

LESSON PLAN

HE FLEW FOR FREEDOM: CHARLES LINDBERGH

BRIEFING: Charles Lindbergh (1902-1974) was born in Detroit but grew up on a Minnesota farm. His father was a lawyer and, from 1907 to 1917, a U.S. Congressman. His mother was a chemistry teacher. Charles was mechanically inclined and went to the University of Wisconsin for two years, studying engineering. But he was passionate about flying and left school to become a barnstormer, trying daredevil tricks at country fairs. He enlisted in the Army Reserve to learn more about flying and graduated first in his flight school class in 1925. Then he became a mail pilot, flying between Chicago and St. Louis.

But Lindbergh had more ambitious goals. He wanted to win the Orteig Prize—a \$25,000 award to be given to the first pilot to fly solo (and nonstop) across the Atlantic Ocean. He convinced nine St. Louis businessmen to finance a plane, the *Spirit of St. Louis*.

Lindbergh took off from Roosevelt Field on Long Island, N.Y., at 8 a.m. on May 20, 1927. The weather was bad, and his plane shuddered as it took off. Many feared it wouldn't get off the ground. Once in the air, there was no radio for communication. The entire nation—and the world—prayed for his welfare. Finally, he saw Ireland below and headed toward Le Bourget Field in Paris, where 100,000 people cheered his landing on May 21 at 10:22 p.m., 33.5 hours after he started.

At only 25, Lindbergh became one of America's first celebrities. The rest of his life was filled with both triumph and tragedy. He married the writer and poet Anne Morrow. They were constantly harassed by the press; some blame the spotlight for the kidnapping and murder of their 20-month-old son Charles Jr. in 1932. Feeling unsafe in the U.S., the couple moved to Europe. When World War II began, Lindbergh returned to America. He was suspected of Nazi sympathies due to his isolationist stance and his acceptance of the German Medal of Honor. As a result, he wasn't allowed to enter the Army. However, in 1944, Lindbergh became a civilian adviser in the Pacific and flew combat missions.

After the War, Lindbergh wrote *The Spirit of St. Louis*, an account of his historic flight that won the 1954 Pulitzer Prize. He died of cancer in 1974. In 2002, to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the historic transatlantic flight, Lindbergh's grandson, Erik, then 37, recreated the journey aboard the *New Spirit of St. Louis*.

CURRICULUM LINKS: History, social studies, science, language arts

NEWSPAPER ACTIVITIES:

- The press pursued Lindbergh everywhere. Should reporters have the right to report on anyone they want to, in any way they want to, as long as they tell the truth? Do celebrities have any right to privacy? Why or why not? Are reporters in any way responsible for stalking incidents that sometimes plague stars?
- If Lindbergh's flight occurred today, what type of media would be able to cover it best on a minute-to-minute or hour-by-hour basis? What type of media would be best able to put the flight in perspective after it ended? Explain. How might a French newspaper report the story? Would there be a difference in emphasis?

CLASSROOM DEBATES:

- The Wright Brothers' first flight occurred 100 years ago. How does Lindbergh's achievement compare to theirs? Which was more important? Why? Was Lindbergh's flight important in the commercialization of aviation? Explain. If Lindbergh had not succeeded in his flight, would the world be different? Or would someone else have succeeded soon after? Who are the heroes of aviation today? What types of exploration are now taking place? How important is it to be the first to do something? Why do "first" achievements get so much more attention than the ones that immediately follow? What made Lindbergh such a celebrity? What "star" qualities did he have? How does he compare to contemporary celebrities?

RESOURCES—BOOKS:

- Joy Hakim's *Freedom: A History of US* (Oxford University Press, 2002), Charles Lindbergh's *The Spirit of St. Louis* (Scribner, 2003), James Cross Giblin's *Charles A. Lindbergh: A Human Hero* (Clarion, 1997), Virginia Meachum's *Charles Lindbergh: American Hero of Flight* (Enslow, 2002) and R.G. Grant's *Flight: 100 Years of Aviation* (DK Publishing, 2002).

RESOURCES—WEB SITES:

- Visit the Web site for the *Freedom* series at PBS.org. Read a biography and newspaper reports, find a timeline and a teacher's guide, or learn more about the history of flight. You also can read about Erik Lindbergh's recreation of his grandfather's flight in 2002 in a PARADE article and at the Web site of the X Prize,[®] an organization dedicated to jumpstarting the space-tourism industry.*

* For links to all mentioned Web sites, visit www.paradeclassroom.com/links/serials on the Web.

JOY HAKIM'S

Freedom A HISTORY OF US

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