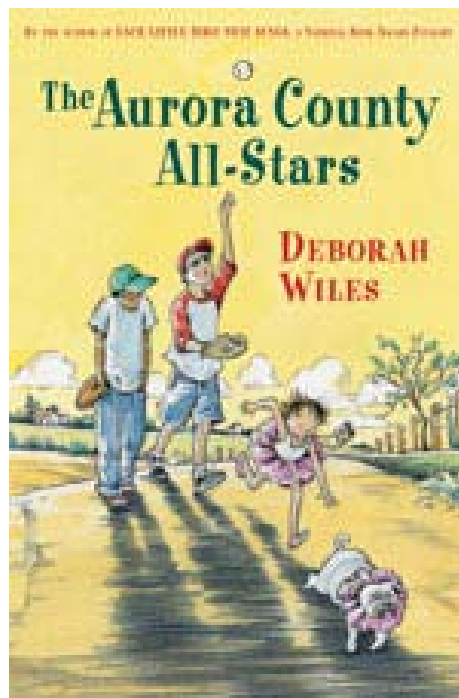


The Aurora County All-Stars

By
Deborah Wiles



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Deborah Wiles



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Deborah Wiles is an author of fiction stories that relate to real events from her past. Her father was in the United States Air Force so she moved frequently to different states and the Philippines as a child. She went to school during the 1960's and remembers the events surrounding the instatement of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. As a child she loved to observe, read and write, but she did not become a writer until much later in life. She learned that to be a good writer, she needed to pay attention to things big and small and then to write and write.

She currently lives in Atlanta, Georgia. She is the mother of four grown children and the grandmother of two. She enjoys having a picnic in cemeteries and she grows the world's most beautiful zinnias.

Other books by Deborah Wiles include:

[Each Little Bird that Sings](#)

[Freedom Summer](#)

[Love Ruby Lavender](#)

[One Wide Sky](#)

Awards for The Aurora County All-Stars include:

SIBA Book Award Finalist

California Young Reader Medal

Young Hoosier Book Award

Awards for other books include:

National Book Award Finalist

E.B. White Award Winner

Coretta Scott King Steptoe Award

Ezra Jack Keats Award

Bank Street Fiction Award

Annotation:

House Jackson is an average twelve year old that is having a not so average summer. The story begins with House at the death bed of Mr. Norwood Boyd, also known to the neighborhood kids as 'Mean-Man Boyd. House has spent the past year reading stories to Boyd, as House waits for his pitching arm to recover from a break. The broken arm, a direct result of Frances Schotz (House's nemesis) has sidelined House from his passion: baseball.

The relationship between House and Mr. Boyd is a secret to all of Aurora County and a mystery to even House. As the story unfolds House begins to understand more about the man whose company he kept, but about whose life he never cared to learn. Boyd's childhood friend, Pip Schotz, helps House learn that Boyd was also a baseball lover, a hero and godfather to House's deceased mother.

The slow revelation to House of the deceased characters, Mr. Boyd and his mother, help House through some challenging conflicts. When House is betrayed by his best friend Cleebo, he must learn to find forgiveness in his heart.

When House, as baseball team captain, is asked to fix the time conflict between the annual baseball game and the county birthday pageant, he looks for answers in the past. His solution of combining both events, because baseball is a pageant, causes a great deal of controversy. In the end House's idea is a success and helps to fulfill many dreams along the way.

The author Deborah Wiles has created a wonderful coming of age story. She combines the difficult themes of death, doing what is right, friendship, and racism. She mixes them with humor, love and the passion of baseball. She has the right combination of suspense, comedy and common elements that quickly carry the reader through the story. The historical/poetic quotes at the beginning of each chapter and throughout the story add to the story's charm.

Genre: realistic fiction, friendship fiction

Point of View: third person

Theme:

The story contains many smaller themes such as baseball, death, race relations, friendship and working together to achieve a common goal. A larger theme of the book is the people that love us never really leave us, even in death. We can look to what they have taught us to help and strengthen us.

Another large theme in the book is to do what is right even when it is difficult.

The title The Aurora County All-Stars can be taken for face value; the name of House's baseball team is the Aurora All-stars. The title can also have a deeper meaning. All of the citizens of Aurora County had to work together and compromise to make the 4th of July pageant/baseball game a success. By compromising all of the participants get to be stars.

Conflict:

There are a few conflicts within the story. The first is an internal conflict within House. He has spent a year with Mr. Boyd, but has only started to learn about him after his death. He discovers that his dead mother also had ties to Mr. Boyd. House wonders why he did not get to know more about Mr. Boyd and therefore his mother.

The second conflict involves that the meetings between House and Mr. Boyd were a secret. No one knows about the meetings, not even House's best friend Cleebo. When the death of Mean-Man Boyd is discovered among the town's children, House has to decide whether to defend Mr. Boyd and his whereabouts for the past year.

The third conflict is between House and his friend Cleebo. When Cleebo decides to share House's secret and pit against him, House must decide whether Cleebo is a friend worth keeping.

The final conflict involves the annual Aurora County baseball game and the Aurora County Birthday Pageant being scheduled at the same time. The mothers of Aurora County would like for their children to be involved in the pageant, while the ballplayers want to play their annual game. The ballplayers look to House, the team captain, for the solution.

Conflict Resolution:

The first conflict is resolved when House decides to learn more about Mr. Boyd through those who knew him better. House admits that he did love the man, which leads House to more information about Mr. Boyd and his mother.

The second conflict is resolved when House tells his best friend Cleebo about his meeting with Mr. Boyd. Cleebo in turn tells the whole baseball team (against House's wishes) about the meetings and forces House to come clean.

The third conflict between the friendship of Cleebo and House is slowly resolved throughout the book as House begins to look deep in his heart. It is finally resolved when Cleebo and the other team players decide to spontaneously join the pageant in order to give House's arm more time to rest between innings.

The final conflict is resolved when House 'listens' to the voices of the past, his mother's and Mr. Boyd, and recommends combining the baseball game and the birthday pageant.

Characters:

Name	Relationship to main character	Traits
House Jackson	main character	age 12, captain of the Aurora All-stars, brave, caring, wanting to learn about the past, creative, lover of baseball
Mr. Norwood Boyd (Mean Man Boyd)	House read stories to Mr. Boyd during the last years of his life, while he was sick in bed.	Died at age 88, bedridden for the last year. Known to most neighborhood kids as a scary secretive man and a 'baby-eater'. Later revealed in the story as a hero who took a stand against racism. A lover of baseball.
Cleebo	House's best friend and member of the Aurora All-Stars	age 12, impatient, disloyal, loyal, funny, sarcastic, lover of baseball
Frances Schotz (Finesse)	House's nemesis, who broke his pitching arm. Director of the Aurora Birthday Pageant	DRAMATIC, wants to be star of the show, flashy, compassionate. In the end is a friend to House.
Pip Schotz	Friend of Norwood Boyd, grandfather to Frances, mentor to House	After Mr. Boyd's death, he teaches House about the past and his mother, lover of baseball, not allowed to play ball because of his skin color.
James Schotz (Dr Dan Deavers)	Pip's son Helps House sell the idea of combining the ball game and the birthday pageant.	A soap opera star who donates the stage for the pageant. All the moms love him and want him to 'discover' their children. Charismatic, helpful
Leonard Jackson	House's father	Caring, loving, allows House to make his own choices, misses his wife who died.
Honey Jackson	House's sister	age 6, aspiring dancer, cute, funny, lover of animals (real and stuffed)
Ruby Lavender	Catcher of the Aurora All-stars. Is only able to play after House changes the rules and allow all those who want to play, to do so, even a girl.	Lover of baseball, calm, helpful to House, level-headed
Doc MacRee	Tends to House's injured arm throughout the story	Patient, understanding
Phoebe 'Scoop' Tolbert	writer for the Aurora County newspaper	gossip, humorous
Sandy Koufax	deceased pro- baseball player, House's hero	hero, House looks at Koufax's past for answers

There are many other characters that appear throughout the story, including other baseball players, pageant participants, 'the mamas' and Eudora Welty, the dog.

Setting: The story takes place in Aurora County, Mississippi, in the small town of Halleluia.

Interest Level: 3-6 grade (Perma bound)

Reading Level: 4.5 (Perma bound)

Book-talk:

House Jackson is a twelve year old, lover of baseball. After sitting out the year due to a broken pitching arm, House cannot wait to get back in the game at the annual 4th of July showdown. Each year the Raleigh Redbugs play the Aurora County All-stars at 4:00pm. This year the Aurora County Birthday Pageant is scheduled at the same time. The team looks to House, the team captain, for a solution. House's solution creates even bigger conflicts and reveals secrets that have been hidden by the past. Will House be considered the hero or the team failure?

Language:

Rumors - page 4 - information that is not necessarily true

Decompose - page 5- to rot or decay

Pageant - page 9- an elaborate show that often portrays historical events

Aspiring - page 12- having a strong desire

Cowering - page 18 - to cringe in fear

Accoutrements - page 27 - equipment

Poise- page 32 - stability

Indignant - page 37- outraged or disbelief

Emanate- page 41- to come forth from

Spigot- page 47- a faucet

Kudzu - 54 - a vine, often thought of as a weed

Resolution - page 61- solution

Katydid- page 77- an insect similar to a grasshopper or cricket

Clangor - page 82 - loud noise

Illuminated - page 92 - to light up

Summoned - page 105 - called to

Dilemmas - page 116 - a situation that calls for a choice between two options

Escalate- page -124 - to increase or intensify

Dyspeptic - page 131- sick

Verbosity - page 149 - using many words

Inhabited - page 152 - lived in, got inside of

Morphing - page 156- changing
Amalgamation - page 156 - a combination
Eluded - page 167 - escaped
Vigorously -page 201 - energetically
Conglomeration -page 216- a cluster of things
Voluminous - page 231- a great number

Indiana State Standards:

Language arts:

3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.3, 3.1.5, 3.1.6, 3.1.8, 3.3.1, 3.3.3, 3.3.4, 3.3.8
 4.1.1, 4.1.3, 4.1.6, 4.1.7, 4.3.2, 4.3.3, 4.3.6, 4.3.7
 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.1.6, 5.3.1, 5.3.2, 5.3.3, 5.3.4, 5.3.8, 5.3.7

Anticipation statements:

Before reading the story		The Aurora County All-Stars by Deborah Wiles	After reading the story	
Agree	Disagree		Agree	Disagree
		Boys and girls should not play on the same baseball teams.		
		Once the people we love die, they cannot be helpful to us anymore.		
		Poetry is very difficult to understand.		
		Friends always stand up for other friends.		
		It is a big brother's job to take care of his little sister.		
		Heroes can be people who have already died.		

Read aloud:

Passage 1: Chapter 9, page 61-62

"Radio Flash News.....This is Phoebe Tolbert, the Vivacious Voice of Aurora County, signing off until next time."

I like the news flashes in this book; I think they are very appealing to kids. This particular news flash discusses one of the main conflicts in the book. I think conflicts often interest kids and encourage them to read on to discover the resolution.

Passage 2: end of Chapter 12, page 85, first paragraph

"Down the long, wide hallway he crept until he found himself in the front of the door to Mr. Norwood Boyd's bedroom.....A cold hand. A ghost!"

I chose this passage because of the 'scare factor'; children usually enjoy being afraid. This passage also creates great anticipation; the reader will want to continue with the story.

Bibliography:

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<http://www.deborahwiles.com/>

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