

## "COME FLY WITH ME" BESSIE COLEMAN STUDY GUIDE

Written by Joanna Maddox

### ARTIST BACKGROUND

Joanna Maddox a professional actress, singer, storyteller writes and performs dramatic portrayals of Historical American Women. She received a BFA in Drama from the University of Georgia. She has toured throughout the US and is an approved Touring Artist of the National Women's History Project and Fulton County Arts Council's School Arts Program. She has appeared in numerous national television and radio commercials, corporate videos and is a member of Screen Actor's Guild and AFTRA.

### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

This program includes women's history and social studies and science.

### PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- The students will learn about a courageous woman who accomplishes what others thought impossible.
- To gain an understanding that one can pursue and achieve impossible dreams.
- To present a positive female role model who inspired and encouraged other blacks to achieve their goals.
- To present a "live history lesson, about one woman's desire, determination and dream to be somebody.
- To appreciate the strength of a woman who turned a daydream into a reality by overcoming obstacles of gender, birthright, race, ethnicity, economics, illness, poor technology, education, societal condemnation and fear.

### PROGRAM SUMMARY

Bessie Coleman was born in a one- room cabin in Atlanta, Texas in 1892. She was the tenth of thirteen children, a bright child who knew figures and was able to make sure that her mother was not cheated when the cotton was weighed. She moved to Chicago and after hearing of women in France who flew airplanes, decided that's what she wanted to do. But the flight schools in America would not accept her because she was a woman and black. Bessie did not let this stop her. She saved the money she made from doing manicures. She learned French in night school and went to Paris France, where she received her international pilot's license from the prestigious Federation Aeronautique Internationale in 1921. (She received her license two years before Amelia Earhart.) She toured the country, organizing exhibition flights and speaking about the potential of the people of her race. Bessie Coleman hoped to open a flying school for Blacks and was close to achieving her goal in 1926 when she died in a plane crash, during a test flight for an air show.

### VOCABULARY

Aviatrix – a woman aviator

Daredevil- adventurous bold person

Jim Crow – the name used for the laws that were in place to enforce segregation of Black and White people

Segregate – to cause or enforce separation from the rest of society

Manicure – to trim and polish fingernails

Barnstormer – a person who pilots an airplane in exhibition stunts in rural districts as a flying circus performer

Sabotage – an act or process intended to hurt or hinder

### OVERVIEW ART FORM

The art forms demonstrated in this program are storytelling, dramatic art. Information presented in the narrative form is the information that will be remembered. Before television and radio people told stories and the ancient art of storytelling is making a comeback. Storytelling can be used to entertain, inspire, encourage, heal, and to pass down cultural history and information from generation to generation. Through stories people can connect, learn about and appreciate each other.

### **PRE & POST ACTIVITIES**

Have students read book from resource to get to familiar with Bessie Coleman.

Write a news story about her or another famous Black American and share with the class. Discuss the barriers that she had to overcome to achieve her dream. Discuss how others could be inspired by Bessie Coleman. Would you consider her a trailblazer? Considering the dangers involved during the early days of aviation, would you have pursued this career? Why or why not?

### **RESOURCES**

Fly, Bessie, Fly	by Lynn Joseph
Fly High! The story of Bessie Coleman	by Louise Jordan and Mary Kay Kroeger
Nobody owns the sky (The story of Brave Bessie Coleman)	by Reeve Lindberg
Queen Bess: Daredevil aviator	by Doris Rich
Talkin about Bessie: the story of aviator	by Elizabeth Grimes
Up in the air: the story of Bessie Coleman	by Phillip Hart
Brave Bessie: Flying Free	by Lillian Fisher
African-American aviators	by Stanley Jones

### **Video Recording**

Black Aviators : Flying Free                      by Harold Dow

### **WEBSITES**

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/bhistory>