



# 13. The Proudest Blue

Age range: Primary

**Theme:** We gather as a community for collective worship that is **inspiring, invitational and inclusive**, reflecting the fact that we are a part of a diverse school family and the wider church community. This term, we are warming up for the Summer Olympics by going back in time and revisiting some Olympic and Paralympic Games from the past. We will share inspirational stories which reflect the six Olympic values of Determination, Excellence, Inspiration, Courage, Friendship and Equality and use them to help us to think about what we can learn from them.



### How does this link to your school's Christian vision & values?

Many of the Olympic values are shared with those that are familiar to us in school, so throughout this term, we encourage you to link each week's collective worship to your school vision – and the way that you live this out through your values. Today we hear the story of children's author and Olympic fencer Ibtihaj Muhammad, who was part of the US fencing team in 2016.

### Resources:

- The PowerPoint slides are numbered with a point in the script so you can find your way, and the parts in **bold** show you where to click on to activate the next slide or animation. There are slides to go with today's script, but you could quite easily use this collective worship without the PowerPoint if you preferred.
- **There is also an Olympic 'passport' that you can create using the reflection cards for each week, and to gather some thoughts from your children as you go along. This is in a separate file and could be easily constructed from an A4 or A5 folder with plastic pockets, but will also be included in each week's resources. You could 'stamp' your reflection card each week, just like you would a passport. There is space for this at the top of each card. Use as many as you have time for.**
- **The opening quiz is about head coverings, to fit in with the books that Ibtihaj wrote about wearing a hijab, retellings of which you can access here: [THE PROUDEST BLUE read by Ibtihaj Muhammad \(youtube.com\)](#) and [THE KINDEST RED read by Ibtihaj Muhammad \(youtube.com\)](#)**
- Ibtihaj Muhammad is listed as one of the Time's 100 most influential people worldwide, and she has her own website here, from which you can download images (for selected slides in the PowerPoint) and find out further information: <https://www.ibtihajmuhammad.com/home>
- **There is an extra, optional reflective slide [slide 23 featuring two quotes from Ibtihaj Muhammad, which you might like to use with older pupils, relating to the importance that she placed on being able to express her identity as a Muslim sportswoman. It might be a useful PSHE exercise.**
- **Reflective prayer activity:** Make a 'proudest blue' boat, containing things that make you feel proud. There are links to video instructions in the final section of this script.

### Gathering:

**Slide 1: Use the new gathering words, which will be the same each week.**



- **Leader: We are here together**
- **ALL: May we 'GO FOR GOLD!' in our words and actions today!**

### Engaging:

- **Slide 2:** We are nearing the end of our Olympic series, with one more Olympics to visit.....and the Paris 2024 Olympics to look forward to very soon!
- **Slide 3:** Let's jump straight into our Olympic time machine and go back in time 8 years ....**to 2016,**
- **Slide 4:** When the Olympics and Paralympics were in Rio, Brazil. We'll be hearing the story of one female athlete who competed in 2016, but first....
- **Slide 5:** We're going to play a short game together, all about head coverings, 'Name that hat!!' [work through **Slides 6-12** – answers are under the slide if you're not sure! Slide 12 shows a **hijab**]
- **Slide 13:** A hijab is a special head covering worn by Muslim girls and women. Many Muslims choose to cover their hair in this way as a way of showing respect and being modest: it's part of their beliefs that only a girl's close family should see her hair uncovered. There are lots of beautiful designs to choose from....and believe it or not, our story from the Olympics today has something to do with a hijab!
- **Slide 14:** *Choose an image from her website for this slide:* <https://www.ibtihajmuhammad.com/> This is Ibtihaj Muhammad, and this is the story of how she became a 2016 Olympic athlete.....
- **Slide 15:** I wonder what you dream of becoming?



- **Slide 16:** At school, Ibtihaj Muhammad loved sport and dreamed of being a professional athlete. But she knew that for many sports, she would not be allowed to wear her hijab, and the sporting outfits she would have to wear would mean that she wouldn't be able to have her arms and legs covered. Her mum would often alter the sports gear to include long trouser legs and sleeves.
- **Slide 17:** Then one day, her parents suggested that she should try fencing. The protective clothing would mean that she could still dress modestly – and she would be allowed to wear her hijab under her helmet. It was the perfect solution! She began learning when she was just 13 years old and by 2005, was the Olympic Junior Champion. However, life was not easy, despite the fact that she now looked and dressed just like everyone else. There were times when she was treated differently to the rest of the team, or her team-mates deliberately ignored her. But she was determined to prove that being black, being a Muslim and being a woman made her strong and proud.
- In 2010, she became part of the American National Fencing Team. The team won **bronze** at the 2011-2013 and 2015 World Championships and **gold** at the 2014 World Championships.
- **Slide 18:** And finally, the moment came and Ibtihaj was chosen to represent her country at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio – she even gave the American President's wife, Michelle Obama, a **fencing lesson** in the lead up to the Games!

As well as winning a **bronze medal** with her team-mates, she also made a world record, becoming the first female athlete ever to wear a hijab whilst taking part in competitive sport. When interviewed after the competition, she said:

**'What I loved most about fencing was it allowed me to pursue my desire to be involved in sports, but also allowed me to be myself as Muslim woman.'**

I wonder what she meant by 'being herself' and why this was so important to her? [talk together for a few moments]

- **Slide 19:** But she is perhaps more famous now for things other than sport. As a child, when Ibtihaj Muhammad played with her dolls or read books, she noticed that none of them looked like her. She used to cut up small pieces of material to make hijabs for her dolls. Now, thanks to her sporting achievements in international competitions, her example in proudly showing her identity as a Muslim and speaking up for others' rights be 'be themselves', Mattell®, the maker of Barbie figures, have launched their first ever Muslim Barbie [use the link <https://www.ibtihajmuhammad.com/> to insert the photo of her with the Barbie] in honour of her. What a proud moment!
- **Slide 20:** She is also the author of 2 children's books, 'The Proudest Blue' and 'The Kindest Red' based on her experiences as a child with her sisters, growing up and wanting to model Muslim values and help others like her to be proud of their identity. [You can find the links to videos showing Ibtihaj reading her 2 books in the Resources section]

As a Muslim, Ibtihaj tries to follow the teachings of the Qur'an and the example of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in how she treats others, so let's hear a few more words from her about how she has tried to do this in her own life:

**"I feel like I have to speak up for those people whose voices go unheard."**

Her books are part of her work to encourage others to be proud of who they are and not feel as if they need to hide.

- *Optional question, for older pupils maybe?: I wonder if there might be people in our school community who sometimes feel like this? I wonder how we might help them to feel that their voices are being heard?*
- **Slide 21:** Throughout our assemblies this term, we have been thinking about these core Olympic and Paralympic values. I wonder which you think Ibtihaj Muhammad has shown during her life and sporting career? [talk together]

### **Slide 22: Responding and words for worship**

Let's be still and quiet for a few moments now, as we come towards the end of our time together today. We've heard today about Ibtihaj Muhammad and how she was the first ever **Muslim**



woman to be able to wear her hijab at the Olympics. We've heard how important it is to her that she speaks up for others who are less able to 'be themselves'.....Let's wonder together now.....

....I wonder why it was so important to Ibtihaj that she was able to wear her hijab when she competed?....

...I wonder how this helped her to feel proud of her religion and proud to represent her country?....

....I wonder what you are proud of?....

....Or how you might 'speak up' for others?....

....In the quietness now, you might want to take a few moments to think.....

### Slide 23: Prayer

Before we take a few moments to pray today, I am going to use some words from the Book of Proverbs, in the Bible – ancient wisdom about how to live well [*you might remember this from our theme of 'Wise Words' last term!*]. The words sound very similar to the words that we have heard from Ibtihaj Muhammad....

**Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. Defend the rights of all those who have nothing....the poor and needy...**

In the silence now, think quietly about what these words mean – and how we might speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. You might want to turn your thoughts into a prayer of your own.....

*[Leave space for private reflection / prayer here]*

### Sending: Slide 24

**Leader: As we leave this place & time and go into the day ahead...**

**All: Let's go for gold\* in all that we do!**



\*Again, you might need to unpick what we mean by 'going for gold' in the context of today's words.

### To listen to / sing:

[Got a bit better \(AAOS\)](#)

[Resilience in me \(NBD\)](#)

### Slide 25: Reflective areas



Make a 'proudest blue' boat, containing things that make you feel proud. You can see a video here (although change the ideas about what to write): [Make a Proudest Blue Paper Boat with S. K. Ali #TheProudestBlue - YouTube](#) You can also find photos and video instructions here: [How to Make an Easy Origami Boat \(thesprucecrafts.com\)](#) but it is perhaps more suitable for older pupils.



Arrival on:



# Olympic Values

**Ibtihaj Muhammad competed at the 2016 Olympic Games as part of the USA's fencing team. She was proud to be able to compete as a Muslim woman and wear her hijab.**



**Why do you think Ibtihaj felt proud of her hijab?**



**What do you think made her feel the proudest – wearing her hijab or taking part in the Olympics?**



**What are you proud of?  
Write your ideas onto a piece of paper and if you can, make it into a folded boat.**

