

Teaching Guide

SEGMENT 9, WEBISODE 11

Please note: Each segment in this Webisode has its own Teaching Guide



Segment
Overview



Let's Discuss

Charles Lindbergh's successful trans-Atlantic solo flight captured the attention of Americans and symbolized the optimism of the Roaring Twenties. While other aviators had unsuccessfully sought to win the \$25,000 prize offered by a wealthy businessman for a New York to Paris flight, Lindbergh succeeded—and he did it alone. Lindbergh, a shy, talented pilot and engineer, helped design a plane for the flight, the *Spirit of St. Louis*. His thirty-three hour flight catapulted him into international fame and jump-started the aviation industry.

The relentless media coverage of Charles Lindbergh's flight was one element in the optimistic, feel-good Twenties that distracted Americans from the danger signs in the ever-expanding stock market. The stock market expanded dramatically during the Roaring Twenties, fueling a time of prosperity, materialism, optimism, growth, and financial speculation. The optimism of the period, however, would soon crash and burn when the stock market collapsed in 1929.

Teacher Directions

1. Students, in small teams, discuss the following questions.

- Why did Lindbergh's flight excite and amaze the world?
- Why did Lindbergh succeed where others had failed?
- What did financial experts expect would happen in the stock market in the 1920s?

2. Make sure students understand the following points in discussing the questions.

Just twenty-four years after the Wright brothers proved flight was possible, Lindbergh demonstrated that its possibilities were nearly limitless. People marveled that the young, handsome, aviator had flown alone across the Atlantic. He symbolized the American spirit of adventure, inventiveness, and daring. While he was nicknamed "Lucky Lindy," his success was only partially due to luck; a talented pilot and engineer, he stripped and redesigned a plane to make the long journey without refueling.

During the boom years of the 1920's, many financial experts believed the stock market would continue to expand without limits.



History Sleuth

Teacher Directions

1. Distribute the Student Sheet: *Lindbergh Crosses the Atlantic*.
2. Working with teammates, students read the newspaper account of Lindbergh's landing in Paris and discuss the following questions.
 - Why did people believe Lindbergh would not succeed?
 - Why did Lindbergh's flight arouse such excitement?
3. Students compare Lindbergh's flight to a news event of their lifetime.
 - How were these events similar? Different?
 - Why did the modern event capture the public's attention?



What do you Think?

Teacher Directions

Lindbergh became an international hero for his bravery, skill, and determination. Students discuss the question "What makes a hero?" Students list one or two individuals they consider heroic. Students consider why these individuals are heroes and list their qualities or accomplishments.



Moving Toward Freedom

Teacher Directions

1. Distribute the Student Sheet: *Queen Bess the Barnstormer*. Students read the Student Sheet and discuss the following questions with team partners.
 - What were Bessie's goals?
 - What obstacles did Bessie face? How did she overcome them?
 - How did Bessie Coleman help America move toward freedom?
2. Students write a brief news announcement announcing Bessie Coleman's fatal air accident and eulogizing her life.



Connections

Teacher Directions

Use the following activities with your students.

Language Arts — Lindbergh moved to Europe for a number of years to escape harassment from the media. Students write an essay presenting the pros and cons of newspaper coverage of private individuals. Should any limits be placed on the media's access to individuals? Should the media be allowed to do anything to get a story?

Geography — Students trace Lindbergh's flight from New York to Paris.

Queen Bess the Barnstormer



Bessie Armstrong loved to fly. Bessie, also known as “Queen Bess,” was the first African American woman pilot.

Bessie, whose family was poor, worked and saved money to attend college and beauty school. When her brothers returned from fighting in France during World War I, they told her stories of French women pilots. Bessie decided she wanted to learn to fly. When white American pilots refused to give her flying lessons, she didn’t give up. She knew that in France, people of her race faced less prejudice. She worked, saved money, took French lessons, and went to France, where she studied aviation and earned a pilot’s license.

Daredevil pilots like Bessie were called “barnstormers” because their aerial tricks included swooping low over barns and fields to thrill audiences. Stunt flying was dangerous, and barnstormers risked their lives on every flight. Large crowds paid to see barnstormers fly loops and spins, fly upside down, or perform other aerial acrobatics. While some women performed stunts such as wing walking or changing planes in mid-air, Bessie wanted to fly planes, not walk on them. Bessie’s flight at the Chicago Checkerboard Airdome in 1922 was the first performance ever given by a black woman pilot.

She saved enough money to buy her own plane and went on flying and speaking tours. “The air is the only place free from prejudices,” she said. Whenever she could, she visited African American churches, schools, and community groups to talk about aviation and encourage young people to fight racism and strive for high goals. She refused to perform in any air shows that did not permit African Americans to attend. Bessie had a dream: to open a flight school for African Americans. Unfortunately, Queen Bess fell to her death while practicing for an air show.

While Bessie did not live long enough to open a flight school for African Americans, she proved that African American pilots could fly as well as whites. In 1995, the United States Postal Service issued a stamp in her honor.

Lindberg Crosses the Atlantic

by Edwin James

On May 20, 1927 Charles Lindbergh took off from Roosevelt Field outside New York City and headed east. After thirty-three and a half hours and 3,600 miles, he landed on an airfield near Paris. This excerpt is taken from an article that appeared in the New York Times.

...It was high drama. Picture the scene. Almost if not quite 100,000 people were massed on the east side of Le Bourget air field. Some of them had been there six and seven hours. Big arc lights on all sides with enormous electric flares were flooding the landing field. From time to time rockets rose and burst in varied lights over the field. Seven thirty, the hour announced for the arrival, had come and gone. Then 8 o'clock came, and no Lindbergh; at 9 o'clock the sun had set but then came reports that Lindbergh had been seen over Cork. Then he had been seen over Valentia in Ireland and then over Plymouth.



Charles Lindbergh rides before admiring spectators at Denver University Stadium in 1927.

Suddenly a message spread like lightning. The aviator had been seen over Cherbourg. However, remembering the messages telling of Captain Nungesser's flight, the crowd was skeptical.

"One chance in a thousand!" "Oh, he cannot do it without navigating instruments!" "It's a pity because he was a brave boy." Pessimism had spread over the great throng by 10 o'clock. The stars came out and a chill wind blew.

...Stamping their feet in the cold, the crowd waited patiently. It seemed quite apparent that nearly every one was willing to wait all night, hoping against hope.

Again landing lights glared and almost by the time they had flooded the field the gray white plane had lighted on the far side nearly half a mile from the crowd. It seemed to stop almost as it hit the ground, so gently did it land.

And then occurred a scene which almost passed description. Two companies of soldiers with fixed bayonets and the Le Bourget field police, reinforced by Paris agents, had held the crowd in good order. But as the lights showed the plane landing, much as if a picture had been thrown on a moving picture screen, there was a mad rush. The movement of humanity swept over soldiers and by policemen and there was the wild sight of thousands of men and women rushing madly across half a mile of the not too even ground. Soldiers and police tried for one small moment to stem the tide, then they joined it, rushing as madly as anyone else toward the aviator and his plane.

...An instant later he was on the shoulders of half a dozen persons who tried to bear him from the field.

The crowd crushed about the aviator and his progress was halted until a squad of soldiers with fixed bayonets cleared a way for him.

...When it seemed the excited French men and women would overwhelm the frail figure which was being carried on the shoulders of a half dozen men, two aviators rushed up with a Renault car and hastily snatching Lindy from the crowd, sped across the field to the commandant's office.

Then followed an almost cruel rush to get near the airman. Women were thrown down and a number trampled badly. The doors of the small building were closed, but the windows were forced by enthusiasts, who were promptly ejected by soldiers.

Spurred on by reports spread in Paris of the approach of the aviator, other thousands began to arrive from the capital. The police estimate that within half an hour after Captain Lindbergh landed there were probably 100,000 storming the little building to get a sight of the idol of the evening.

Suddenly he appeared at a window, waving his helmet...

Not since the armistice of 1918 had Paris witnessed a downright demonstration of popular enthusiasm and excitement equal to that displayed by the throngs flocking to the boulevards for news of the American flier, whose personality has captured the hearts of the Parisian.