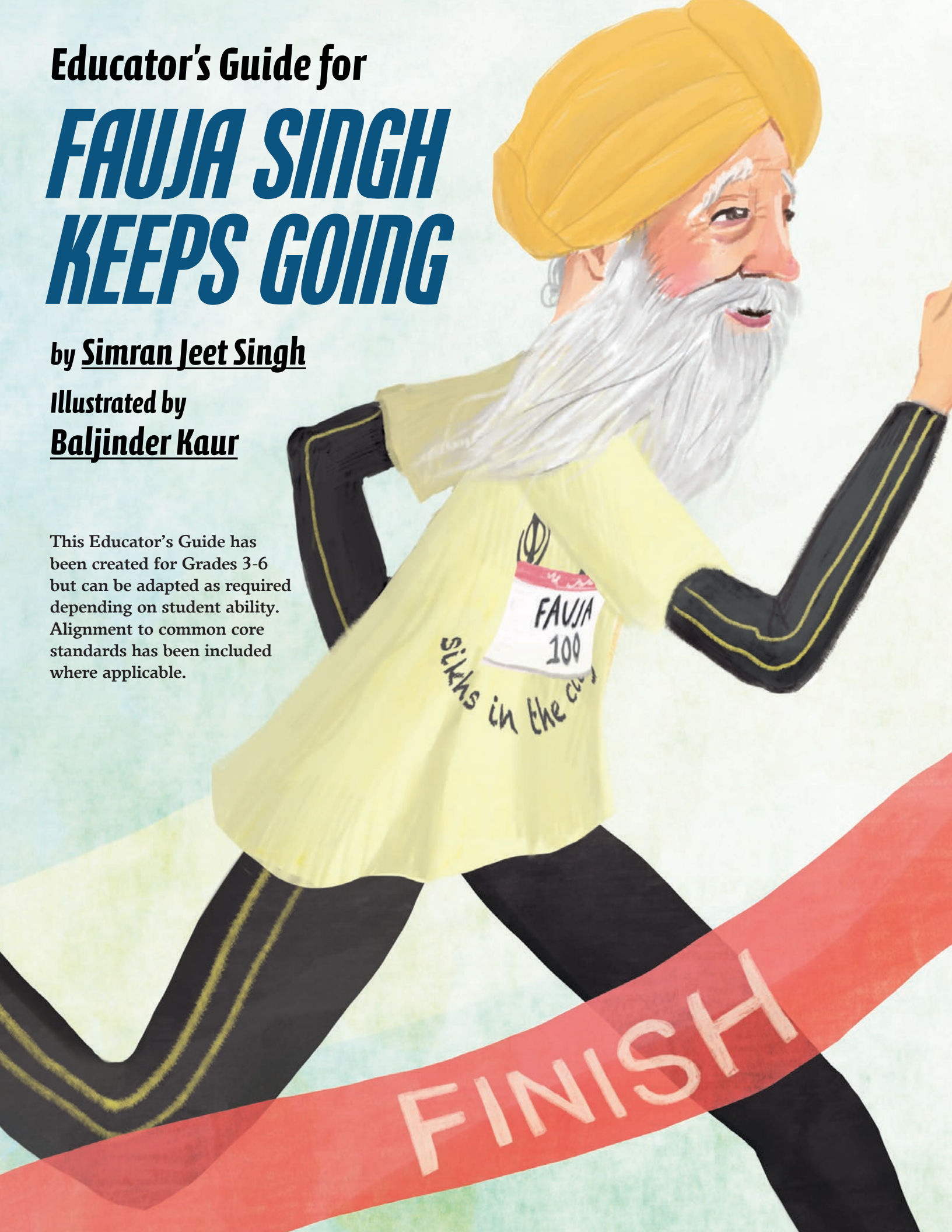


Educator's Guide for ***FAUJA SINGH KEEPS GOING***

by Simran Jeet Singh

Illustrated by
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This Educator's Guide has been created for Grades 3-6 but can be adapted as required depending on student ability. Alignment to common core standards has been included where applicable.



PRE-READING FOR EDUCATORS

SIMRAN JEET SINGH



It would be impossible to tell a story of the oldest person to ever run a marathon without touching on themes of inspiration, persistence, and hard work. These lessons are foundational to Fauja Singh's life-story.

Fauja Singh was born in Punjab, a region in South Asia that, during his own lifetime, was partitioned to create the nation-states of Pakistan and India. Punjab has its own distinct cultural identity, including its own language (Punjabi), fashion, and music. Punjab is also the birthplace of the world's fifth largest religion, Sikhism, which helped shape Fauja Singh's life and worldview. The illustrator and I are both of Punjabi-Sikh descent, and we have sought to present the richness of Punjabi culture and Sikh teachings with authenticity.

The real force of Fauja Singh's story is not just what he achieved, but also the grace and fortitude with which he dealt with life's challenges along the way. Fauja's 100 years of life intersect with various aspects of identity that we don't often associate with our heroes: disability, old age, immigration, turbans. I have learned through my own life experiences that if we can help our kids see the humanity in those who seem most different from themselves, then they can learn to see the humanity in everyone they meet, including themselves.

This is what excites me most about this picture book. Yes, I am grateful that this will be the first-ever picture book from a major publisher to center a Sikh story. But more than that, I sincerely believe that stories like these are critical for enhancing how our kids think of inclusion and belonging. Fauja Singh's life experience lends itself powerfully to ideas of intersectionality and equity in ways that can be instructive for children and adults alike. I'm hopeful that this book will open up hearts and minds, and I'm also hopeful that it will help open up conversations around what it truly means to live alongside one another while honoring and respecting our differences.



UNDERSTANDING WORDS AND MEANINGS CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.4

This glossary of Punjabi words from the story can help students understand meanings. Hyper-linked words connect to a voice note that can be used to aid pronunciation:

Banyan Tree: Type of fig tree that often serves as the center of village life in South Asian cultures.

Fauja Singh:

Fauja: Warrior

Singh: A royal name given to all Sikh men to denote sovereignty and equality

Kaur: A royal name given to all Sikh women to denote sovereignty and equality

Daal: Lentil soup

Roti: Chapati, a type of flatbread common to Punjabi cuisine

Sikh: A follower of Sikhism, the world's fifth largest religion

Parshad: A sweet, pudding-like food made of sugar, flour, butter and water that is served at a Gurdwara (Sikh house of worship)

UNDERSTANDING ILLUSTRATIONS

These descriptions can be used to help students understand illustrations from the story.

Aspects of Sikhism illustrated in the book:

Kes: Uncut hair. Can be seen in the illustrations being combed, tied up in a bun, or braided.

Head coverings:

Dastaar: Sikh turban

Patka: Smaller turban worn by younger Sikhs

Chunni: Scarf, typically worn by women

Kara: Steel bangle

Kirpan: Small sword

Kanga: Wooden comb

Guru Granth Sahib: Sikh scripture and eternal Guru. Compiled by the Sikh Gurus and containing devotional songs and poetry.

Guru Nanak: Founder of the Sikh religion. Lived from 1469-1539 CE.

Darbar Sahib: Gurdwara in Amritsar, Punjab, also known as the Golden Temple and Harimandir Sahib. One of the most religiously, historically and politically significant of Sikh sites.

Extension activity: The Kes, Dastaar, Patka, Kara, Kirpan and Kanga are some of the Sikh articles of faith. If you would like to explore Sikhism, the Sikh identity and the Sikh articles of faith in greater detail, use this [C3 Inquiry on Cultural Diversity](#) from the C3 Teachers website, 'What do the things I wear say about me?'

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS

Objective: To expand simplistic conceptions of identity by exploring diverse identities and our multiple ways of belonging.

Method: Help students observe shared characteristics with those who seem different from themselves and to see different characteristics with those who seem similar.

Use the discussion questions in blue to facilitate conversations about culture, identity and stereotyping.

Draw a picture of your own family.

1. How is the picture of your family similar to the picture of Fauja Singh's family?
2. How are your families different from one another?

Draw a picture of what you think an athlete looks like.

1. What are the similarities and differences between the picture you drew of an athlete, and the illustrations of Fauja Singh in the book?
2. What can we learn about someone based on their outward or visual appearance?
3. Do you think there is a connection between what we see on the outside, and other aspects of someone's identity on the inside?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS DURING READING

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.3,
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3.

1. What is this story about?
2. What are the key events that happen in the story?
3. What are the overarching themes in this story?

Teachers can use the author's description of the story below to help guide the classroom discussion.

Fauja Singh Keeps Going is the true story of the oldest person to ever run a marathon.

Born to a farming family in a village of Punjab, young Fauja grapples with a physical disability throughout his childhood. His particular disability is not chronic (which is not the experience of all disabled peoples). Fauja Singh is eventually able to walk, run, and even help on the farm.

Fauja has a family of his own that he raises on the farm, but as they all grow older and move away, he struggles to find purpose in his life.

He moves to England to live with his children and grandchildren, a foreign and unfamiliar place that feels nothing like home. Fauja perseveres, though, and, at the ripe age of 89 eventually begins running as a way to find a sense of belonging.

He gained celebrity for his feats, and after a few ups and downs in his running career—including a nearly career-ending performance at the New York City Marathon—Fauja achieves his ultimate goal of becoming the first 100-year-old to ever cross the finish line of a full marathon.

Characters

Who are the main characters in this story?

How do other characters support Fauja Singh?

Suggested answers:

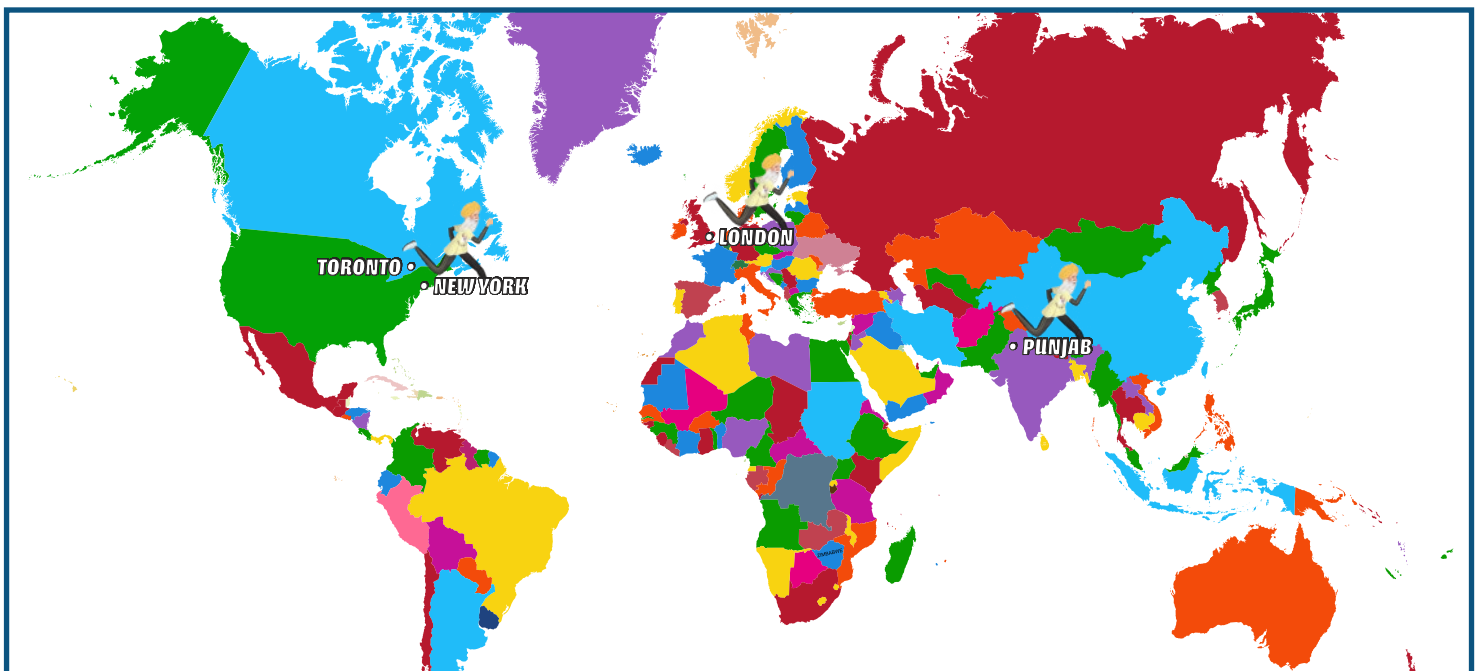
- Fauja Singh: Protagonist, Central character.
- Fauja Singh's Mother: Cares for him through childhood, encourages him through his struggles, with sage and practical wisdom.
- Fauja Singh's wife and children: Bring him joy in his middle age; provide him company later in his life.
- Fauja Singh's friends: Play with him through childhood, sometimes tease him (direct exclusion), sometimes leave him out unintentionally (indirect exclusion).
- Harmander Singh (Fauja Singh's coach): Trains Fauja Singh in running; encourages him to never give up.

Exploring Fauja Singh, the central character (these questions can be connected to the pre-reading activities):

- What can you tell about Fauja Singh by his outward appearance? (Suggested answers: *Age, Religion, Ethnicity*)
- What are some of Fauja Singh's inner character traits that reveal themselves in the story? (Suggested answers: *Love for running, Determination, Perseverance*)

Setting CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3

What are the different locations where this story takes place?



Discussion questions:

- What differences do you notice in the illustrations between Punjab and England? (e.g., food, dress, climate)
- What does immigrant mean?
- What are some reasons that people immigrate?
- What challenges did Fauja Singh face after moving to a new country?
 - « How did these challenges make Fauja Singh feel?
 - « How did Fauja Singh deal with these challenges?
- Have you ever moved to another place?
 - « How did that make you feel?
 - « How did you find a sense of belonging?

Extension ideas: Fauja Singh’s journey can be used to introduce topics such as the immigration stories of South Asians, colonialism, and the Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. Teachers can refer to the author’s note on setting below to help guide classroom discussion.

In 1911, Fauja Singh was born in the region of Punjab, South Asia, during the period of colonial rule. In 1947, the South Asian subcontinent gained freedom from the British, and the region was partitioned into the new countries of India and Pakistan. Historians have described the Partition of 1947—which Fauja Singh witnessed firsthand—as the largest and most deadly migration in human history. As many as 2 million Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus died during this period, and more than 10 million people were displaced from their homes. Punjab was at the center of this partitioning, and though it does not figure into this picture book, it had a major role in shaping Fauja Singh’s life experience. He never knew then that, decades later, he would find himself living in London, England, the center of the empire that had wrought so much violence in his homeland.

AFTER-READING ACTIVITIES

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1

Activity 1: Life-mapping and goal-setting.

Fauja Singh’s story is inspirational. He overcame obstacles, set goals, and reached them through many stages of his life.

Discussion questions:

- What are some challenges that Fauja Singh dealt with in his life?
 - « Suggested answers: *Expectations, Ageism, Ableism, Racism, Stereotyping, Xenophobia, Classism*
- What did you notice about how he met these challenges?
 - « Suggested answers: *Perseverance, Self-Confidence, Self-Compassion, Hard work*
- What are some goals that Fauja Singh achieved?
 - « Suggested answers: *Walking, moving to a new place, running, finishing marathons*

RUN YOUR RACE

Use the following worksheet to identify what you want to accomplish in life and what goals you can set to get there.

START

FINISH LINE

ACTIVATING YOUR VALUES COMPASS

Discussion questions:

- What are values?
- What were the values that Fauja Singh drew upon in the story to achieve his goals?
- Think of someone you admire in your life. What are their values?
 - « Create a Venn diagram using their values and the values of Fauja Singh you observed in this book.
- The compass below depicts values highlighted in the story. Which of these would you like to embody in your life?
- Imagine that someone yells racist words at you like they did to Fauja Singh. How would you use one of your values to guide your response?

VALUES COMPASS

