



Discussion & Activity Guide

Developed by Kate Narita, fourth grade teacher at Center School in Stow, MA

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About the Author: Heather Lang



★ “Lang builds suspense with comparisons and questions . . . this title underscores the pilot’s achievement and conveys her exhilaration.”

—*School Library Journal*, starred review

★ “(A) magnificent, long overdue flight from history straight into the present.”

—*Booklist*, starred review

Heather Lang loves to research and write about real women who overcame extraordinary obstacles and never gave up on their dreams. Her picture book biographies include, *QUEEN OF THE TRACK: Alice Coachman, Olympic High-Jump Champion* (Boyd's Mills Press, 2012), *THE ORIGINAL COWGIRL: The Wild Adventures of Lucille Mulhall* (Albert Whitman, 2015), and *FEARLESS FLYER: Ruth Law and Her Flying Machine* (Calkins Creek, 2016). Heather also volunteers for the SCBWI and writes web articles for the National Children’s Book and Literacy Alliance. When she is not writing, she loves to go on adventures with her husband and four children. Visit Heather at www.heatherlangbooks.com.

Contact Heather Lang by email: heatherlangbooks@gmail.com

Grades 2-3

Before You Read Discussion Questions

1. Who knows what an aviator is? Mention synonyms such as pilot and flyer
2. Make an airplane T-chart and label it *Planes Then* and *Planes Now*.
3. Have students do a think, pair, share about planes and record their answers on the chart
4. Can women be aviators? Why or why not?
5. Would someone read the title please?
6. Look at this picture of one of the first airplanes. Is there any other information we need to add to our T-chart? Be sure to compare and contrast an open-air cockpit and an enclosed cockpit as well as levers versus computerized controls

While You Read Discussion Questions

1. Do you think it was fair that Mr. Curtiss wouldn't sell Ruth Law his latest flying machine? Why or why not?
2. What did Ruth Law do to prepare her biplane for the flight from Chicago to New York City? What does this tell you about Ruth?
3. When did this event happen? About how many years ago was that?
4. "To become an aviator one has to dismiss all fear." What does this quote tell you about Ruth?
5. What landmarks did Ruth hunt for? Why did she need to find those landmarks? Do you think it's as important for aviators today to find landmarks? Why or why not?
6. Why was Ruth able to keep flying even though her oil gauge read zero pressure? What does that tell you about Ruth?
7. "When your engine suddenly stops while your 2,000 feet in the air, it's some comfort to know if anything can be done, you can do it." What does this quote tell you about Ruth?
8. Do you think Ruth will stay in Hornell? Why or why not?
9. What does liberty mean? Did Ruth Law want liberty?
10. "At that moment Ruth realized she had done something more important than breaking a nonstop record." What had she done?

After You Read Discussion Questions

1. Does anyone know what the word discrimination means?
Define discrimination-the unfair treatment of different categories of people based on religious beliefs, skin color or gender.
2. Does anyone know what the word determination means?
Define determination- "a quality that makes you continue trying to do or achieve something that is difficult" Merriam-Webster definition
3. Think-pair-share about all the ways Ruth Law showed she had the determination to overcome discrimination.

Grades 4-5

Before You Read Discussion Questions

1. What do you notice about the title?
2. Why do you think the author chose the alliterative title Fearless Flyer instead of Fantastic Flyer or Fabulous Flyer?
3. Based on the title, predict three fears that most pilots might have had about flying back in 1916 that would be different from fears pilots face today.
-Have students write three predictions in their notebooks

While You Read Discussion Questions

1. After reading the first page, ask if anyone predicted pilots feared losing control of their planes more in 1916 than they do today. Follow up by asking if they think that was one of Ruth Law's fears based on the information on the first page, and have them explain why or why not.
2. What was Ruth's secret weapon? What fear do you think other pilots might have had that Ruth Law lacked because of her secret weapon?
3. Mr. Curtiss didn't think Ruth Law could handle his powerful flying machine on such a long flight because she was a woman. What is this called? How else did society discriminate against women at that time?
4. Make a text-to-self connection about a time you thought you could do something, but someone else doubted you. Did you achieve your goal anyway? Do you think Ruth will achieve her goal? Explain why or why not.
5. What adjustments did Ruth Law do to her biplane to help her achieve her goal? What obstacles did Ruth Law have to overcome that most pilots do not have to face today?
6. Did Ruth Law think a man was more qualified than her to be the first person to fly from Chicago to New York? Which Ruth Law quote best supports your answer?
7. Does Ruth Law think fear is a deterrent or a motivator? Which Ruth Law quote best supports your answer?
8. "When your engine suddenly stops while your 2,000 feet in the air, it's some comfort to know if anything can be done, you can do it." What personality traits can you infer about Ruth from this quote?
9. The author writes, "The sun drops lower, painting the sky." What literary tool is Mrs. Lang using? (personification)
10. What do you think Ruth Law meant when she said that she and the Statue of Liberty, "both feel alike about things?"
11. How do you think Mr. Curtiss felt when he learned that Ruth Law had flown to Governor's Island, New York?

After You Read Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think President Wilson asked Ruth Law to help him light the Statue of Liberty for the first time?
2. Although there is less discrimination today than there was 100 years ago, it still exists. Think-pair-share about an example of discrimination that exists today. Remember that discrimination occurs for many reasons such as someone's gender, their religion, their skin color, or their country of origin.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Comprehension Questions

Read each question and write your answers in complete sentences. Each question is worth two points. You will earn a point for the correct answer and a point for correct capitalization and punctuation.

1. What was Ruth Law's occupation?

2. Was this a typical occupation for women in 1916? Explain why or why not.

3. What was Ruth Law's secret weapon?

4. Did her secret weapon help her reach her goal? Explain why or why not.

5. Ruth Law wanted the freedom to fly wherever she wanted. What do you want the liberty to do?

Name: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

True or False

Read each statement below. Write a "T" for true next to each correct statement. Write a "F" for false next to each incorrect statement.

1. Ruth Law flew from Chicago to New York City without stopping. _____
2. Since Mr. Curtiss wouldn't sell her his newest plane, Ruth made adjustments to her biplane to reach her goal. _____
3. When her oil gauge read: zero pressure, Ruth kept flying. _____
4. In November of 1916, Ruth Law flew 512 miles, setting a new American nonstop flying record. _____
5. President Roosevelt asked Ruth Law to help him light the Statue of Liberty. _____

Vocabulary Cloze Activity

Write the **bolded** word that best completes each sentence in the blank.

altitude **aviator** **engulfed** **frigid** **perched**

1. Ruth Law was a fearless _____.
2. The metal guard Ruth Law installed protected her from the _____ wind.
3. As Ruth Law took off from Grant Park, she gained _____.
4. She _____ on the front of her plane.
5. When Ruth Law took off from Binghamton, a thick fog _____ her.

Comprehension, True or False, Vocabulary Cloze Answers Grades 2-3

Comprehension Question Answers

1. Ruth Law was an aviator who entertained people with her daredevil tricks.
2. An aviator wasn't a typical occupation for anyone in 1916 because the Wright Brothers first flight only took place thirteen years earlier. Furthermore, flying was considered dangerous and people didn't think women were strong enough to do it.
3. Ruth Law knew every nut and bolt on her machine. Since she was a knowledgeable mechanic, she could predict and troubleshoot problems better than aviators who didn't understand how their planes worked.
4. Her secret weapon helped her reach her goal because she didn't land when she saw her oil gauge read zero pressure. Instead, she decided to keep flying based on the sound of her engine.
5. Answers will vary.

True or False Answers

1. False
2. True
3. True
4. True
5. False

Vocabulary Cloze Answers

1. aviator
2. frigid
3. altitude
4. perched
5. engulfed

Name: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Comprehension Questions

Read each question and write your answers in complete sentences. Each question is worth two points. You will earn a point for the correct answer and a point for correct capitalization and punctuation.

1. How was Ruth Law discriminated against?

2. Was it unusual for people to discriminate against women in 1916? Explain why or why not.

3. In 1916, the suffragist movement was fighting for a constitutional amendment to give women the right to vote. Imagine you are a suffragist. How would you feel about Ruth Law helping Woodrow Wilson light the Statue of Liberty for the first time?

4. Ruth Law took many steps to help her reach her goal of setting the longest nonstop flight record including but not limited to adding gas tanks, installing a guard and charting her own course. Name a goal you have and describe three steps you need to take to reach it.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Personality Trait Multiple Choice Questions

Directions: Readers can infer personality traits based on people's quotes and actions. Read each Ruth Law quote below and choose the personality trait her words depict. It's a good idea to look up the definition of each trait before you answer the questions.

1. "What those men can do a woman can do."
 - a. confident
 - b. egalitarian
 - c. fearless
 - d. knowledgeable
 - e. resilient

2. "I could anticipate what would happen to the motor by the sound of it."
 - a. confident
 - b. egalitarian
 - c. fearless
 - d. knowledgeable
 - e. resilient

3. "When your engine suddenly stops while you are 2,000 feet in the air, it's some comfort to know that if anything can be done, you can do it."
 - a. confident
 - b. egalitarian
 - c. fearless
 - d. knowledgeable
 - e. resilient

4. "I was so excited that I hardly felt the gripping pains going through my body on account of the cold."
 - a. confident
 - b. egalitarian
 - c. fearless
 - d. knowledgeable
 - e. resilient

5. "To become an aviator one has to dismiss all fear."
 - a. confident
 - b. egalitarian
 - c. fearless
 - d. knowledgeable
 - e. resilient

Name: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Plot Arc Matching Questions

Directions: Fearless Flyer is an example of narrative nonfiction which means it's nonfiction that resembles a fictional story. Heather Lang used a plot arc to convey the facts about Ruth Law's flight from Chicago to New York City. Match each event to the appropriate plot arc component below.

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| 1. Ruth Law realized she did something much more important than breaking a nonstop record.

_____ | A. exposition |
| 2. In 1916, Ruth Law decides she is going to fly from Chicago to New York City even though many people didn't think a women could fly that far.

_____ | B. rising action #1 |
| 3. Ruth Law circled the Statue of Liberty.

_____ | C. rising action #2 |
| 4. After making necessary adjustments to her biplane, Ruth Law took off from Grant Park on November 19, 1916.

_____ | D. rising action #3 |
| 5. After setting a new American nonstop flying record of 512 miles, Ruth takes off again from Hornell for New York City.

_____ | E. climax |
| 6. With icicles in her hair, Ruth Law landed her plane on Governor's Island, NY.

_____ | F. falling action |
| 7. Ruth Law takes off from Binghamton, NY into a dense fog.

_____ | G. resolution |

Comprehension, Multiple Choice, Matching Answers

Grades 4-5

Comprehension Question Answers

1. Glenn Curtiss discriminated against Ruth Law because he refused to sell Ruth Law his latest flying machine because he thought she couldn't handle such a powerful machine on such a long flight.
2. It was common practice to discriminate against women in 1916. For example, in 1916 women couldn't vote, they couldn't join the military, and many employers refused to hire them.
3. Answers will vary.
 - a. As a suffragist I would be filled with hope that maybe women would have the same liberties as men.
 - b. As a suffragist I would have been angry at Ruth Law that she was helping to light the Statue of Liberty for the first time when our country was denying women the same liberties as men.
4. Answers will vary.

Multiple Choice Answers

1. egalitarian
2. knowledgeable
3. confident
4. resilient
5. fearless

Matching Answers

1. G-resolution
2. A-exposition
3. E-climax
4. B-rising action #1
5. C-rising action #2
6. F-falling action
7. D-rising action #3

Name: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

FEARLESS FLYER STORY PROBLEMS (Grades 2-3)

Directions: Below are facts about Ruth Law's flight from Chicago to New York City. Be sure to label your answers.

1. Originally, Ruth Law's biplane only held sixteen gallons of gasoline. But she added three gas tanks so that her plane could hold fifty-three gallons of gasoline. How many gallons of gas did she add to the plane?

SHOW YOUR WORK

2. Glenn Curtiss's latest flying machine held 205 gallons of gasoline but the one he built for Ruth only held sixteens gallons of gasoline. How many more gallons of gasoline did his latest flying machine hold?

SHOW YOUR WORK

3. Ruth Law flew nonstop from Chicago to Hornell. When she flew over Cleveland, she knew she had already flown about 305 miles. When Ruth Landed in Hornell, she had flown 512 total miles. About how many miles is it from Cleveland to Hornell?

SHOW YOUR WORK

4. The Wright brothers first flew in 1903, and Ruth Law set a new American nonstop flight record in 1916. How many years passed in between the Wright brothers' first flight and Ms. Law's record?
CHALLENGE: About how many days would that be?

SHOW YOUR WORK

Name: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

FEARLESS FLYER STORY PROBLEMS (GRADES 4-5)

Directions: Below are facts about Ruth Law's flight from Chicago to New York City. Be sure to calculate the answers for both parts of each question and include labels.

1. Ruth dressed for her flight at 4 A.M. in the morning. She took off from Grant Park at 8:25 A.M. Eastern time, which was 7:25 A.M. in Chicago.

How many hours and minutes passed from the time she dressed to the time she took off?

SHOW YOUR WORK

How many minutes passed from the time she dressed to the time she took off?

2. At 2:10 she touched down in Hornell, NY.

SHOW YOUR WORK

Since she took off at 8:25, how many hours and minutes had she been in flight?

How many minutes had she been in flight?

3. Ruth Law flew 512 miles in about six hours. On average, how many miles did she fly per hour?

SHOW YOUR WORK

4. She used fifty-three gallons of gas in about six hours. On average, how many gallons of gas did she consume per hour?

SHOW YOUR WORK

FEARLESS FLYER STORY PROBLEMS ANSWERS
GRADES 2-3

1. 37 gallons
2. 189 gallons
3. 207 miles
4. 13 years
4,745 days

FEARLESS FLYER STORY PROBLEMS ANSWERS
GRADES 4-5

1. 3 hours and 25 minutes
205 minutes
2. 5 hours and 45 minutes
345 minutes
3. $85 \frac{1}{3}$ miles per hour
4. $8 \frac{5}{6}$ gallons of gas per hour

Extension Activities

1. Heather Lang incorporates vivid verbs throughout her writing. Give students the following list of vivid verbs and ask them to incorporate them in their daily writing, or ask students to reread the text and identify twenty vivid verbs. Then, give them this list for them to check their work.

appear	dismiss	grumble	scan
chart	engulf	install	sputter
claw	erase	paint	squint
coast	fizzle	peck	steepen
dangle	glide	perch	swoop

2. Read Heather Lang's other biographies *Queen of the Track* and *The Original Cowgirl*. Discuss with your class that these books are also narrative nonfiction. Ask them to identify the exposition, rising action events, climax, falling action and resolution in those books. They can use their plot arc matching questions worksheet as a guide.
3. Ruth Law strapped a six-inch map to her leg. Give each child half a paper towel tube and multiple six-inch papers. Have them chart Ruth Law's course or chart another route that you're studying in class.
4. Read about Harriet Quimby. Here's a link to the MCAS selection about Ms. Quimby:
https://my.triand.com/ncc/production/testbundle/0004/4986/test_booklet/testbooklet.pdf?13403