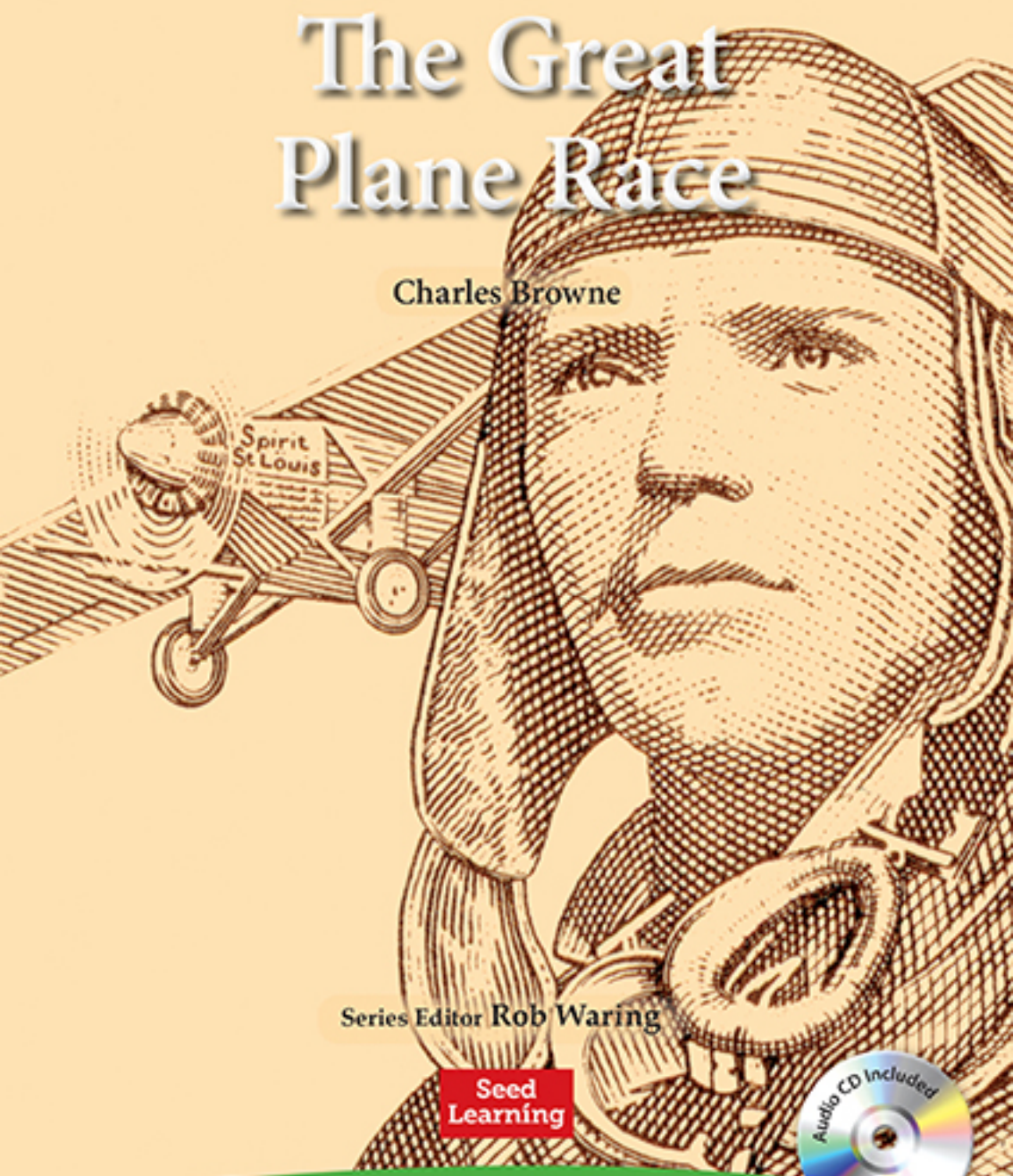


The Great Plane Race

Charles Browne



Series Editor Rob Waring

**Seed
Learning**



Contents

A New Way to Travel	4
The Contest	5
A Failed Attempt	7
An Eager Pilot	8
Becoming a Skilled Pilot	9
The Spirit of St. Louis	10
The Flight	13
Preparing to Fly	14
Take Off and Landing!	15
The Celebration	16
Back in New York	17
Comprehension Questions	18
Glossary	19
World History Timeline	21

A New Way to Travel

Have you ever flown in an airplane?

These days, we easily fly over oceans to visit distant places. We can fly from New York to Paris, crossing a huge ocean in less than eight hours. We can do this while eating good food, watching the latest movies, and sleeping in chairs that fold out into comfortable beds when we get tired.

It wasn't always that way. Only 100 years ago, planes were much smaller and slower. They couldn't fly as high. Long flights across the ocean had never been done before and



Part of the cabin of Charles Lindbergh's plane

were both dangerous and impossible.

But in 1919, all of that was about to change...



A first-class seat in a modern jet

The Contest

Gentlemen:

As a stimulus to the courageous aviators, I desire to offer, through the auspices and regulations of the Aero Club of America, a prize of \$25,000 to the first aviator of any Allied Country crossing the Atlantic in one flight, from Paris to New York or New York to Paris, all other details in your care.

Yours very sincerely,

Raymond Orteig

This simple letter started one of the most talked about races of the past 100 years. It also made Charles Lindbergh one of the most famous heroes of his time.



The author of the letter, Raymond Orteig, owned two hotels in New York. Orteig was originally from France, and many of his hotel guests were French pilots. He wanted to strengthen the relationship between the United States and France.



He offered \$25,000 (which would be worth about \$350,000 today) to the person who could make the first non-stop flight between the two countries. This led to a few different attempts, many of which ended in disaster.

Raymond Orteig
shaking the hand of
Charles Lindbergh

A Failed Attempt

In one famous attempt, the French flying ace, René Fonck, tried to make the flight in a very large, 3-engine airplane. The plane was too heavy, and it crashed and burned on take off. Two of his team died in the fire.



The disastrous crash
of Fonck's plane



Charles Lindbergh
shaking hands with
René Fonck



The giant 3-engine Sigorsky
S-35 plane used by Fonck

An Eager Pilot

Charles Lindbergh was only a teenager at the time Orteig announced his contest. He worked very hard to get into the race. At the age of 20, Lindbergh quit university. He moved to Nebraska and started working for the Nebraska Aircraft Corporation. He learned how to fix planes and got to fly with company pilots from time to time.

At the age of 21, Lindbergh was able to save \$500 and buy a used plane. He bought the plane without ever having flown one by himself. He practiced for a week, and then flew off to begin his barnstorming career.



A picture of a very young Charles Lindbergh

Becoming a Skilled Pilot

Lindbergh spent much of the next year flying almost every single day as a barnstormer. Barnstormers entertained crowds of people with daring tricks in their planes.

Only a year later, he joined the United States Air Service to do a year of military flight training. It was difficult, but he graduated at the top of his class. By the age of 24, Lindbergh was working for the US Postal Service delivering airmail.

He quickly became known as a skilled and careful pilot. At the age of 25, Lindbergh was ready to fly across the Atlantic Ocean.



Lindbergh's famous "Jenny" plane that he flew to develop his flying skills



Planning his flight

Comprehension Questions

1. How long does it take to fly from New York to Paris now?
 - (a) About 24 hours
 - (b) About 8 hours
 - (c) About 3 hours
 - (d) About 24 minutes
2. Who wrote the letter that started the great plane race?
 - (a) Charles Lindbergh
 - (b) President Calvin Coolidge
 - (c) René Fonck
 - (d) Raymond Orteig
3. How much would the prize money be worth today?
 - (a) \$350,000
 - (b) \$75,000
 - (c) \$25,000
 - (d) \$2,500
4. René Fonck's plane crashed because...
 - (a) he wasn't a good pilot.
 - (b) the weather was terrible.
 - (c) the plane was too heavy.
 - (d) it ran out of gas.
5. How much did Charles Lindbergh's first plane cost?
 - (a) \$25,000
 - (b) \$500
 - (c) \$350,000
 - (d) \$50,000
6. What was the first job Charles Lindbergh had as a pilot?
 - (a) Flying across the ocean
 - (b) Working for the post office
 - (c) Working for Raymond Orteig
 - (d) Entertaining others as a barnstormer
7. The *Spirit of St Louis* was different because it was...
 - (a) heavier than other planes.
 - (b) faster than other planes.
 - (c) lighter than other planes.
 - (d) longer than other planes.
8. What kind of gas did Lindbergh use for the *Spirit of St Louis*?
 - (a) A very expensive airplane fuel
 - (b) A gas that had been cleaned many times
 - (c) Free gas from his friends
 - (d) A gas that was normally used in motorcycles
9. How long did it take for Lindbergh to make the flight to France?
 - (a) 8.5 hours
 - (b) 12 hours
 - (c) 33.5 hours
 - (d) 48 hours
10. In what city was Charles Lindbergh given a parade?
 - (a) Paris
 - (b) New York
 - (c) St. Louis
 - (d) Washington DC

Glossary

- **accomplishment** something that is done after a lot of work or effort
- **ace** excellent; very skilled at
- **airmail** letters and packages sent by plane
- **attempt** the act of trying to do something
- **aviation** the business or practice of flying airplanes
- **barnstorm** to travel to a lot of small towns and perform flying tricks for crowds
- **career** the job or series of jobs that you do during your working life
- **cross** to go from one side of something to the other
- **discourage** to try to persuade someone not to do something
- **inspire** to make someone want to do something
- **loyalty** a feeling of support or duty toward someone or something
- **parachute** a device used to save your life when jumping from a plane
- **parade** a big public event to celebrate an achievement
- **runway** the place planes take off and land
- **traffic jam** a large number of cars on a road that are close together and not able to move