

First Woman of Flight

Spotlight the life and times of America's most famous aviatrix, Amelia Earhart, as you celebrate Women's History Month in March!

Aviation Pioneer

Born in 1897, Amelia was a woman well ahead of her time. She attended college when few women went on to higher education, but she did not stay in school long before World War I influenced her to train as a nurse's aid. While in her twenties, Amelia took an airplane ride at a fair and her life was forever changed. She earned her pilot's license, and it wasn't long before Amelia bought her first airplane.

The rest is history! Amelia Earhart holds many records in aviation history. Although her flying career lasted only nine years—from 1928 to 1937—her efforts advanced commercial aviation as well as women's rights. Introduce this amazing woman by sharing David Adler's simple biography, **A Picture Book of Amelia Earhart** (Holiday).

The Challenger

Amelia Earhart challenged barriers by attempting tasks that were unheard of for women. In fact, few men in those days even dared to try what she did. Aviation was in its infancy at that time, and planes were not perfected or ready for the challenges that were to come.

Nevertheless, Amelia Earhart set and broke numerous aviation speed, distance, and altitude records. In 1928, she became the first woman to complete a transcontinental flight (from Newfoundland to Wales), and the public went wild over her accomplishment. Amelia attached little significance to this record since she was "just a passenger" on the flight. To prove her skill as a pilot, in 1932 Amelia Earhart planned a flight that would make her the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean. Scheduled to coincide with the 5th anniversary of the historic flight of Charles Lindbergh, the first person ever to cross the Atlantic alone in an airplane, Amelia used smelling salts to

stay awake and carried only a thermos of soup and a can of tomato juice. She planned to land in Paris as Lindbergh had, but weather hazards and equipment failure forced her to land in Ireland. The flight took 15 hours and 18 minutes. Today a transatlantic flight averages about 6 hours. For this achievement, Congress awarded Earhart the Distinguished Flying Cross. In 1935, she became the first person to fly solo across the Pacific Ocean from Honolulu, Hawaii to Oakland, California, and later that year she would be the first to make a solo flight from Los Angeles to Mexico City and on to Newark, New Jersey.

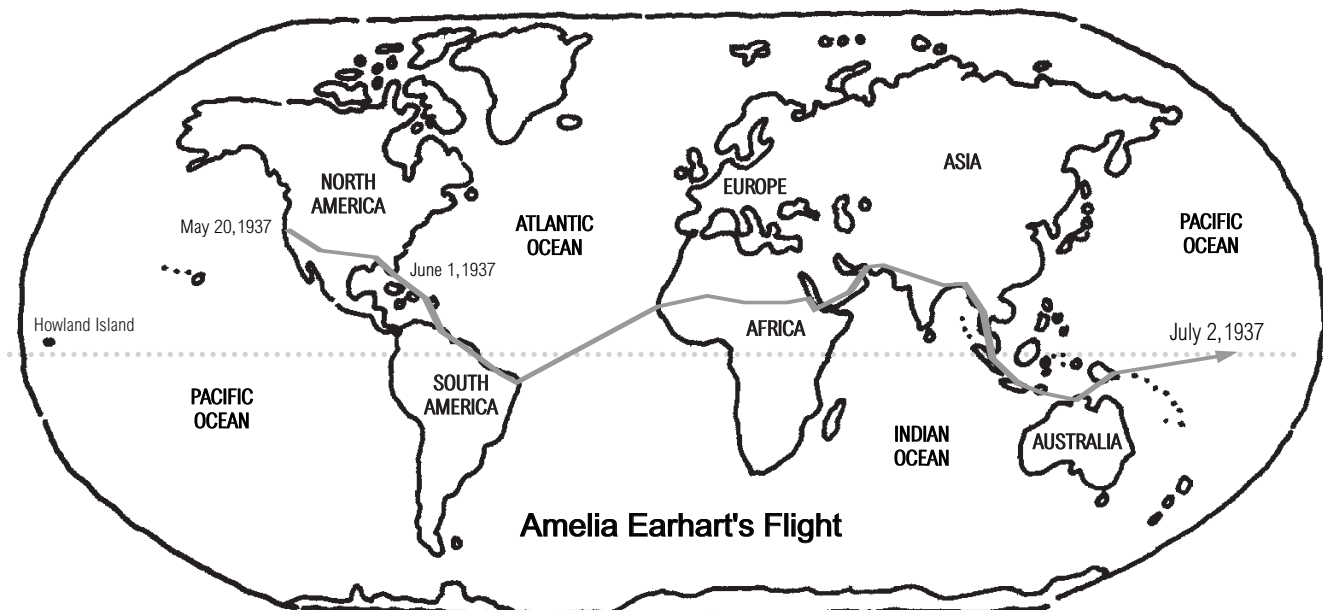
The Final Challenge

Later in 1935, Amelia began to plan what would be her greatest and last challenge. She dreamed of becoming the first woman to circle the globe, but this was not to happen. In 1933, pilot Wiley Post had flown around the world in a record seven days, but Amelia's global flight was to be more spectacular. Her plan was to fly around the world at its widest point—along the equator—a trip of 27,000 miles. On June 1, 1937, Earhart, accompanied by navigator Fred Noonan, left from Miami Florida. They flew to South

America and then on to Africa, Asia, and Australia. Having completed 22,000 miles of the trip, the pair was ready for the final leg over the Pacific Ocean back to California. On July 2, they took off from New Guinea with the intended destination of Howland Island. Howland Island was a tiny speck of land, only two miles long and less than one mile wide, in the huge Pacific Ocean. Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan never arrived at their destination and were never to be seen again. A massive search and rescue was launched, but no sign of the pair or the plane was found. The mystery that surrounds their disappearance is still unsolved today. Although the wreckage of a plane has been discovered, it has not been conclusively identified as Amelia's plane. Countless theories circulated after their disappearance. Some say the two were on a pre-war spy mission while others say they were shot down by the Japanese and died in a prison camp. Many have researched their plight, but the most plausible theory is that the plane ran out of gas, crashed, and sank into the Pacific Ocean. America and the world mourned Earhart's death, and she remains today everyone's favorite woman of aviation.

Other First Flights

Learn about many of the other people famous for first flights. Brothers Orville and Wilbur Wright made the first sustained powered flight in 1903. On this first flight, Orville piloted a 645-pound machine off the ground for a distance of 120 feet. That flight lasted only 12 seconds! Well-known aviator Charles Lindbergh was not the first person to fly across the Atlantic, but his flight was spectacular because he flew alone! Lindbergh took on a challenge by a New York millionaire who offered a \$25,000 prize to any pilot who could fly nonstop from New York to Paris. Flying a single-engine plane named the Spirit of St. Louis, Lindbergh battled fog, ice, and sleeplessness to arrive in Paris 33-1/2 hours later. A hero's welcome and worldwide admiration awaited him. Best of all, his flight inspired the development of American airlines as a viable form of transportation. Both the Wright 1903 Flyer and the Spirit of St. Louis are on display at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C.. Take a virtual tour at http://www.nasm.si.edu/events/spevents/qtvr_tour.cfm Then learn about these historic flights and more online at First Flight



Shrine...<http://www.firstflight.org/shrine.cfm>

Circumventing the Earth

Discover more about Amelia's flight along the equator by explaining that mapmakers have created an imaginary line that runs around the center of the Earth, a line that separates the Northern and Southern Hemispheres. This line is called the equator. Point out the equator on your globe and wall map and relate that if you were to measure this line, it would be about 25,000 miles. The approximate distance of Earhart's trip was 27,000 because she zigzagged north and south of the equator. Explain further that when you measure around the center of a circle or a circular object, it is called the circumference. Give each student a length of yarn that measures 12" and a ruler. Then let kids practice measuring circumferences. Demonstrate by wrapping the yarn around the object, marking the distance where the ends of the yarn meet, and measuring the length of the yarn on a ruler. Invite students to measure the circumference of other circular objects...a finger, pencil, chair leg, cup, rubber ball, etc.

Outstanding Women

Amelia Earhart married a famous publisher named George P. Putnam. She kept her maiden name, which was unusual for the 1930s, and also explained to her new husband that her career was most important to her. Before her last trip, Amelia wrote to George and said, "Please know that I am aware of the hazards... I want to do it. Women must try to do things as men have tried. When they fail, their failure must be but a challenge to others." Amelia had a sense that she could make a difference. She lived at a time when women had just won the right to vote. Women were not valued as much

as men...salaries were less for women than for men, women were not encouraged to go to college, medical school, law school, or business school, and there were few sports that women were encouraged to play. Certain fields, like aviation, were considered a man's domain. Amelia aimed to change that. Another woman who worked for equality for women was Eleanor Roosevelt, the wife of U.S. president Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Read aloud a special book that pairs these two women of history—**Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride** by Pam Munoz Ryan and illustrated by Brian Selznick (Scholastic). Inspired by the real-life friendship of Amelia Earhart and Eleanor Roosevelt, this fictionalized account takes these heroines and their audience for a ride. After reading the story, challenge students to describe the qualities of these women... smart, daring, outspoken, independent, leaders, strong, determined, adventurous, etc.



Follow the Flight

The flight of Amelia Earhart lends itself well to learning map skills. Plot Amelia Earhart's last flight on a map. Enlarge the map on page six of the reproducible booklet and make a transparency of it. Place the transparency on an overhead projector and have kids take turns using a colored marker to trace Amelia's flight from continent to continent. Earhart flew from Oakland, California to Miami, Florida. She left Miami and flew to San Juan,

Puerto Rico and then to Venezuela and Brazil in South America. From South America she flew to Africa over the Sahara Desert and across Asia to Thailand. Port Darwin in Australia was the next stop before flying to New Guinea. From New Guinea, her next destination was Howland Island. Write the names of the continents on the chalkboard to reinforce names and spellings. Be sure to identify the location of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

Amelia's Story

Celebrate Women's History Month by creating a take-home biography about Amelia Earhart. Duplicate the pages and have each child color, cut out, and assemble the booklet. Use a stapler to bind the pages together along the left edge. Read the booklet aloud along with the comprehension questions. Have students take the booklet home to read again, instructing them to read the questions, underline the correct answers in the story, and write the answers on the lines. On the following day, read over the questions and the student responses.

Websites

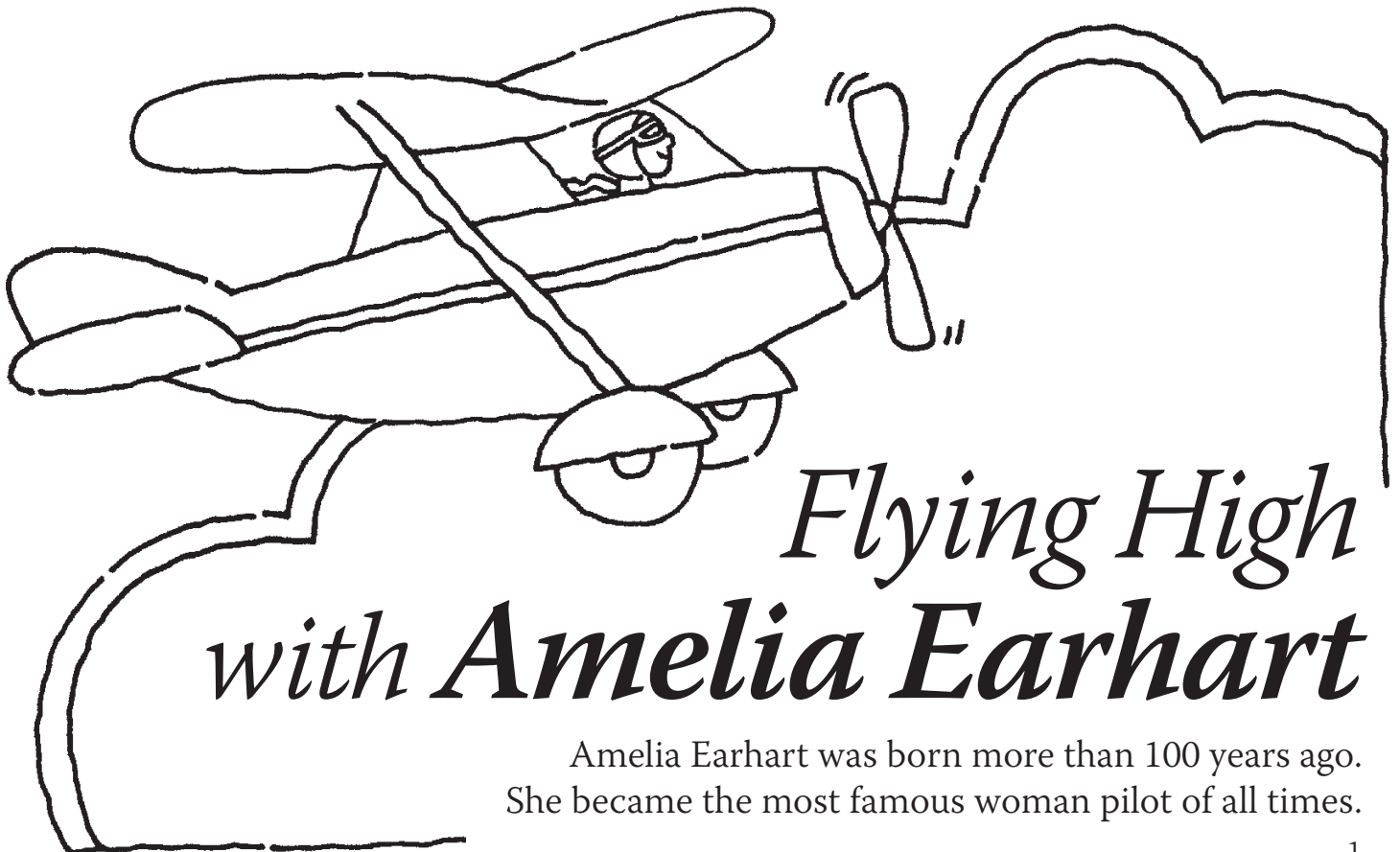
Check out these websites for great information about Amelia Earhart:

Amelia Earhart: Official Site
www.ameliaearhart.com

Amelia Earhart, A Biography
www.ellenspace.net/eae_intr.html

Two Legends of Aviation
<http://www2.worldbook.com/wc/popup?path=features/aviators&page=html/&direct=yes>

Women in Aviation and Space History
www.nasm.si.edu/research/aero/women_aviators/womenavsp.htm

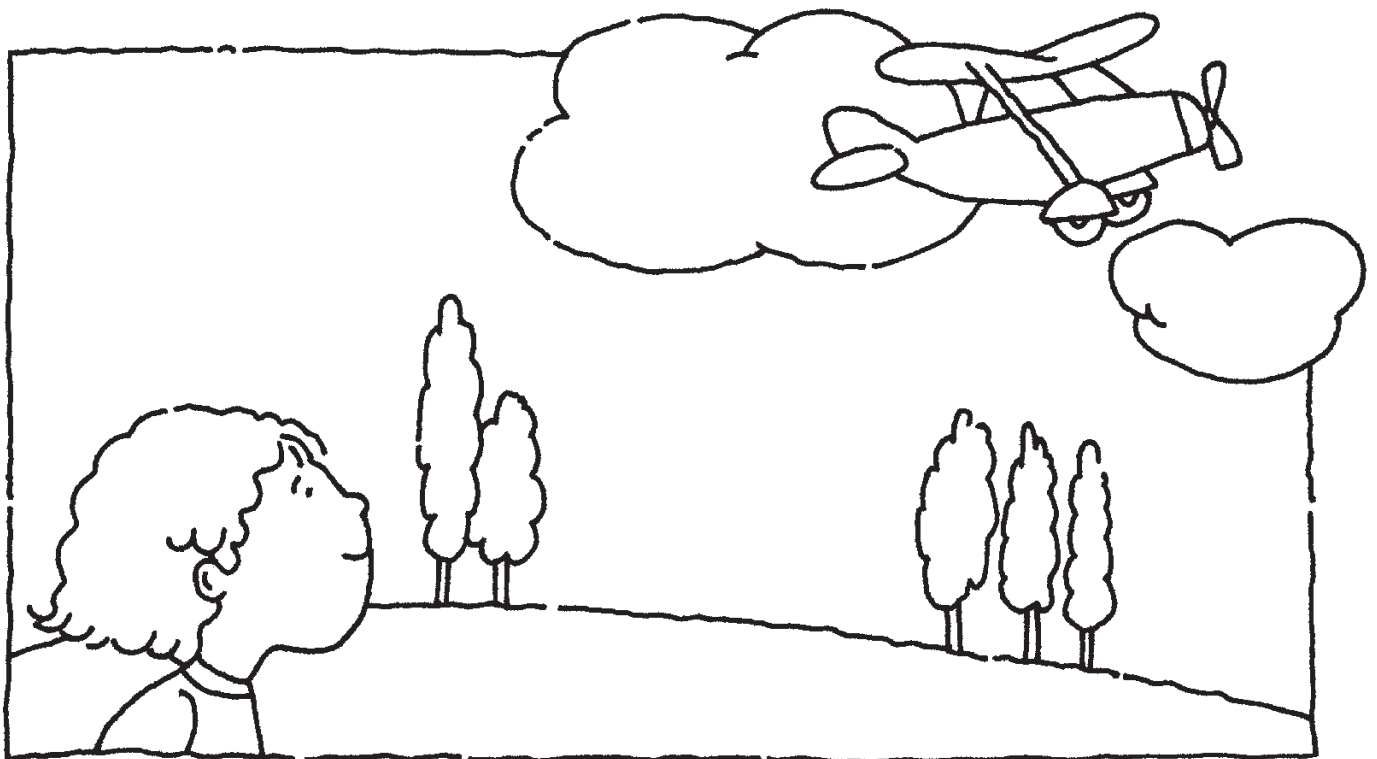


Flying High with Amelia Earhart

Amelia Earhart was born more than 100 years ago.
She became the most famous woman pilot of all times.

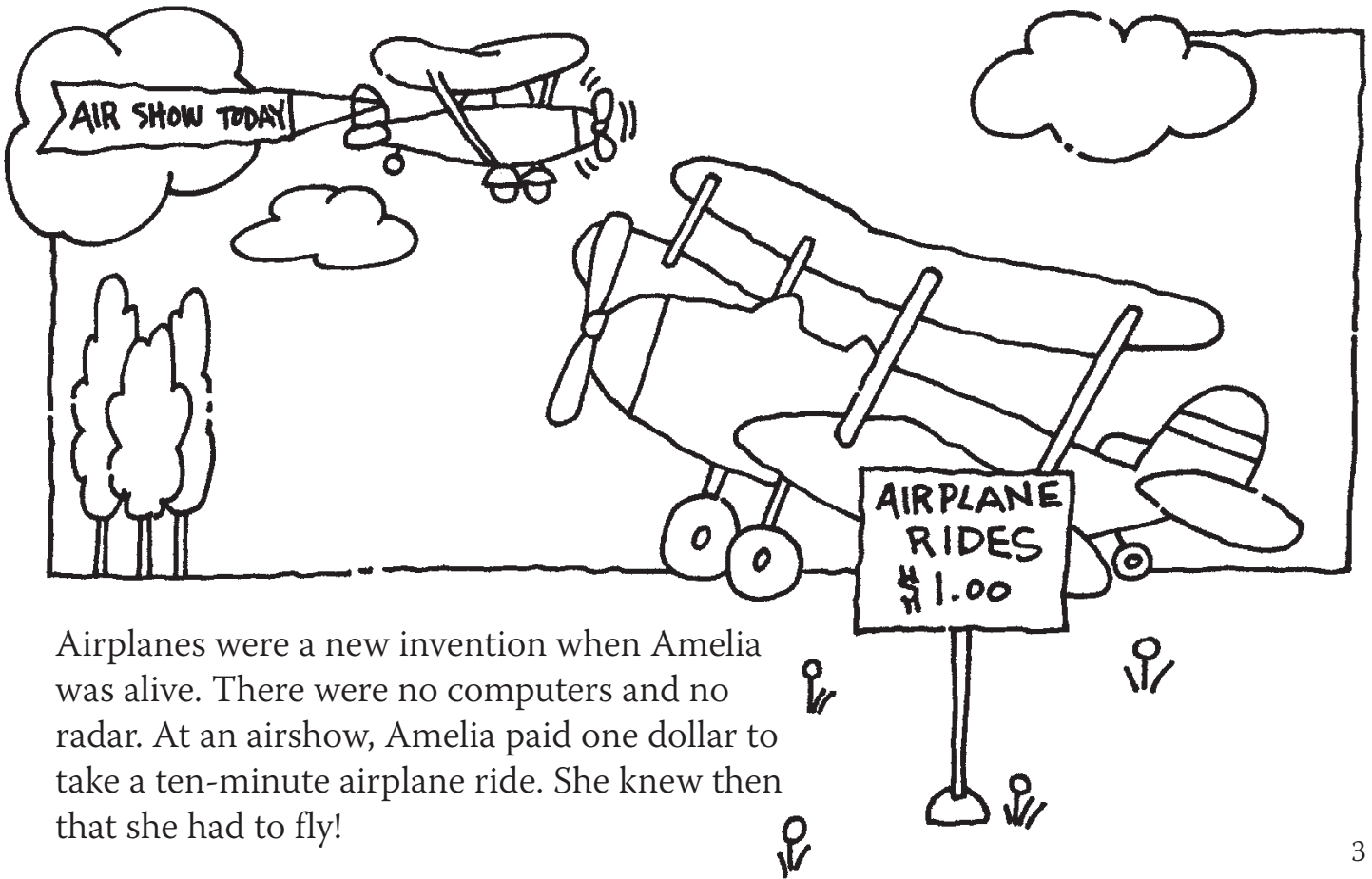
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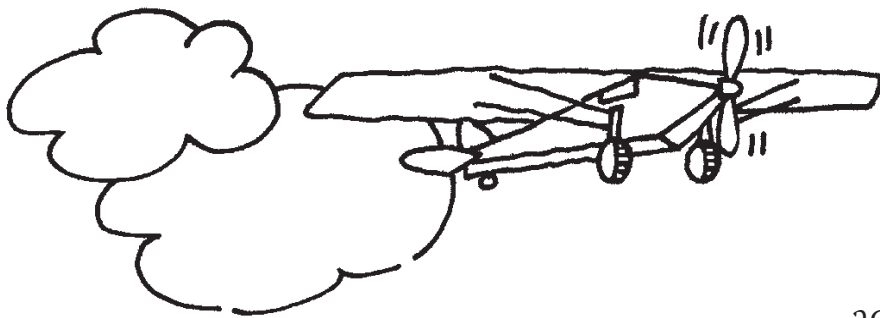


Amelia lived at a time when most women grew up to become wives and mothers. Not many women went to college and few women tried to learn how to fly an airplane. Amelia's dream was to become an aviator.

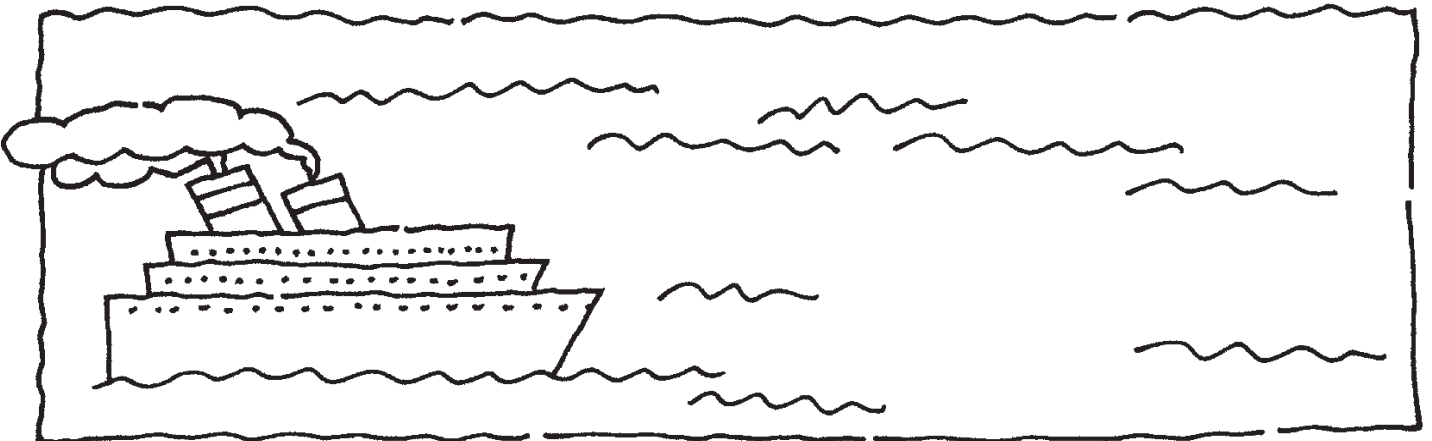
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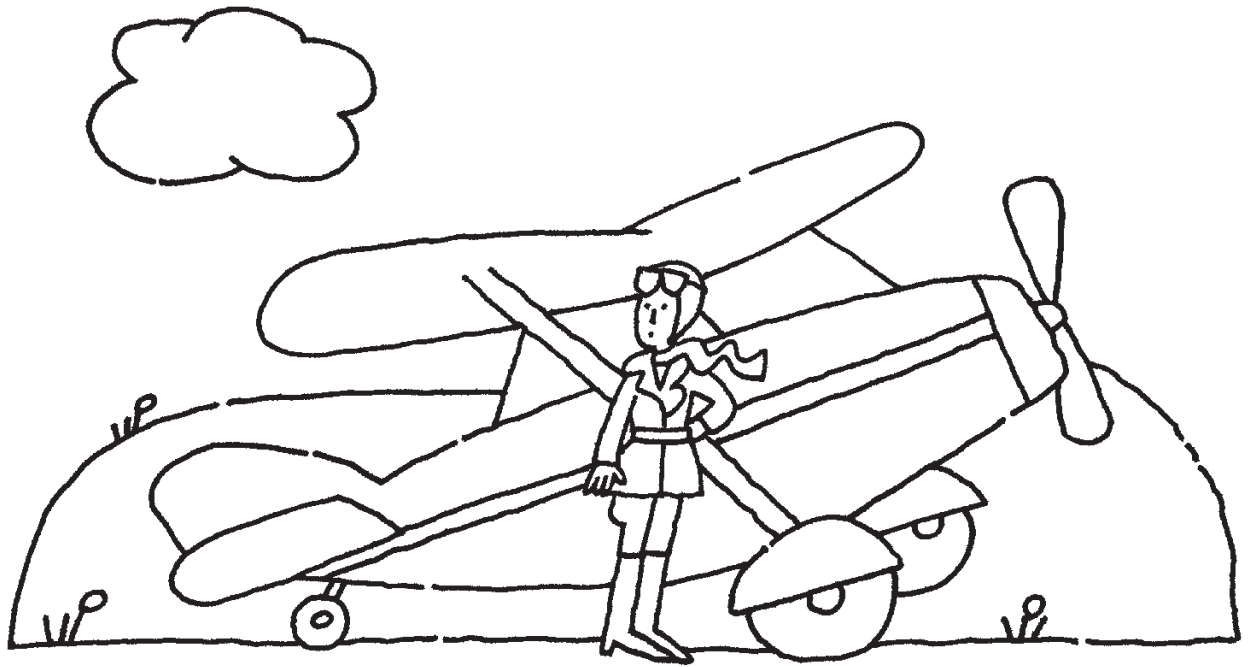


Airplanes were a new invention when Amelia was alive. There were no computers and no radar. At an airshow, Amelia paid one dollar to take a ten-minute airplane ride. She knew then that she had to fly!

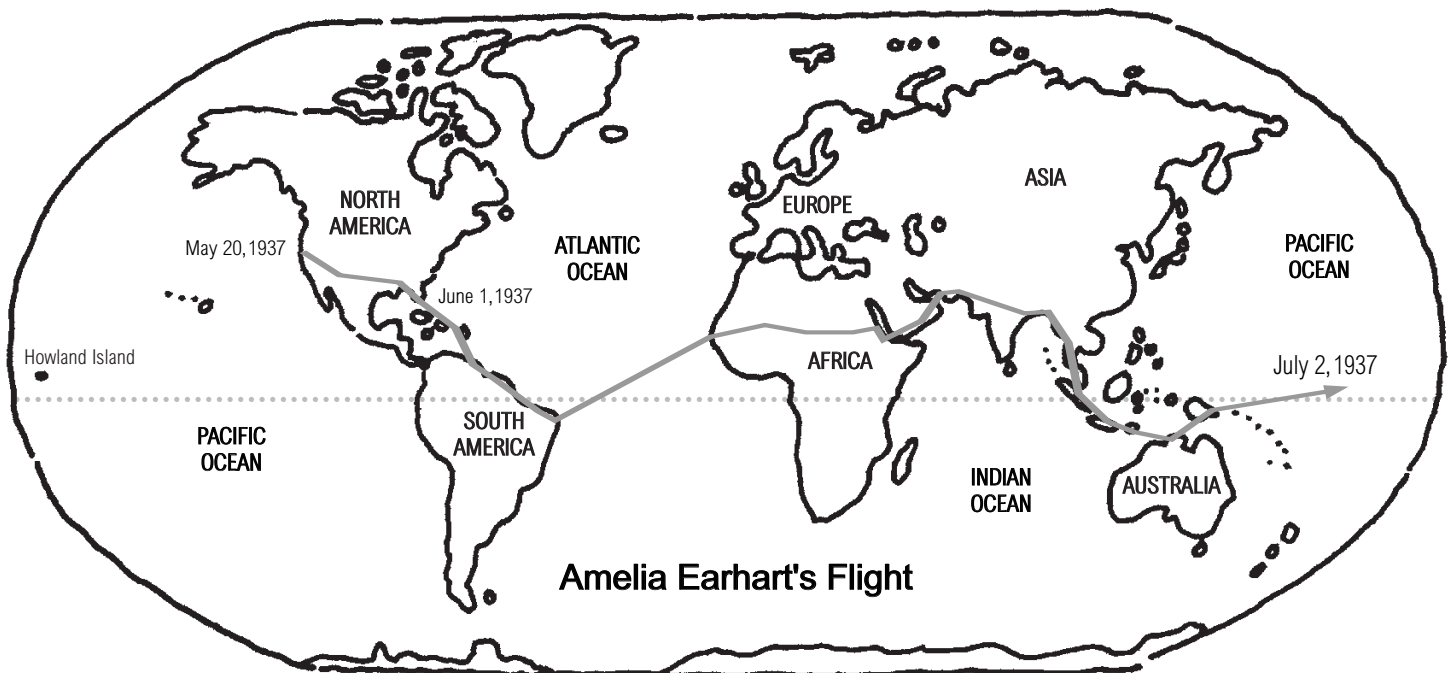


In Amelia's day, boats were the only way people could cross the ocean. Then in 1927, Charles Lindbergh became the first person to fly all alone across the Atlantic Ocean. Amelia wanted to cross the ocean, too.

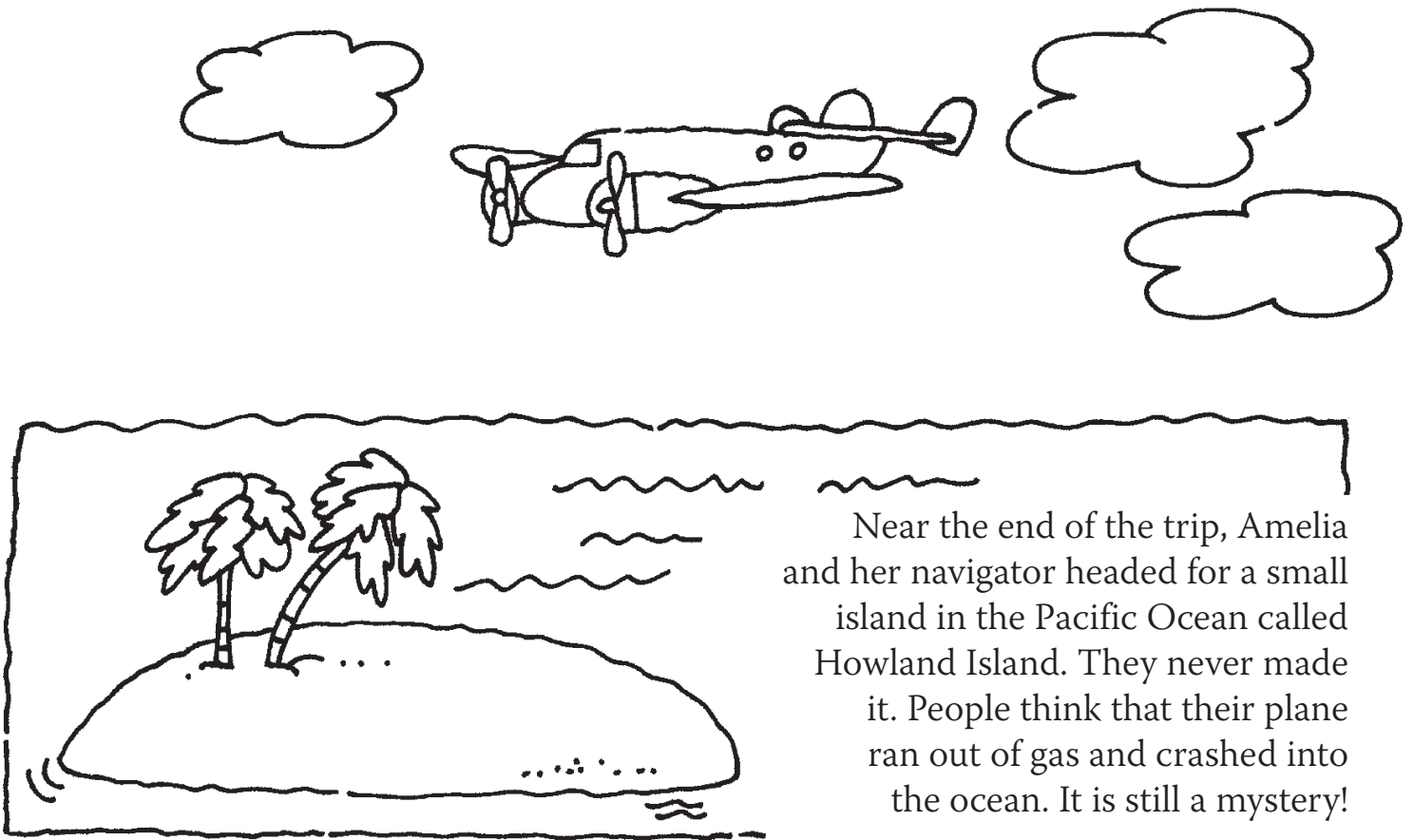




In 1928, Amelia became the first woman to cross the Atlantic Ocean in an airplane. She wasn't happy being just a passenger in the plane. Amelia wanted to be the pilot. Four years later, she became the first woman to fly alone across the Atlantic Ocean.



In 1937, Amelia began a trip that would take her around the world. She wanted to be the first person to fly along the Equator. She flew from America to South America to Africa to Asia and then to Australia.



Near the end of the trip, Amelia and her navigator headed for a small island in the Pacific Ocean called Howland Island. They never made it. People think that their plane ran out of gas and crashed into the ocean. It is still a mystery!

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How Well Did You Read?

Read the questions below. Find the answers and underline them in the story.

1. What did Amelia Earhart become when she grew up? *(page 1)*

2. What was Amelia's dream? *(page 2)*

3. What did Amelia know she had to do? *(page 3)*

4. Who was the first person to cross the Atlantic Ocean alone in an airplane? *(page 4)*

5. What was different about Amelia's trip around the world? *(page 6)*

6. What is the mystery about Amelia's trip? *(page 7)*

Amelia worked hard to make her dreams come true. What is your dream?

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