

How Muhammad Ali's Life Reflected America's Struggles – Student Handout

Introduction

Legendary boxer Muhammad Ali died of natural causes on Friday in Phoenix, Arizona. He was 74.

Key Terms

Nation of Islam — an organization composed chiefly of African Americans, advocating the teachings of Islam and originally favoring the separation of black and white racial groups in the United States

heavyweight — a weight in boxing and other sports, typically the heaviest category. In the amateur boxing scale it ranges from 178 to 200 pounds

conscientious objector — a person who for reasons of conscience objects to serving in the armed forces

Essential Question

Do professional athletes have a role in society beyond playing sports?

Warm Up Questions

1. Who was Muhammad Ali?
2. Why was the Vietnam War such a turbulent time in U.S. history?
3. How do the lives of professional athletes reflect debates about American society?

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Why was Muhammad Ali a controversial figure?
2. Why was Ali's conscientious objection to military service significant?
3. Did Ali's public persona and boastful attitude help or hurt him in the long run? Explain your answer.