

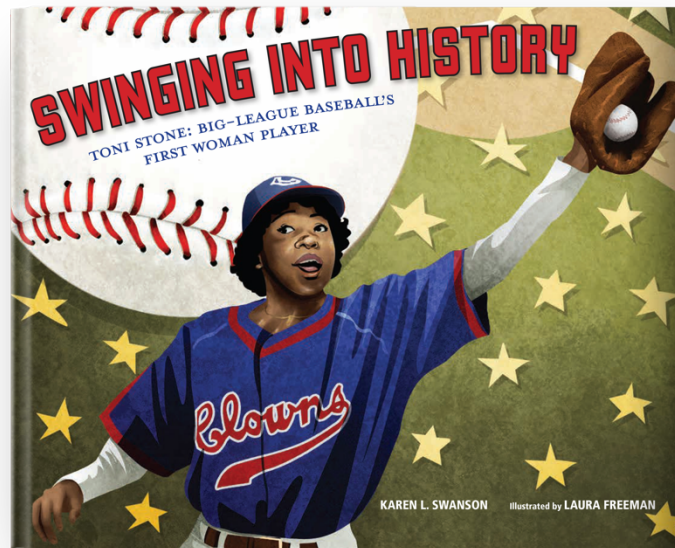
DISCUSSION GUIDE

SWINGING INTO HISTORY Toni Stone: Big League Baseball's First Woman Player

Written by Karen L. Swanson
Illustrated by Laura Freeman

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Ages 7-10
Grades 2-5



ABOUT THE BOOK

Young readers will root for Toni “Tomboy” Stone, the first woman (and the first Black woman) to break into professional baseball—taking over Hank Aaron’s roster spot—in this nonfiction picture book biography.

Nothing could stop Toni “Tomboy” Stone from playing baseball—not even her parents. The only girl on a church team, she persevered as insults were hurled her way from the boy players. She caught the attention of former major leaguer Gabby Street, who gave her a chance at his summer baseball school. With Coach Street’s training—and the cleats he gifted her—Toni managed to earn a spot in the minor leagues. Though teams were hesitant to sign a woman, she pitched the idea that fans would pay to see a woman play—and it worked! But Toni’s persistence and optimism were not enough to win over the Jim Crow South crowds nor her male teammates. Coaches put her in the starting lineup and then benched her early, every game, no matter her results. But her talent got noticed and she was signed by the Indianapolis Clowns, becoming the first woman to break into the pros. “Toni arrives,” shouted newspaper headlines, and she delivered! In her first professional game she ripped a single and drove in two runs and left the crowd chanting “TONI! TONI! TONI!”

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PRAISE FOR *SWINGING INTO HISTORY*

“Marcenia 'Tomboy' Stone lived, loved, and breathed baseball...Her big break came when she was selected to replace Hank Aaron on the Indianapolis Clowns in the Negro League—the first woman to play professional baseball. In an author's note, baseball enthusiast Swanson expands on the racism and gender discrimination Stone faced. Stone's words appear on banners across the bold, energetic illustrations by Freeman...as well as those from the press...all of which round out this upbeat tribute. A welcome addition to the annals of women's sports.” —***Kirkus Reviews***

“The narrative is appealing; well-chosen quotes from Stone are presented on certain pages alongside Freeman's engaging digital illustrations. From childhood dream to hard-won achievements, Stone's story unfolds as a picture book with a happy ending. In the extensive back matter, Swanson makes clear how difficult and demoralizing Stone's path really was. An inspirational biography for baseball fans.” —***Booklist***

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH

Marcenia “Tomboy” Stone parents did not want her to play baseball. Why? What sport did they insist she try instead? What did Tomboy plan to do when her parents forbade her from playing baseball?

How did Tomboy finally get her first chance at playing on a baseball team? How did she feel when the boys she played with and against her made fun of her? What did she do about it?

When former major-league baseball player turned coach Gabby Street opened up a baseball school, Tomboy's “pulse raced.” Did Street want to give Tomboy a tryout for his baseball school? What did he say when she would not go away?

Gabby Street was the first person to recognize Tomboy's talent. What did he do to support her dream of playing professional baseball?

When Tomboy's parents didn't want her to ‘barnstorm’ with a men's team, how did she convince them?

Why did Tomboy have to change her name to “Toni” and say she was ten years younger than she actually was? How did she convince a minor league team owner to give her a roster spot? Did Toni get the playing time her statistics deserved?

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Whose roster spot did Toni take when she finally got called up to the majors to play with the Negro League team the Indianapolis Clowns? Did her teammates on the Indianapolis Clowns welcome her – were they glad she was on the team?

Did it matter to Toni that she was an inspiration to girls and women?

In August 1991, Toni was the only woman invited with 74 other major league players of the Negro Leagues to the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY. What did she say about being included and recognized?

Did other women play baseball on the Indianapolis Clowns after Toni did? Who were they? Why did Toni get traded and play her second year of professional baseball for the Kansas City Monarchs? Has any other woman played for two Negro League teams?

After reading the backmatter in the book, discuss the other ways Toni Stone has been recognized and celebrated for her accomplishments and legacy.

How have women's sports changed since Toni's time? Discuss the women who are making strides in the sports world today.