



Classroom Guide

Title: **Ruth Law Thrills a Nation**

Author: **Don Brown**

Illustrator: **Don Brown**

Theme: In spite of the incredible odds against them, strong determination enables people to meet goals that may seem out of reach.

Program Summary: This true story describes the record-breaking flight of a daring woman pilot, Ruth Law, from Chicago to New York in 1916. LeVar takes viewers on a trip through time from the barnstorming days and flying machines of Bessie Coleman, the first African American woman to get her pilot's license, to modern aviation machines and female pilots. Viewers will also see a teenage pilot who takes to the air for the first time, following in the footsteps of the great women who went before her.

Topics for Discussion:

Accomplishing a difficult task is generally more meaningful than completing an easy one. Have students describe something that was difficult for them to do (or learn to do) and how they managed to succeed.

Discuss “biography” as a type of literature. Have the book *Ruth Law Thrills a Nation* and other picture book biographies for the class to examine. Have them list characteristics of the books that make them identifiable as biographies.

Discuss the reasons why people thought Ruth Law could not successfully complete her flight.

Ruth Law was considered a hero. Discuss other heroes, past and present, and why they are considered such.

Curriculum Extension Activities:

Ruth Law encounters a number of problems in her flight. Have the students make a chart of these problems, and next to each one, write the means by which she overcame the problem.

Plot Ruth Law's flight path on a map of the United States. Use a travel website to determine how long a nonstop flight from Chicago to New York City takes today.

Have students research the contributions of other women aviators and create a timeline of their accomplishments. The following individuals can serve as a starter list: Jackie Cochran, Bessie Coleman, Amelia Earhart, Mae Jemison, Beryl Markham, Ruth



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Nichols, Harriet Quimby, Sally Ride, Blanche Stuart Scott, Katherine and Marjorie Stinson, and Louise Thaden.

As a class, write a newspaper story about Ruth Law's flight. Introduce the five W's (who, what, where, when, why) and have the students decide on the most important facts to include in the story.

Have students research different types of air transportation that represent a wide range of power sources, including gliders, blimps, hot air balloons, etc. Encourage creativity in the way they share their information, e.g., model, diorama, poster, individually made book, and others.

Contact a local flight school and invite an instructor to the classroom to talk to the students about learning to pilot a small plane. If possible, take a field trip to the flight school instead, so that they can see the cockpit and interior size of a small plane.

There was no television at the time of Ruth Law's flight. Role-play a TV reporter interviewing Ruth at the beginning and at the end of her flight. Have the class brainstorm what questions they would ask her.

Ruth Law never gave up. Have students make a list of other book characters they know, real and fictional, who never gave up. Have them make special notations on their list of fictional and nonfiction characters.

Book Review:

Flight by Robert Burleigh, illus. by Mike Wimmer

Supplementary Booklist:

Nobody Owns the Sky by Reeve Lindbergh, illus. by Pamela Papparone

The Glorious Flight: Across the Channel with Louis Bleriot by Alice and Martin Provensen

Related Themes:

- space flight
- transportation
- women in history



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Related Reading Rainbow Programs:

- Program #64 — Bored—Nothing to Do!
- Program #16 — Hot-Air Henry
- Program #31 — Space Case

About the Author/Illustrator: A lifelong history enthusiast, Don Brown became interested in early pilots while he was researching an article on women flyers for a magazine. *Ruth Law Thrills a Nation* was his first book for children.