

High Flight Worksheet

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Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds ... and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of ... wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air.
Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I've topped the wind swept heights with easy grace
Where never lark, or even eagle flew.
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

Vocabulary In one or two words define the following terms from the poem.

surly, bonds, laughter-silvered wings, Hov'ring, delirious, untrespassed, sanctity

Word Pictures Word pictures is another way of saying *imagery*. *Imagery* or *figurative language* helps us form a picture of what the author is trying to present. Discuss what these word pictures mean and, perhaps, draw your idea of the *imagery* or *figurative language* the author uses!

surly bonds
danced the skies
laughter-silvered wings
tumbling mirth
sun-split clouds
sun lit silence
shouting wind
eager craft
footless halls of air
long, delicious, burning blue
wind swept heights
easy grace
silent, lifting mind

Mechanics Verbally discuss

Who is the speaker?

What does the poem reveal about the speaker's character?

Is the speaker addressing someone in particular or is it to anyone?

Does the poem have a setting?

Is the poem about a particular event? Is the event past or present? If it is about a past event, does the remembrance of the event have a particular meaning to the speaker?

Is the theme of the poem stated directly or indirectly?

What point of view or perspective is the speaker?

How did you respond to the poem when you read it the first time?

Comprehension Questions Verbally discuss

In general terms, what is the poem about? Do you think the author made good use of word pictures or imagery? Did you think you were in the airplane with the author? Why? What do you think the author was thinking about when writing this poem? Thoughts have consequences. Do you think the author was glad, sad, mad or scared? Why? What did you think while reading this poem?

After reading this poem, what character traits did you think of? What does the Bible have to say about these character traits?

What Does the Bible Say?

Find Scripture proofs for the assertions or statements made in this poem.

Give Biblical examples of those happy, excited, and contented serving God. Give historical examples. Does this poem remind you of anyone or of any event? Why?

The Author/Poet

Based on what you have studied about this poem so far, would you guess that the author was a Christian or a humanist? How did you arrive at your decision?

The author's name for this poem is John Gillespie Magee, Jr. (1922-1941). He was born in Shanghai, China, died in England 11 December 1941, and is buried at Scopwick, Lincolnshire, in a churchyard cemetery. Mr. Magee, like many Americans, crossed the border into Canada to enlist with the Royal Canadian Airforce during the Battle of Britain. (German bombers were crossing the English Channel regularly to attack Britain's cities and factories.) These brave men decided to obey their conscience and knowingly broke the law in order to fight Hitler's Germany. Magee was just 18 years old when he entered flight training and was sent to England on 30 June 1941. He flew the Spitfire being promoted to the rank of Pilot Officer. On 3 September 1941, Magee flew a Spitfire V test flight which inspired him to write his poem. On the same day he wrote a letter to his missionary parents which included this now famous poem. On 11 December 1941, three months later, Mr. Magee was killed. This was just three days after the US entered the war and four days after Pearl Harbor.

Geography

Locate China, England, Canada, Germany, and the United States on a globe, map and atlas.

Challenge Locate Shanghai (China), Scopwick, Lincolnshire (Britain), and Pearl Harbor (USA) on a map or in an atlas.

Compare/contrast the weather of China, England, Germany, and/or Canada with your own for one week.

Make a meal from China, England, Germany, and/or Canada for your family.

Activities

1) Make your own book! Without making an image of Christ, draw pictures representing this poem. With construction paper and other items readily available at home, make a title page with the name of the poem and the author's name which will be your book's cover. You may want to illustrate your cover and include this poem in your book.

2) Make your own play! Re-enact with your siblings or friends the event and message discussed in this poem. Keep it lively, simple, and short. You may want to end your play with singing a rousing chorus of this poem or reading Scripture verses. Videotape your creation.

3) Radio Drama! With a handheld tape recorder, create your own radio show dramatizing the historical event and messages of this poem.

4) Be a Reporter! Either with your family camcorder or with a handheld tape recorder, "interview" various individuals connected with this poem (e.g., airplane pilots, etc.). In order to have the fast paced style of a reporter, watch and/or listen to the news with your parents' permission. Keep the interviews lively, quick, and to the point.

Remain objective! Being objective means just reporting the facts and not giving your opinion of the situation.

5) What is one of the things you most enjoy? Is it literature? math? science? sports? cooking? Take that area of interest and relate that to this poem. If you enjoy dance, for example, develop a dance routine that physically expresses the sentiments of this poem. If you enjoy shop, create something out of wood that helps to clarify this poem. Do you enjoy creating stories? Write a story based on any time period you desire that expresses the sentiments of this poem. Do you enjoy creating things in the kitchen? Make an ancient meal from this time or develop your own meal that symbolizes the many different points this poem makes.

6) Poster. Create a poster illustrating the the author's view of the impact of *High Flight*.

7) Scavenger Hunt. Go to the library to learn what you can about John Gillespie Magee, Jr. and share it with your family. If possible, discover the story behind this poem.