



## ABOUT THE BOOK

Just nine years after American women finally got the right to vote, a group of trailblazers soared to new heights in the 1929 Air Derby, the first women's air race across the US. Follow the incredible lives of legend Amelia Earhart, who has captivated generations; Marvel Crosson, who built a plane before she even learned how to fly; Louise Thaden, who shattered jaw-dropping altitude records; and Elinor Smith, who at age seventeen made headlines when she flew under the Brooklyn Bridge.

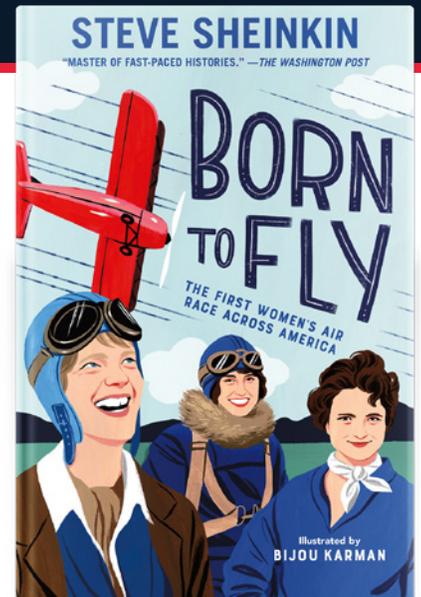
These awe-inspiring stories culminate in a suspenseful, nail-biting race across the country that brings to life the glory and grit of the dangerous and thrilling early days of flying, expertly told by the master of nonfiction history for young readers, National Book Award finalist Steve Sheinkin.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Steve Sheinkin** is the acclaimed author of fast-paced, cinematic nonfiction histories for young readers, including *The Port Chicago 50: Disaster, Mutiny, and the Fight for Civil Rights*; *The Notorious Benedict Arnold: A True Story of Adventure, Heroism & Treachery*; and *Bomb: The Race to Build—and Steal—the World's Most Dangerous Weapon*. His accolades include a Newbery Honor, three Boston Globe–Horn Book Awards, a Sibert Medal, and three National Book Award finalist honors. He lives in Saratoga Springs, New York, with his wife and two children.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**Bijou Karman** is an artist and illustrator from Los Angeles. She graduated with Distinction from Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, CA. Bijou is inspired by nostalgia and a love of print and bright colors. She spends most of her time working on illustrations for editorials, books, and advertising, but also works in gouache to create paintings centered around fashion.



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This guide is intended to support your classroom instruction. The standards listed throughout are aligned with the NCSS C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards and the Common Core State Standards for grades six through eight, but the activities and questions can be applied to multiple grade levels. Please adapt the activities and questions to meet the needs of your students. You know your students better than anyone else!

## BEFORE READING

1. Sheinkin's book tells the story of the twenty female pilots who competed in the 1929 Women's Air Derby. Prior to reading, create a chart to collect text evidence as you read about each pilot, their successes, and their challenges before, during, and after the competition.

**CCSS.RL.6.3** Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes, as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

**CCSS.RL.7.1** Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

2. The decade of the 1920s is a major part of the setting of this book. Prior to reading, research the Roaring Twenties and create an infographic to show major events of the decade and the culture of the time period. (Piktochart and Canva are free online tools to create infographics.)

**CCSS.W.6.7** Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.

**D2.HIS.1.6-8.** Analyze connections among events and developments in broader historical contexts.

## DURING READING

1. Each of the female pilots introduced in the chapter titled "Racing to the Sky" came to flying in a different way. Select two female pilots and create a Venn Diagram to compare and contrast their stories.

**CCSS.RI.6.1** Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

2. Why do pilots and historians refer to the years between World War I and World War II the "Golden Age" of aviation?

**CCSS.RL.6.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

3. Rewrite one of the close call experiences described in "Dreams and Nightmares" as if you were in the pilot's seat when it happened. Be sure to include descriptive details and relay events as they unfolded.

**CCSS.W.6.3** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

4. Could the female fliers also be described as Flappers? Why or why not?

**CCSS.RH.6-8.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

5. In the chapter titled "Racing for Records," Sheinkin describes how the female pilots competed against one another to break flying records. What records were broken and what risks did the pilots face as they attempted to break these records?

**CCSS.RH.6-8.2** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

6. Why did female pilots fight for an air race to compete in? Why was having the same opportunities as male pilots important to them?

**CCSS.RH.6-8.2** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

**D2.HIS.3.6-8.** Use questions generated about individuals and groups to analyze why they, and the developments they shaped, are seen as historically significant.

7. What were the other names used when covering the race in the media? How did the racers react to the nicknames for the race and themselves?

**CCSS.RL.6.1** Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly, as well as inferences drawn from the text.

8. What tools did the racers use to aid their navigation? How did this impact their ease in finding their landing locations?

**CCSS.RI.6.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.

9. “The pilots would soon look back on the chaos at San Bernardino and wonder. Is that where their troubles began?” (116). How does this sentence fit into the overall structure of the text? What does Sheinkin lead the reader to question based on this sentence?

**CCSS.RI.6.5** Analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, or section fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas.

10. What questionable events happened during the stop in San Bernardino? Do you think the issues the pilots found with their planes were unintentional or sabotage?

**D2.HIS.1.6-8.** Analyze connections among events and developments in broader historical contexts.

**CCSS.RH.6-8.2** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

11. After the death of Marvel during the race, critics argued the race was too dangerous for female pilots and should be ended immediately. Why did the female racers balk at the criticisms and continue on with the race?

**CCSS.RH.6-8.2** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

12. As the pilots raced across Texas, they faced many harrowing incidents. Describe these incidents in a storyboard format, including both images and texts.

**CCSS.W.6.2.A** Introduce a topic; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

13. Respond to Halliburton’s claim that, “women are lacking certain qualities that men possess, as men are lacking in certain qualities that women possess. Handling essential to safe flying is one of the qualifications women have not mastered successfully.” How did the female pilots who raced in 1929 refute his claim?

**CCSS.W.6.1** Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

## AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

1. In each city the racers attended a banquet they were served chicken for dinner, much to their dismay. Select five of the cities they stayed overnight and create a menu that represents the city’s local fare. Each city should include a beverage, an appetizer, a main course, and dessert, as well as reasons for each selection.

**CCSS.W.6.7** Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.

2. Create a map that shows each stop of the race, as well as the events that occurred beyond the confines of the race route. Design a key to help the readers of your map identify the locations you’ve added in addition to the race route.

**D2.GEO.1.6-8.** Construct maps to represent and explain the spatial patterns of cultural and environmental characteristics.

3. View the documentary that inspired the book, *Breaking Through the Clouds*, and compare and contrast the two formats of presenting information using a Venn Diagram. Summarize your findings by describing the different strengths of each of the mediums used to tell the story.

**CCSS.RI.6.7** Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

**CCSS.RI.6.9** Compare and contrast one author's presentation of events with that of another (e.g., a memoir written by and a biography on the same person).

4. Marvel Crosson's death was ruled accidental, but Sheinkin introduces various theories about her crash and death, including sabotage, mechanical error, and carbon monoxide poisoning. Rewrite her death certificate and determine her cause of death based on the evidence in the text and using additional research. Be prepared to orally present your findings and be ready to answer questions about your chosen cause of death.

**CCSS.W.6.1** Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

**CCSS.SL.6.4** Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

**CCSS.W.6.7** Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.

5. The female pilots were asked many questions by reporters that their male counterparts were never asked about: their appearance, their exhaustion levels, etc. Do you think the media treats females in the spotlight differently than males today? Research current people in the spotlight, including athletes, politicians, and celebrities. Compare and contrast the questions they are asked by reporters and determine if there is a difference in how the media treats people based on their gender.

**D2.HIS.2.6-8** Classify series of historical events and developments as examples of change and/or continuity.

**CCSS.W.6.8** Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources; assess the credibility of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and providing basic bibliographic information for sources.

**CCSS.W.6.7** Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.

**CCSS.W.6.2** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

Nicole Woulfe has a bachelor of arts in history and a master of arts in secondary education from the University of New Hampshire. She is currently teaching at Sanborn Regional Middle School and was named the 2018 New Hampshire History Teacher of the Year.