

Taking Flight: The Story of Bessie Coleman

CLASS ACTIVITIES

Fluent Reading | Grade 2



LITERACY



MINDSET

Why is Bessie Coleman an important person in history?

Use this essential question to guide student learning with class discussion and inquiry activities.

1. DESCRIBE BESSIE COLEMAN (20 MINUTES)

Print out a picture of Bessie Coleman and post it on a classroom wall. During or after reading the book, have the class brainstorm adjectives that describe Bessie based on the details in the story. Some suggested adjectives include brave, courageous, determined, and daring. As the class brainstorms these adjectives, write each one on a large sticky note and post them on the wall around the picture of Bessie.

2. SUPPORT AN IDEA WITH DETAILS (20 MINUTES)

Provide each student with a copy of the **Main Idea and Supporting Details** graphic organizer. (This can be either printed out or shared as a fillable PDF.) Have the sentence frame “**Bessie Coleman is _____.**” prewritten in the **Main Idea** box (or students can write this in on their own). Instruct students to fill in the blank with an adjective that describes Bessie. (They can use one of the adjectives brainstormed in the first activity.) Then have students write 2–3 details from the book in the **Detail** boxes to provide evidence for the main idea.

PRINTABLE Main Idea and Supporting Details <https://resources.waterford.org/practice-materials/2699/2699.pdf>

3. ANALYZE MEDIA (45 MINUTES)

Share with students that in the year 2023, the toymaker Mattel released a Bessie Coleman doll for their **Inspiring Women** series of Barbie dolls. Show students the product page for the doll (or have them navigate to the page on their device): <https://bit.ly/49JrAsO>

Provide students with a printed or digital copy of the Think-Pair-Share graphic organizer with these questions in the first column:

- Why do you think this company made this doll?
- What do you like or not like about the doll?
- Who might want to have this doll?
- Why are there both words and pictures on this webpage?



*Use the bilingual book **Tomando vuelo La historia de Bessie Coleman** to help support Spanish-speaking ELL students with the activities.*

Name _____ Date _____	
Main Idea and Supporting Details	
Fill out the organizer with information about a topic.	
Topic	
Main Idea	Detail
	Detail
	Detail

Main Idea and Supporting Details

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Have students answer each of these questions individually in the **What I Thought** box on the organizer. Then have them pair with another student to discuss their thoughts. Each student should write down their partner's key points in the **What My Partner Thought** box. Finally, have partners share their ideas as part of a whole-class discussion.

PRINTABLE Think-Pair-Share <https://resources.waterford.org/practice-materials/3548/3548.pdf>

WEBSITE Barbie Signature Inspiring Women Bessie Coleman Doll <https://bit.ly/49JrAsO>

4. PARTICIPATE IN GROUP RESEARCH (60 MINUTES)

On the final page of the book, the author explains that Bessie Coleman inspired other people to fly. Among those inspired by Bessie are Janet Harmon Bragg, Jesse LeRoy Brown, Mae Jemison, and William J. Powell.

Have students form groups of 4–5. Explain that each group will be learning about one of the people Bessie inspired. Instruct students to choose and write down five facts about the person they learn about to share with the class.

Provide these resources for research:

JANET HARMON BRAGG

YouTube Biography <https://bit.ly/49lOoAt>

Article <https://s.si.edu/3la7kol>

JESSE LEROY BROWN

YouTube Biography <https://bit.ly/49CiTjC>

Article <https://bit.ly/42JxfwB>

MAE JEMISON

YouTube Biography <https://bit.ly/49HatYj>

Article: <https://bit.ly/42LhDZo>

WILLIAM J. POWELL

YouTube Biography <https://bit.ly/3ulGIru>

Article <https://bit.ly/4bGQ0ol>



Barbie Signature Inspiring Women
Bessie Coleman Doll

Name _____ Partner's Name _____ Date _____

Think-Pair-Share

Use this chart to record details of the conversation with your partner.

Question or Topic	What I Thought	What My Partner Thought	What We Will Share

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Think-Pair-Share

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5. CREATE A DIGITAL PRESENTATION (1-2 HOURS)

Have groups create a digital presentation (such as a slide deck or video) in which they share what they learned their research. This presentation should include at least one picture along with the five key facts they identified in the previous activity. Provide guidance in creating a digital presentation as needed.

6. PRESENT RESEARCH (60 MINUTES)

Have groups share their digital presentation with the class. Emphasize the importance of speaking clearly and at an appropriate pace. Encourage groups to make sure that all members have an equal part in the presentation.