

**BECAUSE  
OF THEM  
WE CAN**

**BOX**

**JUST FOR KIDS**

# BECAUSE OF ALTHEA GIBSON

AGES 5-8

BOTWC MINI POSING AS  
ALTHEA GIBSON



# ALTHEA GIBSON

Read the two text about Althea Gibson. The first text is an interview - that means you will see at least two speakers discussing a certain topic. In this one, Althea is being asked questions about her life. The interview was created by Miles Educational Film Productions, Inc. and can be found in the Washington University in St. Louis Library or using this link: <https://bit.ly/2VtxPzR>. The other text gives you a lot of details about Althea Gibson but



## TEXT 1:

**[Interviewer #1:]** —Where did you go from your block to learn to play the game of tennis?

**[Althea Gibson:]** Well, after playing paddle tennis in the play streets, I think, I'm not, I'm not too sure on this, but that we have in those, in those years a tennis club called the Cosmopolitan Tennis Club. That was the black, I think it was the black **elite** tennis club in those years. And I was introduced to that club by the play street director of the play street named Buddy Walker, who happens to be a band leader, and plays tenor sax. And he introduced me to the club. And, upon introducing me, the

tennis pro there, Fred Johnson, who happened to be one-arm, he lost one arm in, during the war. And, he took me on to teach me how to play lawn tennis. And, he taught me the basics, the footwork, the service motion. And, from 1946 to 50—, no I'm sorry, up to '46 I won the ATA girls' singles championship at the Cosmopolitan Tennis Club through the tutelage of Fred Johnson, at the time. And, I went on from there.

**[Interviewer #1:]** Tennis has always been a game involving a lot of traveling. And you had grown up in Harlem, in a city, Manhattan, New York City. What did those other parts of America, those other parts of the world, look like to you when you started to travel on the tennis circuit?

**[Althea Gibson:]** At first, strange, different, the people's mode of living was new and



# GAME, SET AND MATCH

different to me. As a matter of fact, I considered it a great education to be able to travel around the world as I did, being the first black female tennis **champion** of the world to have this **privilege**, and I enjoyed it tremendously. I learned a lot, I saw a lot, and I played a heck of a lot of tennis all over the world. I think it's always great for someone to be able to travel, especially representing their country in a sporting event, to travel to different **foreign** countries, to see how other people of the world live. I enjoyed it very much.

## TEXT 2:

Althea Gibson was a tennis player from South Carolina who was the first Black American to play in Wimbledon in 1951. She started off playing table tennis, where she was often the champion and then was invited to play full court tennis by a musician named Buddy Walker.



no matter what  
accomplishments you make,  
someone helped you.

- Althea Gibson

She was a part of the American Tennis Association and won 12 championship titles, which earned her a scholarship at Florida A&M. Being a star athlete gave Althea the chance to travel to many different places to play tennis, like France where she played in the French Open. She made a name for herself as a great tennis player and got to have new experiences and meet all types of different people while doing it!

## GLOSSARY

**Elite** - the people who have the most wealth and status in a society; the most successful or powerful group of people

**Champion** - someone or something (such as a team or an animal) that has won a contest or competition, especially in sports

**Privilege** - a special opportunity to do something that makes you proud

**Foreign** - located outside a particular place or country, and especially outside your own country

# READ & RESPOND

Answer the following questions using what you read in the interview and article.

**1. How are the two texts similar?**

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**2. How are the two texts different?**

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**3. Do you think one text is better than the other one? Why or why not?**

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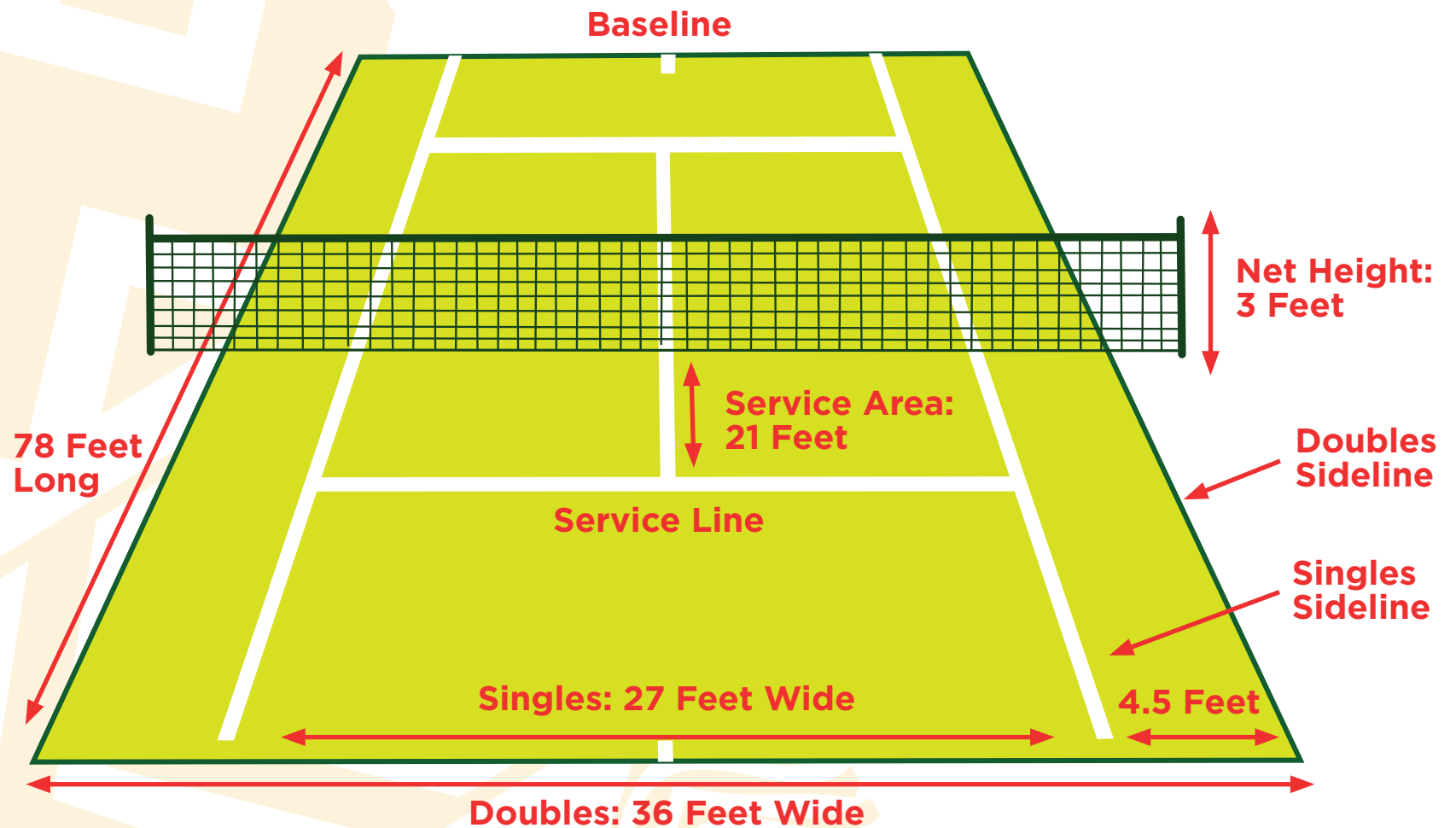
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# MATH, ANYONE?

Use the picture of the tennis court to answer the following questions.



1. Choose 3 lines from the tennis court and put them in order from shortest to longest.

SHORTEST	
LONGEST	

2. Order the following lines from longest to shortest: the baseline, the service line, and the doubles sideline.

LONGEST	
SHORTEST	

3. Explain how you know whether an object is shorter or longer than another object?

ANSWERS: (1) Answers will vary based on the lines students choose. Here is the order of all the lines: Net, Service Line, Baseline, Singles Sideline, Doubles Sideline (2) Doubles Sideline, Baseline, Service line (3) Answer will vary. Students should explain that longer means that the line continues after the other one stops.

# A TENNIS TIMELINE

There are many Black people that made Tennis history just like Althea Gibson! She was the first Black American to play at Wimbledon (the oldest tennis tournament in the world). Match the text to the year in the correct place on the timeline.

1. **1916**

A. Althea Gibson becomes the first Black American to participate in the US Nationals.



2. **1917**

B. Althea Gibson becomes the first Black person to win a major U.S. tennis championship and is the first to win the US open. This is after she is the first Black woman to participate in the US Nationals.

3. **1950**

C. This is the first event on the timeline. The ATA (American Tennis Association) was founded in Washington D.C.

4. **1957**

D. Athur Ashe becomes the first becomes the first (and still the only) Black man to win the US Open

5. **1968**

E. Just one year after the ATA was founded, Lucy Diggs Slowe wins the women's singles tournament and becomes the first Black woman national champion in any sport.



6. **1983**

F. Venus and Serena Williams both win championships. This is the last event on the timeline.

7. **1998**

G. Yannick Noah is the first Black man to win a French Open after Arthur Ashe wins the US Open.

ANSWERS: (1) C (2) E (3) A (4) B (5) D (6) G (7) F

## TAKE THE PLEDGE

**I WILL HONOR**  
THE SACRIFICES OF  
MY ANCESTORS.

**I WILL BELIEVE**  
IN ME.

**I WILL PURSUE**  
MY DREAMS.

**I WILL HELP**  
OTHERS ALONG  
THE WAY.