



**Minnesota Storytime
Reading Guide**

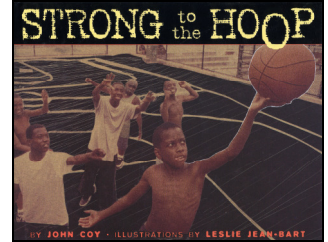
Title: *Strong to the Hoop*

Author: John Coy

Illustrator: Leslie Jean-Bart

**Publisher and
Copyright Date:**

Lee & Low Books, 1999
Also available in Spanish – *Directo al Aro*, Lee & Low Books, 2002



**Connection to
Minnesota:** Minnesota author

Summary: This is a story about James, an undersized ten year old boy who suddenly finds himself called to play basketball with the neighborhood big boys. This is James' chance to prove himself on the basketball court and he knows there is much more than making the winning basket riding on his last shot.

Suggested ages: 7-10

Tips for Reading:

- Show the unusual photo-based illustrations and the way that important words in the text are set off by changing size and color before reading. Ask children what they think about it.
- Exaggerate the sounds that get the reader into the game – “wump, wump”, “Ehnn!”, and “Trchh.”

Questions before reading:

- What do you know about the game of basketball?
- Have you ever played the game? Shot baskets?
- Have you ever watched a game of basketball? Was it played in a gym or was it an outdoor game? Were there uniforms for the players? Coaches? A referee?

To Introduce this story say: We're going to read a book about a playground basketball game called a “pick up” game, where the players are in charge of their own play.

Questions After Reading:

- Do you think this story took place in Minnesota? Why or why not?
- Are there words or phrases in the story that are only used in describing a basketball game? Which? Do you need to know these in order to understand and enjoy the story?
- Could this story have been about girls playing basketball? Why or why not?
- What three words would you use to describe James? Marcus?

RELATED ACTIVITIES

- Culture:**
- Attend a basketball game as a group and have everyone focus on the smallest player on the court, and after the game discuss his/her desire and performance.
- Dramatization:**
- Present this story as a play.
- Language:**
- Name as many basketball terms as you can and talk about their meaning – such as, “strong to the hoop”, “woofing”, and “slam dunk”.
- Other:**
- Consider John Coy’s “Basketball and Poetry” workshop. Check it out at <http://www.leeandlow.com/p/teachers-coywksp.mhtml>
- Suggestions for English Language Learners:**
- Summarize the main action of the story together with the children. For example: James goes to the basketball court. James practices basketball. Etc.
 - Fill in the outline a bit more with detail of how the main character, James, is feeling.
- Related Books:**
- ***Amos & Boris*** by William Steig (Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1977)
 - ***Baseball Saved Us*** by Ken Mochizuki, illustrated by Dom Lee (Lee & Low, 1995)
 - ***Salt in His Shoes*** by Deloris Jordan and Roslyn M. Jordan, illustrated by Kadir Nelson (Simon & Schuster, 2000)
 - ***Super Sports Star Kevin Garnett*** by Stew Thornley (Enslow Publishers, 2001)

