



Fly High! The Story Of Bessie Coleman

By Louise Borden, Mary Kay Kroeger

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Besse Coleman was born in rural Texas in 1892. She loved school, especially learning about numbers, and she was a good reader, too. Yet when it was time to pick cotton she had to work in the fields instead of going to school. Nevertheless, she was determined to be *somebody* when she grew up.

In her early twenties, Bessie moved to Chicago. Perhaps there she could "find a bigger life." In the city, Bessie heard many tales of World War I from returned veterans. She also heard there were woman airplane pilots in France. From then on, she was determined to become a pilot. But she soon found out that no one would teach a woman -- especially a woman with dark skin -- how to fly. To study in France was her only chance, and by working hard and saving her money, she managed at last to get there. Bessie Coleman became the first African-American to earn a pilot's license. She was *somebody*.

The inspiring story of her difficult early years, her success as a stunt pilot putting on daring air shows in many states, and her dedication to telling young African-Americans wherever she went, "You can be somebody. You can fly high just like me," is as moving and important today as it was then. Simply told with evocative full-color illustrations, this is a special book for today's young people.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Written for an older audience than aimed for in either Lynn Joseph's *Fly, Bessie, Fly* or Reeve Lindbergh's *Nobody Owns the Sky!: The Story of 'Brave Bessie' Coleman*, this informative and insightful picture-book biography of the African-American aviator merits attention. Borden and Kroeger, co-authors of *Paperboy*, stress the adversities of Bessie Coleman's childhood in rural Texas at the turn of the 20th century and emphasize her extraordinary perseverance. As a girl, Bessie struggles to get an education, even when she must pick cotton instead of attending school; later, at 18, Bessie enrolls in "catch-up classes" and is placed in sixth grade at a private college, but her money runs out after only one term. Undefeated in her determination to become "somebody," Bessie eventually moves to Chicago in 1915 and, later, learns of French women who piloted planes during WWI. From that point on, Bessie resolves to fly; when no American pilots agree to teach her, she saves up money and enrolls at a school in France, becoming the first African-American to earn a pilot's license. At once breezy and grounded, the rhythmic text is arranged in short, verse-like lines, which should encourage reluctant readers to climb on board. Flavin's (*Pushing Up the Sky*) pebbly gouaches are atmospheric if a bit stiff, capitalizing on Borden and Kroeger's optimism. A flight well worth taking. Ages 9-12. (Jan.)

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From School Library Journal

K-Gr 4-The authors' flair for imparting history soars in this biography of the first African American to earn a pilot's license. From her difficult childhood spent picking cotton in Texas to her grand achievements in aviation, Coleman's personality shines through. The warm illustrations done in gouache on colored paper mix exciting images of the aviator flying her plane with quieter glimpses of her interacting with friends and family members. The straightforward sentence structure keeps the action moving and will capture reluctant readers. Coleman's affinity for children will captivate youngsters, who will freely mourn the early demise of the "très chic! aviatrix" who often told others, "You can be somebody, too." A first-rate follow-up to Borden's *Good-Bye, Charles Lindbergh* (McElderry, 1998).-Gay Lynn Van Vleck, Henrico County Library, Glen Allen, VA

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From [Booklist](#)

Ages 6-9. This short, highly illustrated biography introduces aviatrix Bessie Coleman, who in 1921 became the first African American with a pilot's license. Coleman, who picked cotton as a child in Texas, moved to Chicago as a young woman and was seized with the desire to fly an airplane. When that opportunity was denied to her in America, she saved her money, learned French, and moved to France, where she earned an international pilot's license. Throughout the text, the authors emphasize Coleman's determination to "be somebody," a resounding inspirational message for youngsters. The writing is clear and informative. Even the potentially difficult section on Coleman's death in a plane crash is handled with plainspoken dignity. Flavin contributes a series of soft-edged gouache paintings that express beauty and harmony in every aspect of Coleman's life. Pair this with Reeve Lindbergh's *Nobody Owns the Sky* (1996) for the same age group.

Carolyn Phelan

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jesse Nance:

Reading a reserve tends to be new life style on this era globalization. With examining you can get a lot of information that can give you benefit in your life. With book everyone in this world may share their idea. Guides can also inspire a lot of people. A lot of author can inspire their reader with their story or even their experience. Not only the storyline that share in the publications. But also they write about the ability about something that you need illustration. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach children, there are many kinds of book that you can get now. The authors on this planet always try to improve their expertise in writing, they also doing some study before they write to their book. One of them is this Fly High! The Story Of Bessie Coleman.

Virginia Gauvin:

Often the book Fly High! The Story Of Bessie Coleman has a lot of knowledge on it. So when you make sure to read this book you can get a lot of benefit. The book was authored by the very famous author. Tom makes some research prior to write this book. This book very easy to read you can obtain the point easily after perusing this book.

Mae Marks:

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