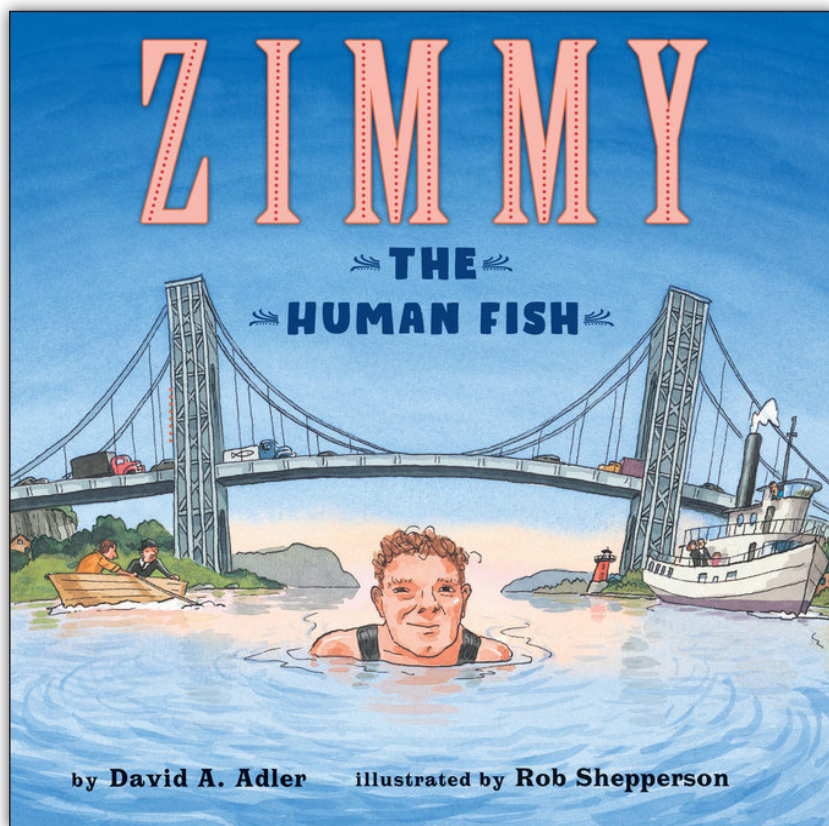


HOLIDAY HOUSE EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



Zimmy

The Human Fish

by David A. Adler

illustrated by Rob Shepperson

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Meet Charles “Zimmy” Zibelman, the legless athlete who swam from Albany to New York City, in this non-fiction picture book from bestselling author David A. Adler.

On August 23, 1938, “The Legless Wonder” Charles Zibelman began his daring swim to New York City—a one hundred forty-five mile journey that would take him six days to complete. Swimming for up to a hundred hours at a time without stopping, he was covered in barnacles by the time he arrived at his destination to thousands of cheering spectators. When he arrived at a Harlem hospital for recuperation after his exhausting journey, he told paramedics, “I feel kind of funny being out of the water.”

Charles “Zimmy” Zibelman cites having no legs as the key to his achievements—he could bob in the water like a cork and even sleep while staying afloat! “The Human Fish” was truly one with the water, and his lively personality is as memorable as his achievements.

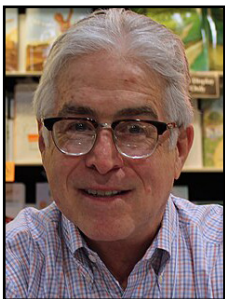
Nonfiction pro David A. Adler and prolific illustrator Rob Shepperson introduce readers to one of history’s most amazing athletes, who swam against the current to break records and make a name for himself in newspapers around the country. Disabled daredevil Zimmy’s story is an action-packed yet true tale sure to make a splash with educators and young readers alike.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Take a very close look at the cover. Why do you think Jimmy is called “The Human Fish”? Turn to the title page. Point out Jimmy. How do the cover of the book and the title page suggest what the book is about?
- Jimmy was born Charles Zibelman in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1893. Discuss the new inventions and products that appeared in the United States the year he was born. Why did Jimmy’s parents move their family to Chicago, Illinois? Describe Chicago from Jimmy’s point of view.
- Explain how Jimmy lost his legs. How did losing his legs change him? What was the first clue that Jimmy wouldn’t let his handicap defeat him?
- Explain the following simile: “He could bounce in the water ‘like a cork’” (p. 7). At what point did swimming become Jimmy’s passion? Discuss his many efforts to set records. What happened when he failed?
- Describe his Hudson River swim from Albany, New York, to the new George Washington Bridge in New York City. What obstacles did he face? He had a lot of support from many people. In what way did they help him reach his goal?
- Why was it important for Jimmy to keep his name in the news? Charles Zibelman died November 9, 1952. Debate whether you think he was happy with his accomplishments before his death. How might his story inspire others?

Guide created by Pat Scales, retired school librarian and independent consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



David A. Adler is a former math teacher and author of more than two hundred books for children. He has collaborated on several science picture books with Anna Raff, including *Light Waves* and *Magnets Push, Magnets Pull*, both named finalists for the AAAS/Subaru SB&F Prize for Excellence in Science Books. He is also the author of the Picture Book Biography series and the Cam Jansen mystery series. He lives in New York.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



Rob Shepperson’s editorial illustrations have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. The children’s books he has illustrated include *Thunderboom!* by David L. Harrison and *Blue Daisy* by Helen Frost. He lives on the Hudson River, along Jimmy’s route, in Croton-on-Hudson.