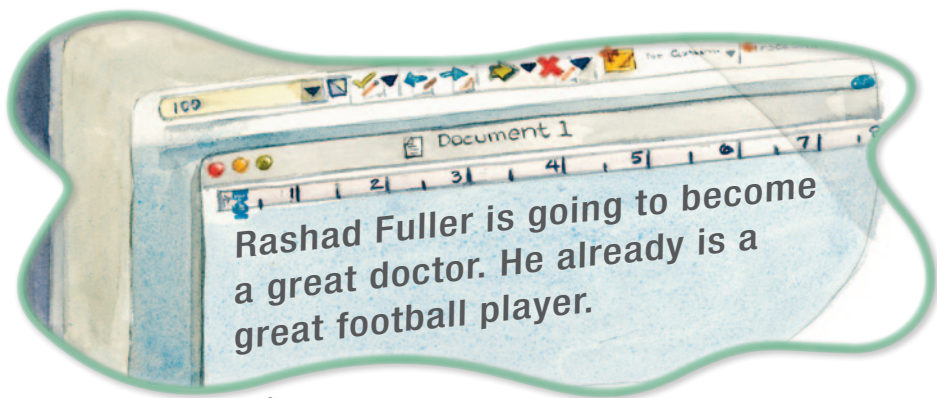
“But you don’t need the money,” she said.

“No, I don’t,” Fuller said. “But I need to do something important with my life. I want to achieve more. *Work hard in all areas, and many things are possible.*”



🔊 The future
Dr. Rashad Fuller

🔊 That familiar line made more sense, coming from a famous athlete. Brenda thanked Fuller and went to the computer lab. She began writing.



🔊 Brenda begins her story.

Brenda finished her story and went back to class. “How was it?” the other students began asking. Even her teacher was curious.

“Mr. Fuller is one of my heroes,” Brenda said. “Read my story to learn why.”

🔊 Turning to her schoolwork, Brenda found herself working harder. She wanted to do well. She thought about her tennis lesson coming on the weekend. She promised herself that she would squeeze in extra practice after school.

Most of all, she wanted to go home and tell her other hero about her big day.

Responding



TARGET SKILL

Author's Purpose Why did the author write *The Big Interview*? Copy the chart below. Write the author's reason for writing the story. Then list details that support those reasons.

Detail: In college, Rashad Fuller studies to become a doctor, and he plays football.

Detail: ?

Detail: ?

Author's Purpose: To show readers that there are many ways to succeed in life if you work hard



Write About It

Text to Text Think of something you have read about someone whose ideas surprised you. How did you feel about that character? Write a paragraph that tells about your reaction.



TARGET VOCABULARY

dependent
deteriorating
effective
exception
granted

issue
minimum
ordinance
urge
violation



TARGET SKILL

Author's Purpose Use text details to figure out the author's viewpoint and reasons for writing.



TARGET STRATEGY

Summarize Briefly tell the important parts of the text in your own words.



GENRE Realistic Fiction is a present-day story with events that could take place in real life.

Level: R

DRA: 40

Genre:

Realistic Fiction

Strategy:

Summarize

Skill:

Author's Purpose

Word Count: 1,395

5.4.19

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN

Online Levelled Books



ISBN: 978-0-547-89057-9



HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT

1508031