

# COMMUNICATION

## John R. Tunis's Epic of America

Leverett T. Smith Jr.

North Carolina Wesleyan College

John R. Tunis began to write children's sports stories in the late 1930s when he was in his late forties. His discovery of himself as a children's writer, his critical interest in sports, and the Second World War provided the matrix for some of his best writing. Four of these comprise a kind of epic of America: *The Kid from Tomkinsville* (1940), *World Series* (1941), *Keystone Kids* (1943), and *Rookie of the Year* (1944). These four books about a fictional Brooklyn Dodgers celebrate a vision of America as a team during World War II, raise and answer questions about the nature of a community and its leadership. *Keystone Kids*, the only book examined in detail, deals with the problem of how to create a team. Spike Russell, Dodgers' rookie manager, deals with racial prejudice on the team, and his success allows Tunis to praise the team both as a heroic entity and as a melting pot in which the American character is forged.