

# Amelia Earhart

## Pre-reading

Questions: What do you know about Amelia Earhart?

Definitions: Endeavor – a serious attempt

Navigation – determination of travel directions for a ship or aircraft



Library of Congress photograph

## Reading\*

“Decide...whether or not the goal is worth the risks involved. If it is, stop worrying....” These words were spoken by Amelia Earhart. For decades, she has stood as a symbol of success and freedom for women worldwide. She is proof that we all can accomplish our dreams.

Amelia Earhart was born to Edwin Stanton and Amy Otis Earhart on July 24, 1897. Mr. Stanton worked for the railroad as a lawyer, but he lost his job due to alcoholism. Earhart and her younger sister busied themselves with hobbies that cost little or no money. They were encouraged by their parents to try new things including those that were typically reserved for boys such as baseball, fishing and insect collecting. The girls also loved to read and were very good students.

After graduating from high school in 1915, Earhart planned to continue her education at college. Those plans changed one day after she met four wounded World War I veterans. Meeting the veterans brought the war much closer to Earhart. In an effort to help, she became a nurse’s aide.

Earhart was fascinated by stories she heard of daring pilots who had spent the war fighting from planes. She also enjoyed watching airplane stunt shows where pilots looped and spun their planes through the air. On December 28, 1920, Earhart took her first airplane ride. After that first flight, she knew flying was her **destiny**. She took her first flying lesson on January 3, 1921.

Earhart worked for a telephone company as a file clerk to pay for her first flying lessons that carried a \$1,000 fee. In June 1921, she completed her first solo flight, and in 1922 she received her pilot’s license. Jobs for pilots were slim, especially for females, so she worked many odd jobs.

In 1927, Charles Lindbergh became the first person ever to fly alone across the Atlantic Ocean. The total distance was 3,610 miles, and it took 33 hours and 30 minutes for Lindbergh to complete the flight.

Five years later, on May 20, 1932, Earhart began her endeavor to be the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean. Though she encountered many difficulties during the flight, Earhart crossed the Atlantic in the record breaking time of 14 hours and 56 minutes.

Earhart became a symbol of the “new woman.” From her short, boyish hairstyle to her relaxed, casual dress, Earhart **defied convention**. She said, “Women must try to do things men have tried. When they fail, their failure must be but a challenge to others.”

In June 1937, Earhart began the flight that would be her last. She and Fred Noonan set out in a twin-engine plane, the *Flying Laboratory*, in an attempt to fly around the world at the equator. On July 2, they were due to land on tiny Howland Island, which is only two miles long and a half mile wide.

U.S. Coast Guard ships were placed in the Pacific to send navigation signals to Earhart. The ship *Itasca* sent signals to her, but she did not receive them. She sent a few broadcasts. One of the first was, “Cloudy and overcast.” Then an hour later, “We are circling.” Five hours later, the *Itasca* crew heard a last message saying that they were circling around and around looking for the island.

Amelia Earhart, Fred Noonan, and their plane disappeared. No traces of the plane or the pilots were ever found. Many rumors exist, but the most reliable evidence suggests that the plane was tossed off course by my tumultuous weather, ran out of fuel and was engulfed by large waves.

\*Revised selection – original text authored by Maren Willey. Reprinted with permission by Deborah Byrnes, Ph.D., Utah State University.

## Understanding

1. What does Earhart's quote about goals, risk and worry mean? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. How did Earhart first get interested in flying? \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. When did she make her most famous flight? \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. Why was that flight such a historical one? \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. What does it mean to **defy convention**? How was Earhart an example of this? \_\_\_\_\_  
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6. In what airplane did Earhart take her last flight? \_\_\_\_\_  
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7. What does the word **destiny** mean? \_\_\_\_\_  
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8. How did Earhart's childhood affect her adult life? \_\_\_\_\_  
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## Writing

Option A: Summarize the reading in your own words.

Option B: What new things did you learn? Could you see yourself doing something like Earhart did?  
Why or why not?

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