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Activity Guide

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The Glorious Flight

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ABOUT THE STORY

After the first airship ever seen over the city of Cambrai, France causes Louis Bleriot to distractedly drive his car into a pumpkin cart, Mr. Bleriot becomes determined to build a flying machine of his own. After ten attempts with ten different designs, Mr. Bleriot becomes one of the great pioneers of aviation, and the first person to fly across the English Channel.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ ILLUSTRATOR

Alice and Martin Provensen were married in 1944. Together they have written and illustrated several awardwinning books, including this one which earned them the Caldecott Medal. Alice studied at the Art Institute of Chicago, the University of California in Los Angeles, and with the Art Students League in New York. Martin studied at the Art Institute of Chicago as well as at the University of California at Berkeley. Mr. Provensen passed away in 1987. Ms. Provensen lives in rural New York.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Explain that before people could travel by jet or space shuttle, they first had to learn how to fly. After the Wright brothers' successful first flight in a powered plane in 1903, other aviation pioneers worked hard to develop and improve techniques for flight. This book tells the story of Louis Bleriot, a French man who overcame the hazards of flight and became the first person to fly across the English Channel.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

1. How many children did Mr. Bleriot have? (*five*)
2. What is Mr. Bleriot distracted by when he runs his car into the pumpkin cart? (*first airship seen over his city*)
3. How many air crafts did he design in all? (*eleven*)
4. How many miles wide is the English Channel? (*twenty*)
5. How many minutes did it take Mr. Bleriot to fly over the channel? (*37 min.*)

Vocabulary

Be sure students have an understanding of the following terms. Depending on age, simply discuss the terms, or have children look them up in a dictionary.

Glorious, cockatoo, narrow, bruised, poises, soars, toast, valiant, aeronaut, readiness, signal, inevitable, cockpit, destroyer, motionless, propeller, prospect, English Channel

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Geography: Across the Channel

Use a map or globe to locate the English Channel, England, and France. Explain that the English Channel is actually an "arm" of the Atlantic Ocean that separates England from France for a distance of 350 miles. Use the scale on the map or globe to show how the channel's width varies from 20 - 100 miles. Point out that Bleriot wisely chose the narrowest point (Calais to Dover) to make his successful crossing attempt. Give each student a printout map of the area and use crayons or colored pencils to shade in each of the main areas mentioned above.

History and Math: Charting timelines

Visit the library and use its' resources to have the children create timelines and/or charts that outline the rapid development of manned flight in relation to the world's history. Depending on level of children, introduce Daedalus and Icarus and their interest in flight even in ancient times. Other names to suggest for research include the Wright brothers, Santos-Dumont, Earhart, Lindbergh, Goddard, Glenn, and/or Armstrong. Combine this activity with Internet searching. Use the information found to chart out a timeline spanning across a wall of the classroom.

Language Arts/Dictionary Skills: Word Roots in Action

The words aeronaut and aeroplane can be found in the book. Ask children if they can tell the modern day equivalents of these words (astronaut, airplane). Compare the root words aero and astro. Use a dictionary to compare their meanings and differences. Discuss what these things tell about the progress of air travel. Use this activity as a springboard for a further study of root words.

Arts and History: Automobiles in Action

At the beginning of the story, Mr. Bleriot is taking his family for a drive in their "shiny new car". Have children research what kind of car they might have been driving in 1901 France. Locate pictures and make dioramas with scenes of Mr. Bleriot and his family driving through town. Display around classroom. (If desired, combine this activity with Internet research.)

INTERNET ACTIVITY

Before you send children to do research using any of the keywords listed below, you may wish to try them yourself to be sure the sites are suitable.

Louise Bleriot: Locate additional biographical information about this aviation pioneer and use it to write short biographies. Display on bulletin board with Bleriot's picture and illustrations of his eleven different "airplane" designs.