

READING CHALLENGE

The Fastest Runner in the World

Usain Bolt ran 100 metres in 9.58 seconds. Nobody has ever been faster.

Level	A1 (Beginner)
Age Group	Teens (11-16)
Topic	True Stories
Duration	~12 minutes
Skill	Reading

Imagine this. You are standing in a big **stadium**. There are 80,000 people around you. Everyone is looking at the running track. Eight runners stand behind a white line. They are ready to run. A voice says: "On your marks. Get set." Then — BANG! The gun fires. The runners start. And one man is faster than everyone. Much faster. In less than ten seconds, it is over. The fastest man in the world crosses the finish line. His name is Usain Bolt.

A Boy from Jamaica

Usain Bolt was born on 21 August 1986 in a small town called Sherwood Content. It is in Jamaica. Jamaica is a small island in the Caribbean Sea. Usain was a tall boy. Even as a child, he was very, very tall. He liked sports from a young age. He played cricket. He played football. But he was best at running. He was the fastest boy in his school. He was the fastest boy in his town. When Usain was 12 years old, he was the fastest runner in his whole school district. His **coach** saw that he was special. The coach told him: "You should run. You can be great." So Usain started to train. He trained every day. He ran and ran and ran.

The Young Champion

In 2002, when Usain was only 15 years old, something amazing happened. He won the 200-metre **race** at the World Junior Championships. He was the youngest person ever to win a gold **medal** at this competition. The world started to notice him. But the next few years were not easy. Usain had problems with his legs. He got hurt many times. His back was not straight, and this caused pain in his legs. Some people thought he would never be a top runner. But Usain did not give up. He kept training. He listened to his coaches. He worked on his body. Slowly, he got stronger. And faster.

Beijing 2008: The World Sees Bolt

The 2008 Olympic Games were in Beijing, China. Usain Bolt was 21 years old. He entered the 100-metre **sprint**. Nobody expected him to win. He was known as a 200-metre runner, not a 100-metre runner. But in the **final**, Bolt was incredible. He ran 100 metres in 9.69 seconds. That was a new world **record**. And he did something nobody could believe: he slowed down before the finish line. He looked to his left. He looked to his right. He saw that nobody was close. So he slowed down and still won. He even hit his chest with his hand to **celebrate**. Scientists later said that if he had not slowed down, his time would have been about 9.55 seconds. The **crowd** went crazy. Bolt then won the 200 metres too, in 19.30 seconds. Another world record. He also won gold with the Jamaican team in the 4x100 metres relay. Three gold medals in one Olympics. The world had a new star.

The Lightning Bolt

After Beijing, everyone knew Usain Bolt. He got a **nickname**: "Lightning Bolt." It was perfect. Lightning is the fastest thing you can see in the sky. And Bolt was the fastest person on Earth. Bolt had a famous pose. After winning a race, he would stand tall. He would lean back a little. He would point to the sky with both arms, one arm up and one arm forward. It looked like a lightning bolt. Everyone loved this pose. Fans around the world copied it. It became one of the most famous poses in all of sport. Bolt was also very funny. He smiled a lot. He joked

with other runners. He danced before races. He was not just fast — he was fun. People loved watching him because he always looked happy.

Berlin 2009: Even Faster

In 2009, the World Championships were in Berlin, Germany. Bolt was ready. This time, he did not slow down. In the 100-metre final, he ran as fast as he could. His time: 9.58 seconds. A new world record. Nobody has broken this record since then. Think about that. In 9.58 seconds, Bolt ran 100 metres. That is about 37 kilometres per hour. That is faster than a city bus. His top speed during the race was about 44.72 kilometres per hour. That is very, very fast for a human. Bolt also broke the 200-metre world record in Berlin. He ran it in 19.19 seconds. Two world records in one week. He was the fastest [athlete](#) the world had ever seen.

More Olympics, More Gold

At the 2012 Olympic Games in London, Bolt won three more gold medals. He won the 100 metres, the 200 metres, and the 4x100 relay. He was the first person in history to win both the 100 and 200 metres at two Olympic Games in a row. The [title](#) of "fastest man alive" was his again. Then, at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Bolt did it again. Three more gold medals. 100 metres. 200 metres. 4x100 relay. He was 30 years old now. Most sprinters are finished at 30. But not Bolt. He stood on the track, in his [lane](#), and he was still the best. In total, Bolt won eight Olympic gold medals. He won at three different Olympic Games. He never lost an Olympic 100-metre or 200-metre final. He was simply the best.

Life After Running

In 2017, Bolt ran his last race. It was at the World Championships in London. He did not win this time. He came third in the 100 metres. And in the relay, he got hurt and could not finish. It was a sad ending. But Bolt smiled. He waved to the crowd. He did his lightning bolt pose one last time. Then he [retired](#). After running, Bolt tried to become a football player. He played for a team in Australia for a short time. But he was not as good at football as he was at running. So he stopped. Today, Bolt is a businessman. He has a company that makes electric scooters. He has a restaurant in Jamaica. He is also a father. He has three children. He lives in Jamaica and is still very famous. He sometimes goes to big sports events. When people see him, they always ask him to do the lightning bolt pose. And he always does it. With a big smile.

Why Was Bolt So Fast?

Scientists have studied Usain Bolt for years. Why was he so fast? First, he is very tall: 1.95 metres. Most sprinters are shorter. Shorter people can start faster. But Bolt was different. His long legs meant that he took fewer steps. In the 100-metre race, most runners take about 44 steps. Bolt took only about 41 steps. Each step was very long — about 2.44 metres. That is huge. He also had very strong legs. His legs pushed him forward with a lot of power. And his body was very relaxed when he ran. Many runners look stressed. Bolt looked easy. He looked like he was having fun. Some scientists say that Bolt was a "once in a lifetime" athlete. We may never see another runner like him. His world records — 9.58 for 100 metres and 19.19

for 200 metres — may last for many years. Maybe they will last forever. Nobody knows. But one thing is sure: Usain Bolt is the fastest person who has ever lived. And he did it all with a smile.

Vocabulary

Term	Definition
race	a competition to see who is the fastest
medal	a small, round piece of metal given to the winner of a competition
record	the best result ever in a sport or activity
coach	a person who teaches and trains someone in a sport
lane	one of the narrow paths on a running track
athlete	a person who is good at sports and does a lot of exercise
final	the last and most important game or race in a competition
retire	to stop working or playing a sport because you are older
crowd	a large group of people in one place
title	the name given to a winner, like champion or number one
stadium	a large building with seats where people watch sports
nickname	a fun or short name that people call you, not your real name
lightning	the bright flash of light in the sky during a storm
celebrate	to do something special because something good happened
sprint	to run as fast as you can for a short distance

Comprehension Quiz

1. Where was Usain Bolt born?

- A) Trinidad
- B) Jamaica
- C) Nigeria
- D) Brazil

2. What is the world record for the 100 metres?

- A) 9.98 seconds
- B) 9.78 seconds
- C) 9.58 seconds
- D) 9.38 seconds

3. How many Olympic gold medals did Bolt win in total?

- A) Five
- B) Six
- C) Eight
- D) Ten

4. What was Bolt's famous pose called?

- A) The Arrow
- B) The Lightning Bolt
- C) The Champion
- D) The Star

5. What did Bolt do after he stopped running?

- A) He became a football player
- B) He became a teacher
- C) He started businesses, became a father, and stayed famous
- D) He moved to England

Answer Key

#	Answer	Question
1	B	Where was Usain Bolt born?
2	C	What is the world record for the 100 metres?
3	C	How many Olympic gold medals did Bolt win in total?
4	B	What was Bolt's famous pose called?
5	C	What did Bolt do after he stopped running?