

**FLEYDO ENGLISH SCHOOL**

A2 Reading Challenge

# The Skateboard Kid from Brazil

*How a little girl in a fairy costume became one of the youngest Olympic medal winners in history*

<b>Level</b>	A2 (Elementary)
<b>Age Group</b>	Teens (11-16)
<b>Topic</b>	True Stories
<b>Duration</b>	~15 minutes
<b>Vocabulary</b>	12 words
<b>Quiz</b>	5 questions

## Article

In 2015, a short video appeared on the internet. It showed a little girl on a skateboard, rolling down a ramp and landing a difficult **trick** called a heelflip. She was only seven years old. She was wearing a blue fairy **costume** with wings on her back and a small crown on her head. She looked like she had just come from a birthday party. But the way she moved on the board was not like a child playing — it was like a **professional**. The video went **viral**. Within days, millions of people around the world had watched it. The little fairy on the skateboard had a name: Rayssa Leal. And her story was only just beginning.

### Growing Up in Imperatriz

Rayssa Leal was born on 4 January 2008 in Imperatriz, a city of about 250,000 people in the state of Maranhão in north-eastern Brazil. It is not a famous city. It is far from the beaches of Rio de Janeiro and the big stadiums of São Paulo. Rayssa's family was not rich. Her father, Ricardo, worked as a public servant, and her mother, Lilian, took care of the home. Rayssa had an older brother who loved skateboarding. When Rayssa was six years old, she watched her brother doing tricks in the street and wanted to try. Her parents bought her a small skateboard, and she started practising every day. She fell down many times. She got cuts and bruises on her knees and elbows. But she always got back up. Even as a very young child, Rayssa had **determination** — she did not want to stop until she could do every **trick** perfectly.

### The Fairy Video

The famous fairy video was filmed in 2015 at a local skate park in Imperatriz. Rayssa had been at a **costume** party at her school, dressed as a fairy. After the party, instead of going home, she went straight to the skate park — still wearing her fairy wings and crown. Someone filmed her doing a heelflip, a **trick** where you flip the board with your heel while jumping in the air. Most adults cannot do this **trick**. Rayssa made it look easy. The video was shared on Facebook and then on other platforms. The famous American skateboarder Tony Hawk saw it and shared it with his millions of followers. He called Rayssa **incredible**. Overnight, the little girl from Imperatriz became known around the world as the "skateboarding fairy." But Rayssa did not care about fame. She just wanted to skate.

### Becoming a Professional

After the **viral** video, Rayssa started getting attention from skateboarding companies and coaches. Her parents decided to **support** her dream. They took her to bigger skate parks in other cities. They helped her find a **professional** coach. Rayssa trained hard, sometimes for four or five hours a day. She entered her first **competition** when she was just eight years old — and she won. After that, she kept winning. By the age of eleven, she was competing against adults in national and international events. In 2019, she won a stage of the Street League Skateboarding (SLS) World Tour in Los Angeles, beating many of the best skateboarders in the world. She was only eleven. The skateboarding world was amazed. This

was not a cute child doing tricks in a fairy **costume** any more. This was a serious athlete.

## The Tokyo Olympics

In 2021, something historic happened. Skateboarding was included in the Olympic Games for the very first time, at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics (which were held in 2021 because of COVID-19). Rayssa qualified for the Brazilian team. She was thirteen years old. She flew to Tokyo with her family and her coach, excited but nervous. The **competition** was called "street skateboarding," and it involved doing tricks on a course with stairs, rails, and ramps. The best skateboarders from all over the world were there. On the day of the final, Rayssa skated brilliantly. She landed **trick** after **trick**, smiling the whole time. When she fell, she laughed, got up, and tried again. The crowd loved her energy. At the end of the **competition**, Rayssa had won a silver **medal**. She stood on the podium with a huge smile, waving a small Brazilian flag. At thirteen years and 203 days old, she became one of the youngest Olympic **medal** winners in history.

## A National Hero

When Rayssa returned to Brazil, she was treated like a national hero. The President called to congratulate her. Newspapers put her face on the front page. Her hometown of Imperatriz held a huge celebration. Thousands of people came to the streets to welcome her home. Children held signs that said "Rayssa, you **inspire** us!" Her social media following grew to millions. Companies wanted her to advertise their products. But Rayssa stayed humble. In interviews, she always thanked her family, her coach, and her friends. She said that the most important thing was not the **medal**, but doing what she loved. She also talked about the importance of girls in sport, saying that she wanted to show other girls that they could do anything they wanted, no matter where they came from.

## Paris 2024

After Tokyo, Rayssa continued to compete at the highest level. She won **championship** after **championship**, including multiple SLS World Tour events. She became the number one ranked street skateboarder in the world. In 2024, she travelled to Paris for the Olympic Games. The whole of Brazil was watching. The **competition** was tough. Rayssa faced strong opponents from Japan, Australia, and the United States. But she kept her focus. She landed her best tricks under enormous pressure. At the end of the final, Rayssa won a bronze **medal**. She was only sixteen. She had now won two Olympic medals, and she was still a teenager. Standing on the podium in Paris, she cried tears of happiness. She later said it was the proudest moment of her life.

## More Than a Skateboarder

Rayssa Leal is more than a great athlete. She is a symbol of what is possible when you have talent, hard work, and a family who believes in you. She comes from a small, ordinary town in one of the poorest parts of Brazil. She did not have expensive equipment or a famous coach when she started. She had a second-hand skateboard and a street outside her house. But she

had something more important: she had **determination** and joy. When you watch Rayssa skate, the first thing you notice is her smile. She smiles when she lands a **trick**. She smiles when she falls. She smiles on the podium. She smiles in interviews. Skateboarding is not just her sport — it is her happiness. That is why millions of people around the world love her. She reminds us that sport is not only about winning. It is about loving what you do, being brave enough to try, and getting back up every time you fall. Rayssa Leal started as a seven-year-old fairy on a skateboard. Today, she is one of the most famous athletes in the world. And she is still only sixteen years old. Her story is far from over.

## Vocabulary

Word	Definition
<b>viral</b>	spreading very quickly to millions of people on the internet
<b>costume</b>	special clothes that you wear to look like a different person or character
<b>trick</b>	a clever or difficult action that needs skill, especially in a sport
<b>competition</b>	an event where people try to win by being the best at something
<b>medal</b>	a small flat piece of metal given as a prize for winning in a sport
<b>professional</b>	doing something as a job and getting paid for it, not just as a hobby
<b>opponent</b>	a person you compete against in a sport or game
<b>incredible</b>	very hard to believe; amazing
<b>support</b>	to help someone by encouraging them or giving them what they need
<b>championship</b>	an important competition to find the best player or team in a sport
<b>inspire</b>	to give someone the idea or wish to do something good
<b>determination</b>	the quality of continuing to try even when something is very difficult

## Comprehension Quiz

**1. How old was Rayssa when her skateboarding video went viral?**

- A) Five years old
- B) Seven years old
- C) Nine years old
- D) Eleven years old

**2. What was Rayssa wearing in the viral video?**

- A) A superhero costume
- B) Her school uniform
- C) A fairy costume
- D) A princess dress

**3. What medal did Rayssa win at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics?**

- A) Gold
- B) Silver
- C) Bronze
- D) She did not win a medal

**4. What is the name of the town where Rayssa grew up?**

- A) Rio de Janeiro
- B) São Paulo
- C) Imperatriz
- D) Brasília

**5. What did Rayssa do at the 2024 Paris Olympics?**

- A) She did not qualify
- B) She won a gold medal
- C) She won a bronze medal
- D) She was injured and could not compete

## Answer Key

#	Answer	Question
1	<b>B</b>	1. How old was Rayssa when her skateboarding video went viral?
2	<b>C</b>	2. What was Rayssa wearing in the viral video?
3	<b>B</b>	3. What medal did Rayssa win at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics?
4	<b>C</b>	4. What is the name of the town where Rayssa grew up?
5	<b>C</b>	5. What did Rayssa do at the 2024 Paris Olympics?