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Bio4Kids: Amelia Earhart (1897-1939)

Brief Outline

Amelia Earhart wasn't the first female pilot, but she became one of the most famous women to take to the air. She had no idea when she was growing up in a small town in Kansas that people around the world would be fascinated by her adventures. Born on July 24, 1897, Earhart saw her first plane at a state fair when she was ten years old. She didn't think it was anything special. She changed her mind about flying once she took her first ride in 1920.

The next year Earhart took her first flying lesson and soon after bought her first plane. It was a bright yellow Kinner Airster that she nicknamed "Canary." After years of flying, she received an amazing invitation in 1928. She was asked to become the first woman to fly across the Atlantic Ocean. The man who extended this offer was book publisher George P. Putnam who later became Earhart's husband.

Earhart traveled as a passenger on her first trip across the Atlantic. She was joined pilot Wilmer "Bill" Stultz and co-pilot Louis E. "Slim" Gordon for the journey. On June 17, 1928, the trio left Trepassey, Newfoundland, Canada, and about 22 hours later arrived in Burry Port, Wales. News of their flight and Earhart becoming the first woman to cross the Atlantic by plane made headlines around the world.

Four years later Earhart set out on an amazing journey of her own. She decided to cross the Atlantic again, but this time she would be the pilot and the plane's only crew member. She flew from Harbor Grace, Newfoundland, on May 20 and arrived in Paris, France, the next day. This time the trip was even shorter-it took her almost 15 hours to make the journey. Her incredible feat brought her international fame. It also earned her the Distinguished Flying Cross from the U.S. Congress, making her the first woman to receive the honor.

Earhart made more ground-breaking solo flights. She wanted to show that a woman could excel as a pilot just as many men had. By 1937, she was ready for her biggest challenge of all-to fly around the world. She wanted to be the first woman to complete this feat. After one failed attempt, she set out from Miami, Florida, on June 1, 1937. On July 2, Earhart and her navigator Fred Noonan left Lae, New Guinea, headed for Howland Island in the Pacific. Sadly, they never made it there.

For more than a week, an intense search was conducted in the area for Earhart, Noonan, and the plane, but no trace of them has ever been found. After her mysterious disappearance, Earhart was presumed to have died. She is remembered for her courage, bravery, and pioneering spirit. She is considered by many to be a trailblazer for women in the field of aviation.

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