

Clear for Takeoff



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Illustrated by Brian Martin

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CHAPTER ONE



Dreaming Big

A soft voice warbled past the orange trees.

“One day,
I want to fly,
In the sky,
Up, up, up
Above the clouds.
If I can see the world,
I’ll be so proud.”

Abbie Mendez was singing the same song she always sang when she walked home. She was the only one who knew the words because she made them up. School was fun, but Abbie had bigger dreams.



She wanted to see what the world was like from above. She wanted to fly.

Abbie gave a little hop. For as long as she could remember, Abbie had dreamed of flying. She was constantly looking up into the sky for airplanes. She loved imagining how it would feel to pilot her own plane.



She loved when her mom drove so fast it felt like they lifted off a little when they hit a bump. She went to flight camp last year and became an expert at the *Navigator 537* game. But she didn't just want to play video games—she wanted to *really* fly.





She was about to sing another verse of her flying song but was interrupted. Waldo, her pet parrot, swooped down and landed on her shoulder with a squawk. Waldo was more than a pet; he was her friend. And he could talk! He could actually *talk*—not just repeat words that Abbie taught him. Sometimes, they would have full conversations. It was weird, but it gave Abbie hope. If Waldo could talk, maybe there were other weird and amazing things out in the world. And if there were, she was determined to find them.

Waldo gave an excited squawk. “I just got back from the Empire State Building.”

Abbie’s eyes grew wide. “In New York?”

“It is beautiful this time of year,” Waldo said. “It’s my favorite place to catch up with other birds. I had a bath in a fountain, listened to music, and pecked at a bagel. You should have been there, Abbie!”

“Yes!” she agreed. “One day.”

Clear for Takeoff

Abbie has been dreaming of flying since she first saw birds in the sky. She has tried everything from pole vaulting to inventing a floating trampoline. Nothing works until she discovers the secret of flight—and a little magic.

Reading Levels

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DRA Level: 30

Lexile® Level: 600L

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