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About the Author

Poet and author Mary Woodbury is best known for her award-winning children's novels, especially the Polly McDoodle mystery series from Coteau Books.

She won narrative poetry medals in Newfoundland in the late 1960s. Her juvenile novel Jess and the Runaway Grandpa was runner-up for the Alberta Writing for Youth Competition, had a starred review in the Our Choice Catalogue in 1997, and was nominated for the Silver Birch Award, the Torgi Award and the Manitoba Reader's Choice award. Brad's Universe was nominated for the Red Maple Award in 1999 and shortlisted for the Writers Guild of Alberta Juvenile Fiction Award.

Mary helped found a literary magazine, Other Voices, and two publishing companies, The Books Collective and Hodgepog Books. Mary is a member of the Writer's Union of Canada, the Canadian Society of Children's Authors, Illustrators and Performers, the Writer's Guild of Alberta and the Canadian Children's Book Centre.

Her most recent young adult novels are The Ghost in the Machine, published in 2004, and the fifth Polly McDoodle, The International Polly McDoodle, both from Coteau Books. Flight of the Tiger Moth is her fourteenth published book.

Mary Woodbury lives in Edmonton with her husband Clair and their old dog Rosie. The Woodburys have four grown sons and six grandchildren, five old enough to read their grandma's books. Mary can be reached at mary.woodbury@shaw.ca.

Coteau Books is proud to have published the following books by Mary Woodbury:

More information on these titles can be found at www.coteaubooks.com. A full bibliography of Mary's books can be found at www.marywoodbury.ca.
**Introduction**

It's 1943, and no one knows who will win World War II. The fighting may be happening in Europe, but Canadians are taking a major role. The war changes people's lives, even those left behind in southern Saskatchewan.

Sixteen-year-old Jack Waters is too young to enlist, but the war comes to his small prairie town of Cairn when an air base to train flyers from all over the United Kingdom is set up nearby. He even gets a job there, and is able to be around the airplanes he loves. Most exciting of all, his sister's fiancé, Sandy – an instructor at the Moose Jaw air base – is teaching him to fly the Tiger Moth.

Jack's mother is worried sick about his sister going overseas to be a nurse, so Jack doesn't tell her when Trevor, one of his pilot friends takes him up again in a Tiger Moth. It's a good thing Jack had a chance to practise the skills Sandy taught him, because soon a buddy's life depends on him remembering what he learned. When a friend's plane comes down on the prairie, Jack has no choice but to make his first solo flight.

*Flight of the Tiger Moth* is the thrilling story of one boy's journey to become a man and find his path in the world. It also gives young readers a glimpse of Canadian lives during World War II, and of one more Canadian contribution to winning the war.

**Themes**

Throughout the novel, Jack and his friend Wes struggle to understand the issues of sacrifice, personal responsibility, life and death, war and peace. Why do bad things happen to good people? How can people learn to get along with each other? What is the meaning of life? Although they are very good friends, each finds a slightly different answer.

**Courage**

"Courage is not a gift; it is a decision," a character says in this novel. Jack is an ordinary boy, and all his life, his parents – especially his mother – have encouraged him to be careful, not courageous. Yet as he grows up, circumstances force him to choose to undertake challenges that require great courage. The war brings the question of courage and choices to a head for all the young people in the book, whether it is the courage to go to war, to fly, or to stand up for what you believe.

**Responsibility**

Parents want to protect their children, but as they face the challenges of growing up and their world gets bigger, young people become increasingly responsible for making their own choices. Jack's mom wants to keep him safe, to keep him young and innocent, to protect him from feeling sad or losing his dreams. Jack doesn't want to cause his mom more worry, but he wonders what he would do if someone needed his help. As he copes with new challenges, and especially when his friend Trevor dies, Jack becomes increasingly responsible for making his own good choices.
Respecting Differences

The village of Cairn is made up of all kinds of people, but each one has a place in the community. In the same way, there are many differences of opinion that come up throughout the story, even between friends and family. We see that there are reasons why people believe and behave as they do. Sometimes these can be traced back to events long ago, events that are now shrouded in secrecy; sometimes they reflect events that occur on the world stage; sometimes they reflect differences in people’s personalities. Sometimes the characters in this novel hold fast to what they believe in, but often they are transformed by the many rapid changes occurring in their world.

A Message from the Author

Writing Flight of the Tiger Moth was a real challenge. I had never written historical fiction before but felt that the story had to be told about how we trained so many pilots and flight crew during the Second World War, especially in the prairies. I have a son who is a pilot and my husband was seven or eight when a British Commonwealth Air Training base opened two miles from his village in Saskatchewan.

I had to imagine my protagonist as a sixteen-year-old boy who wanted to fly. I had to do research and get a lot of help from old pilots and retired airmen and military nurses. Then I had to do research about what people ate, read, talked about, sang, played and so on in 1943. I was only eight in 1943, so I had a lot to remember and learn. I like to stress the importance of using all my senses when I write, so I read to make sure I have sights, sounds, smells, feelings and tastes included. I like to use action words when I’m writing a scary or tough scene.

The Internet helped. Visits to museums, archives and libraries helped. Several books were very important. After I had written my story I had my advisors – pilots, navigators, other writers and my older friends – read the manuscript. I wanted them to check that my memory and research were right and had been turned into a vivid, exciting story with characters they cared about.
CONNECTIONS TO THE SASKATCHEWAN CURRICULUM

This novel will appeal to readers in Grades Seven to Twelve. The themes in the story have ample connections to the English Language Arts Curriculum in most of these grades. As well, cross-curriculum applications exist in Drama, Science, Music and History, particularly in the Change unit in Grade Nine Social Studies, Twentieth-century History in Grade Eleven and Canadian History in Grade Twelve.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

GRADE APPROPRIATE UNIT

7  Voices through the Ages – Reconstructing Past Lives (social, cultural, and historical; environmental and technological; multigenre inquiry and interdisciplinary)
9a  Conflicts, Issues, and Choices – Doing the Right Thing (social, cultural, and historical; multigenre inquiry and interdisciplinary)
9b  Exploring Love, Loyalty, and Relationships (social, cultural, and historical; multigenre thematic) OR Surviving and Conquering (social, cultural, and historical; environmental and technological; multigenre thematic)
10a  Canadian Frontiers and Homeland – Journeys and Discoveries Challenges – Opportunities and Obstacles (quests and adventures; courage and leadership; conflict and search for peace)
10b  Decisions – Action or Apathy (life pressures; career decisions)
20  Recollection – A Journey Back (family and peer relationships)
     Anticipation – On the Threshold (choices and commitments; perspectives and passages; values and goals)
30a  Canada – Diverse Landscapes and Peoples (regional landscapes)
     Canada – Diverse Voices (regional voices)

By choosing appropriate activities from this guide, teachers can meet most of the Grade Nine English Language Arts objectives for the Saskatchewan curriculum in every strand: Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, Viewing, and Representing. This study guide provides key strategies for before, during, and after reading that address the common essential learnings (CELS). For more information on the Saskatchewan Curriculum, visit: http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/curr/evergreen/index.shtml.
Grade Nine English Language Arts Objectives at a Glance

A similar table may be created for use in other grades.

Focus: Communicating Ideas and Experiences with Clarity, Correctness, and Effect (Emphasis)

Foundation Objective 1: Students will extend abilities to listen, speak, read, write, view, and represent effectively in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes.

- Listen to, read, and view a range of contemporary and classical texts in a variety of forms (including discussions, presentations, dramatic readings, print fiction and non-fiction, poetry, and plays, multimedia presentations, videos, dramatizations, advertisements) and from a variety of cultural traditions for a variety of purposes including for learning and for enjoyment.
- Speak, write, and represent to describe (a multi-paragraph profile, an analysis of a character), to narrate (a personal narrative), to explain and inform (a research report, letters), and to persuade (a persuasive essay, letters) and recognize speaking, writing, and representing as useful tools for clarifying, thinking, communicating, and learning.
- Experiment with a variety of text forms (e.g. debates, meetings, presentations to unfamiliar audiences, poetry, précis, short script advice column, video documentary, comic strip) and techniques (e.g. tone, persona, point of view, imagery, dialogue, figurative language).

Foundational Objective 2: Students will extend abilities by practising the behaviours of effective, active listeners, speakers, readers, writers, viewers, and representers.

- Select and use the appropriate strategies and language cueing systems to construct meaning before, during, and after listening, reading, and viewing.
- Select and use the appropriate strategies and the language cueing systems and conventions to communicate meaning before, during, and after speaking, writing, and representing.
- Understand and apply the language cues and conventions (pragmatic, textual, syntactical, lexical/semantic/morphological, graphophonic, and others) as they listen, speak, read, write, view, and represent.

Foundational Objective 3: Students will extend abilities to assess strengths in listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and representing and set goals for future growth.

- Assess personal strengths and needs as a listener, speaker, reader, writer, viewer, and representor and contributions to the community of learners.
- Assess own and others’ work for clarity, correctness, and impact.

A table with all the objectives for the Language Arts strands can be found in English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Middle Level (Grades 6–9), 2006, http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/curr/pdf/ela_guide_6to9.pdf. When selecting activities from this guide and devising others, use the table to keep track of your objectives.
ASSessment and Evaluation


Many teachers use rubrics to provide formative assessment when studying a novel. More information can be found at: http://sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/aar/afl/docs/assessment_support/rubrics.pdf.

In the Concluding Activities section of this guide, you will find a number of activities that can be used to provide summative assessment.

Background Information

Online Resources

History

- Canadian War Museum, www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/chrono/1931crisis_e.html

Flying/wwii Aircraft/Tiger Moth

- Collingwood Classic Aircraft Foundation, http://www.classicaircraft.ca/tiger_main.htm

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• Australian Military Aircraft Serials and Aircraft History, http://www.adf-serials.com/gallery

BRITISH COMMONWEALTH AIR TRAINING PLAN

NURSING SISTERS
• Library and Archives Canada, http://www.collectionscanada.ca/nursing-sisters/025013-1000-e.html#table-of-contents

MAPS
• United States Military Academy, Department of History, http://www.dean.usma.edu/history/web03/atlas/ww2%20europe/ww2%20europe%20war%20index.htm

TIMELINES
• http://www.shambles.net/pages/school/timelines

WORD SEARCHES
• http://puzzlemaker.school.discovery.com/WordSearchSetupForm.html

AV RESOURCES
• *Bye Bye Blues* (PG, Monarch, 1989)
• *Canada at War* (NFB)
• *Canada Remembers* (NFB)
• *The Glen Miller Story* (MGM Universal, 1953)
• *A Song Is Born* (HBO, 1948)
• *Swing Kids* (PG-13, Buena Vista, 2002)
Print Resources

- *The Girls of the King’s Navy* by Rosamond “Fiddy” Greer (Sono Nis Press, 1963)
- *Wings of Victory* by Spenser Dunsmore (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995)

Beginning the Novel Study

Unit Planning – Cross-curriculum Applications

History/Geography – Making Connections

You will need a large map of the prairie provinces and many small self-stick dots in two colours. Ask the students to find out if anyone in their family is from rural areas of the prairies, and where. Have them place a coloured dot on a map for each location. Next, have the students research which prairie communities had British Commonwealth Air Training Program bases. Place a different coloured dot on each location.

History/Special Events – Remembrance Day

For teachers who are looking for a meaningful connection to Remembrance Day activities, this novel is particularly suited for study during the pre–Remembrance Day period. Students can select passages from the book to read aloud at the Remembrance Day program at your school. Have students conduct archival/Internet research to find photographs of the period, including aerial photographs of prairie towns and prairie life during wartime, photos of airbases and aircraft used in the British Commonwealth Air Training Program and the Allied war effort and photos of airmen and women at work and at play. These can be combined into a PowerPoint presentation to accompany the readings. The program could also include dance and music of World War II (see next page).

Art/History – Models

- Have students draw pictures or create models of different WWII aircraft – a Tiger Moth, a Spitfire, an Oxford, a Lancaster bomber – or automobiles of the period.
- Have students research and draw air officers’ and airmen and women’s uniforms.
- Have groups of students create dioramas/scale models/maps of/aerial maps of:
  - a prairie aircraft hanger with the various aircraft used in training, and motor vehicles like Sandy’s ’36 black Ford
• a small prairie town of the period, including services and attractions important to flight training officers, like cafés and all the usual businesses, such as a grain elevator, a hotel, a railway station, etc.
• the prairie landscape Jack would have seen from the air, including the town of Moose Jaw in the distance, Cairn, roads, railway tracks, etc

Physical Education/Art (Dance) – Swing Kids
During Physical Education or Arts Education classes, students learn various dance steps common during WWII: jive, lindy hop, etc. Show clips from Swing Kids (PG-13), Bye Bye Blues (PG), etc.

Music – Swing Time
Students may work in groups to investigate the music popular during WWII, including the big bands of Glen Millar, Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey and the Canadian bands of the era. Students prepare a brief biography of a WWII-era band and present clips of their hits to the class. Clips from movies such as Bye Bye Blues (PG), which portrays the life of a singer in a wartime prairie swing band may be appropriate.

Media – Radio Days
Using the resources of such Internet sites as Radio Days (http://www.otr.com/index.shtml), students should investigate and report on various aspects of radio programming during WWII, including news, drama and game shows.

Home Economics – Short Rations
There were many food shortages during the Second World War, so the government instituted a system of rationing scarce commodities. People were only allowed so much sugar, eggs, butter and so on. Have your students investigate how rationing worked and what the ration was in 1943 for a family of three like the Waters family. Groups of students should then bake a cake or other dessert for a celebratory “tea,” using as few rationed items as possible (e.g., a cake recipe using as few eggs and as little butter as possible), calculating how long it would take a family to save enough coupons to bake the cake.
Preparing to Read

We recommend that teachers read the first several chapters of this novel aloud to their students. Before reading begins, teachers may wish to have the class consider the cover illustration and discuss the title. Next, read or have a student read the back cover copy to the class, and ask the class to predict something about the setting, characters, plot and themes of the novel.

Teacher Questions/Student Predictions

- Cover Illustration: What does the cover illustration show? What does this make you think of?
- Title: What is a Tiger Moth? How does this relate to the cover illustration?
- Back Cover Copy:
  - Setting: Where and when is this novel set? What was happening in the world at that time? How might people on the prairies have been affected by the war? What other novels or non-fiction books have the students read that are set in rural prairie Canada or during wartime? (list on board) How is growing up in a small prairie town different from growing up in a city? How is growing up in the 1940s different from today?
  - Character: Who is the main character in this novel? How old is he?
  - Plot: What do we think is going to happen to him over the course of the novel?
  - Themes: What challenges does he face? What big questions will he have to find the answers to?

Student Questions

At this point, ask the students to formulate some questions covering each of the elements of setting, characters, plot and themes before the reading begins. These should be recorded and posted for the class to refer to as the reading proceeds. At the end of each chapter, ask the students if any of these questions have been answered, and if they have any additional questions that have been raised by the reading.

Literary Connections

To enrich the students’ experience, stock your classroom with other novels and nonfiction titles about WWII, WWI, flying, rural life in the mid-twentieth century and so on.
Chapter One
Pages 1–II

Summary

As the story opens, Jack Waters, a young man growing up in a small prairie town during World War II, is experiencing flight for the first time. We see the prairie landscape spread out below him, and Jack feels a mixture of discomfort, exhilaration and raw fear. His half-sister’s fiancé, Sandy, an instructor at the Moose Jaw air base with the British Commonwealth Air Training Program, has managed to get Jack’s mother to agree to let Jack go up in Sandy’s Tiger Moth. Then Sandy lets Jack take the controls, an opportunity Jack has spent the past several months preparing for, studying flight manuals and drilling with Sandy.

We learn that Sandy is about to be sent overseas and that Jack’s half-sister Flo, who is a nurse in Moose Jaw, wants to go overseas as well. But we also learn that Flo’s father was a flyer in World War I, that he came home a hero and that he died in a way the family never talks about.

Vocabulary Building

As students read through the novel, have them prepare a list of WWII/flying/aircraft vocabulary with their definitions. When the list is complete, students could compile a Word Search activity for their classmates using a puzzlemaker site (such as the one at puzzlemaker at DiscoverySchool.com). To get you started, here are some words from Chapter One that will be new to many students.

Gosport  
Biplane  
Tiger Moth  
Turn-and-bank indicator

Exhilarated  
Side-slipping  
Cockpit

Tarmac  
Bobbed  
rcaf

After Reading

Comprehension Questions

- What colour is the Tiger Moth? Why would they paint a plane this colour?
- What is “the call” Sandy is expecting?
- What’s Sandy’s real name?
- What kind of job does Flo hope to get overseas?

Discussion – Secrets

Guidelines

Before the discussion begins, students should be reminded that when expressing feelings, ideas, and opinions in one-to-one, small group and large group discussions, they should strive to:

- share ideas and knowledge clearly and logically
- encourage others to contribute
- disagree courteously and sensitively
- take turns speaking

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answer others’ questions clearly and politely
give reasons for opinions and point of view
add to others’ ideas
repeat points for clarification
restate points already made for emphasis and reconsideration
summarize main ideas discussed and conclusions drawn
analyze statements made by self and others
generalize from several comments and points made.

Introduction
There are a lot of secrets in this chapter. The story about Flo’s dad seems to be a family secret. Sandy tells Jack he’d better not tell his dad “too much” about the flight. Flo tells Jack not to tell his parents about the flying lessons at all or they’ll have a fit or tell the whole village. Sandy says, “Keeping secrets is hard work, Jackie. No sense worrying your mother needlessly, though. In wartime kids have to take responsibility for their own decisions. It’s hard, but that’s the way it is.”

Key Questions
• Is keeping secrets the same as taking responsibility for your own decisions?
• When should children be told about the family’s secrets?
• Have you ever not told your parents about something you’ve done that turned out to be more dangerous than you’d imagined, or told them only half the story?
• Is keeping secrets hard for you?

Discovery – Buttermilk
What does buttermilk taste like? Perhaps bring a sample for the class.

Extending the Reading
Reader Response Journal/Creative Writing
Do you remember the first time you experienced a new activity or environment – your first flight, your first swim in the ocean, your first day of school? Did you experience the same physical and emotional responses as Jack? Write a description of the experience and as you describe it, tell us about the feelings it evoked. Were you changed by the experience?

Understanding Rural Life
Ask students if they think young men from England and other parts of Canada enjoyed being stationed in rural Saskatchewan.
Begin a class list of the buildings mentioned that make up the town of Cairn and the city of Moose Jaw. As they read through the book, students should add to the list. What does Moose Jaw have that Cairn doesn’t?
Chapter Two
Pages 12–18

Summary
Sandy has been shipped out, and has given his car to Jack to look after until he returns, or forever if he never comes back. When Flo tells her mom she's volunteered to go overseas and could be called up any day, they have an argument, but soon she's on her way.

Before the Reading
Anticipation
Jack is sixteen; he can join up at eighteen. Do you think Jack will get the urge to join up and go overseas too?

After Reading
Comprehension Questions
- What is the wd?
- Why doesn't Ivy Waters want Flo to go overseas?
- What does Jack have decorating his room?
- What does Sandy leave Jack in his will?
- What kind of car does Sandy drive? What is its name?
- How does Sandy want Jack to take care of his car?
- What are Flo's last words to Jack?

Questions for Research and Discussion – Women
Women were not allowed to participate in combat during World War II. Why not? Should women be allowed to risk their lives in combat on the front lines of battles? When did Canada first allow women to participate in combat?

Extending the Reading
Reader Response Journal/Creative Writing – Keepsakes & Memories
Flashback is a literary device that is used effectively in this chapter when the car reminds Jack of Sandy shipping out. Ask your students if they have keepsakes and momentos that remind them of past events. Have them write a piece describing the keepsake and the memories it evokes.

Descriptive Paragraph – Where There’s a Will
What is a will? If you were going to be sent off to war, how would you divide up your stuff? Have students write a paragraph or two describing what is important to them and who they would leave it with.
Chapter Three
Pages 19–25

Summary

The family finds out that Sandy is missing in action, and they are supported by a visit by the family of the United Church minister. Airplane models hang safely from the ceiling in Jack’s room, but when he thinks about them, he wonders whether there is any way to protect the people he loves, who seem so fragile.

Before the Reading

Anticipation

- Will Jack be able to continue flying now that Sandy’s gone?
- How has he shown that he’s a natural?

After Reading

Discussion Questions

- Who is Leonardo da Vinci?
- What materials is Jack using to make his current model of a Tiger Moth? Why is this wood useful in making models? What is a disadvantage?

Extending the Reading

History – Inventions & Models

Along with balsa wood models of bombers hanging from the ceiling, the walls in Jack’s room are covered with photographs of airplanes and drawings of Leonardo da Vinci’s flying machines. Investigate what da Vinci’s flying machines looked like and make copies of the plans for your classroom. Even though they were drawn over 500 years ago when there were no aircraft, do they look like they could fly? In groups of two, students can try making models of da Vinci designs of different flying machines.

History – Resistance in France

What is the French Resistance? Have students write a brief report on the French Resistance, its heroes, and its activities.

History – Witnesses on the Home Front

Students should arrange to conduct an interview of a person who witnessed wartime in prairie Canada. As a group, have students brainstorm a set of base questions that should be asked of all interviewees. Questions should be edited and structured ahead of time so that the interview flows smoothly. Students should keep the 5 W’s in mind. For example, “Did you know anyone who decided to join up or decide not to join up?” and “What was it like to experience rationing during WWII?”

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INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES

Information on interviewing techniques can be found in *English Language Arts, A Curriculum Guide for the Middle Level (Grades 6 to 9)*, June, 2006. http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/curr/pdf/ela_guide_6to9.pdf

An interview is a good way to gain information and provide the participants with practice in improving speaking and listening skills. Results of interviews can be prepared for publication in reports or in the school newspaper, thus supporting the writing component of the Language Arts program.

Before the Interview

Effective interviews are the result of careful planning. The teacher and students together should draw up a checklist of preparations that must be made for interviewing. Some important steps to include are:

- Think about the purpose of the interview and state it clearly.
- Make arrangements for the time, place and setting of the interview so they are convenient for both parties. Confirm arrangements the day before the interview.
- Become informed about the topic of the interview. Learn any special vocabulary needed to talk about the topic. Try to become familiar with some current information on the topic.
- Examine your own attitudes toward the interviewee and the topic you will be discussing.
- Plan your opening remarks in advance. These should include the purpose of the interview and the initial questions.
- Plan how you will document the interview. If you wish to audio or video record the interview, ask for permission ahead of time as some people prefer not to be recorded. To use audio or video recorders, be sure equipment is booked and in working order.

During the Interview

Guidelines are necessary for students to establish the way in which interviews should be conducted. Some suggestions include the following:

- Use language that is appropriate to the setting, the subject and other people present.
- Be alert to nonverbal cues from the interviewees. If they seem offended or confused by what you say, adjust your language or restate the question.
- Maintain a friendly, interested attitude. Always be polite. Offer reassuring comments.
- Make continual checks for understanding. Summarize especially long or complicated answers. Ask follow-up questions.
- Let the interviewee do most of the talking.
- Use nonverbal cues to show interest and support (e.g., maintain eye contact, nod, smile, or lean toward the speaker, as appropriate).
- Conclude the interview by thanking the interviewee for participating.
After the Interview

The teacher should discuss the interview process with the interviewer and with the class (audio or video recordings can be discussion starters). If the interview has taken place away from the school, the student interviewer could complete a self-assessment and report back to the teacher or class. If the teacher and students have been able to observe the interview, a few students may be asked to fill in a peer-assessment checklist. An example of a rating scale can be found on page 215 in *English Language Arts, A Curriculum Guide for the Middle Level (Grades 6–9)*, June, 2006. http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/curr/pdf/ela_guide_6to9.pdf
Chapter Four
Pages 26–35

Summary

Jack heads out on his bicycle to his weekend job at the Elementary Flight Training School, and on his way he finds a dog and her pups lying dead by the roadside; miraculously, one of the pups has survived. He stops to bury the dead dogs as best he can.

We meet some of the British pilots training at the air base, and we learn that the people of Cairn regularly invite groups of them to Sunday dinner in their homes. We also learn how dangerous the training can be, and that a few students have already died.

Before the Reading

Anticipation – Land of Earth and Sky

In this chapter, Jack heads out of town to his job at the airbase. Ask the students to pay attention to how he describes it, and to see if it helps them to remember their experience of being out on the prairie.

After Reading

Discussion Questions

- Why did the whole community come to Jack’s house the night before?
- What is Jack’s job at the base? What is he saving money for?
- Why does Jack cover the dead dog and her three pups?
- How far is two miles, the distance Jack has to bicycle every Saturday and Sunday from Cairn to the Elementary Flight Training School, in kilometres? How far is it from your house or school to the nearest store?
- What is an outhouse? Have you ever used a pump? Why would the town need a water truck to go to the water station at the town of Mortlach?
- Do the students know the words to the anthem “God Save the King”? “You Are My Sunshine”?
- What is a flight simulator (the Link)? Are flight simulators still used to train pilots?

Extending the Reading

Research Questions – Learning to Fly

Jack says that after the men trained as flyers in Cairn – after they had “earned their wings” – they would go to England for further training as bomber or fighter pilots. Have students use the Internet to find out:

- What did training a pilot during World War II involve? How long did it take?
- Why were pilots not allowed to wear glasses? Must pilots still have perfect vision?
Reader Response Journal/Creative Writing – Land of Earth & Sky

Write about being out on the prairie. What do you see, smell, hear, taste, feel? How does it feel to be surrounded by all that sky and grass?

Literary Devices – Contrast

Consider the contrast between the words the author uses to describe the dead dogs and the image she evokes when she describes the dew on the mat Jack uses to cover them. What are some of the images we use in prayers? What are some words we use to talk about funerals and death? About life and renewal? List these, and then write your own meditation or poem on the subject, using the contrast between them to make each concept more powerful.

Literary Devices – Sentence Fragments

The author deliberately uses sentence fragments, not often but occasionally, for effect. For example, on page 33, when Jack examines the wound in the dog’s head, he notes: “A bloody hole the size of a silver dollar was drilled into the dog’s head. Had to be caused by a shotgun blast.” Why would the author choose to use a sentence fragment? In what circumstances would it be appropriate?

History – Causes of World War II

When Jack prays, “For all the senseless killing in this world, God, we ask forgiveness,” he is drawing a parallel between the death of the innocent pups and the killing of people in war. The big issues that start wars often seem senseless when it comes down to the death of someone you know. Write a brief, 250–500 word essay outlining some of the causes of World War II.
**Chapter Five**
Pages 36–40

**Summary**

Jack peddles back into town with the pup in his bike carrier. He wonders who in town could have tried to get rid of the dogs in this manner, and he suspects the family of his enemy, Jimmy Boyle. He talks about joining up, but he realizes someone has to stay home to “mind the chickens.” He brings the dog home to meet his mother.

**Before the Reading**

**Anticipation**

- What do you think Jack wants to happen?
- Why would it not be possible?

**After the Reading**

**Comprehension Questions**

- Why does Jack suspect the Boyles of killing the dogs?
- Why does Jack think Buddy will help his family?
- What does Jack mean when he says he has to stay home to “mind the chickens”?

**Research Questions – Joining Up**

Jack knows the Royal Canadian Air Force will take seventeen-year-olds on as “boys.” What does that mean?

**Extending the Reading**

**Storytelling – Loyal Dogs**

Dogs are loyal – some dogs are so loyal that after their owner dies, they pine away and seem to die of a broken heart. Dogs are pack animals and are loyal to the alpha male and female leaders of their pack; when dogs are domesticated, this is their human owner. Have students who are interested in dogs read true stories about loyal dogs and then recount them to the class.
**Chapters Six and Seven**  
**Pages 41–53**

**Summary**

Jack tries to get his mom to let him keep Buddy, but she is so upset about Sandy that he can’t even tell her about how he found the pup. Jack goes to the store and talks to his dad, who helps him to understand why his mother is so opposed to the idea of keeping the dog but promises to try to change her mind. The topography of the town is described, as is the store.

**Before the Reading**

**Anticipation**

- What do you think Ivy Waters is going to think about having a dog in her house?

**After the Reading**

**Questions for Discussion**

- Why do you think Ivy Waters is so upset?
- Why does Flo “self-censor” her letter? What does the saying “Loose lips sink ships” mean?
- What reasons does Ivy Waters give for not wanting a dog? What reasons does her husband give for her dislike?
- What kind of dog is Buddy?

**Extending the Reading**

**Drama – Improvisation/Character Sketch**

The bachelor twins portray an important aspect of small-town life, and they allow students to understand the pace and rhythm of daily life for all the characters in the book. In pairs, students should improvise a scene of the conversation of the bachelor twins, Arnie and Melvin Hobbs, as they sit on the front porch of the store. They may use props and costumes or not. Before they begin, have them consider the following questions: What do the twins talk about in the story? What are their interests? Why do they want to be at the store?

**Art – Mental Pictures**

The town store plays an important role in rural life. Draw a picture of the Waters General Store, interior or exterior, based on the description in Chapters Six and Seven and the students’ own imaginations.
Social Studies – Rural Depopulation

Mrs. Nelson notices that more and more people are leaving Cairn and moving to Moose Jaw to get jobs. Have students investigate rural depopulation on the prairies, using the Statistics Canada Web site to analyze population statistics from the early 1900s to the present. Students should also look at the current situation using such sources as the CBC Web site, then write a report about why people continue to move to the cities and what effects this has on life in rural areas.

Discovery – Old-fashioned Candy

Have your students bring a variety of old-fashioned candy – those mentioned in the book and other kinds their grandparents or great-grandparents might remember – to class. Set up a candy counter to sell old-fashioned candy to other students and give the profits to a charity such as a dog shelter.

Discovery – Gossip

Word of mouth is important to advertisers – and to people who like to gossip. Gossip is important in small towns like Jack’s, but it can be misleading or just plain wrong. Sit with your students in a large circle, then whisper to the student next to you something about the story, such as “I think Ivy likes cookies but hates pups;” the student whispers what he or she heard to the next student, and the next, and so on. No repeats allowed! The last students in the circle says what he or she heard out loud, then you say what you had originally whispered. Try it again with a more complex line, or faster.
Chapter Eight
Pages 54–63

Summary

Jack arrives at his job at the Cairn airfield and begins cleaning aircraft. Readers are introduced to flying in the World War II era, to the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan and to a group of English lacs – Leading Aircraftsmen – including Basil, Trevor, Dexter and Charles (known as Cheese).

Before Reading

Focus

Tell the students to take note of the description of the airbase. Can they imagine what it looked like? Can they see it in their mind’s eye?

After the Reading

Comprehension Questions

- What was going on at the base when Jack arrived?
- Would you take a job like Jack’s?
- What did the inside of a Tiger Moth smell like?
- “This blighted bunch of blokes” (page 60) is an example of what literary device in which all the words begin with the same sound?
- Where did the lacs come from and why are they in Cairn?

Extending the Reading

Group Presentations – Science & History – Training Dogs, Training Pilots, the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan and the Blitz

Divide your students into small groups to investigate the following topics:

- How dogs are trained, including why some breeds are easier to train than others.
- Trevor’s dog Max was killed in the Blitz in 1941. What was the Blitz? Find pictures in books or on the Internet to show the devastation. (This information is expanded upon in Chapters Ten and Eleven.)
- Why some planes, like the Tiger Moth, were said to be easy to fly. Which planes were more difficult to fly?
- The function of all the gauges in the Tiger Moth cockpit: oil, airspeed, turn coordinator, compass, altimeter. What do they measure? Why are they important?
- What was the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan? What is the British Commonwealth? Why were flyers from all over the Commonwealth trained in Canada? The novel hints that the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan had some lasting benefits for Canada. What were they?

All groups should then make a brief presentation to the class explaining their findings.

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Art – Bird’s Eye View

Draw an aerial view of the airbase using the description in the book and your own imagination.

The Writer’s Craft

The author uses slang throughout the book.

- Does this help you feel part of the time and place, or do you feel like the characters are very different from you because of the different words they use?
- What are some slang words we use today?
- Would Jack understand what we were saying if he were transported into the future?
- Why have slang words changed since 1940?
- As you read, keep a list of slang words used and their meanings.
Chapter Nine
Pages 64–71

Summary

Jack visits his friend Wes McLeod to show him the puppy. Later, when he and Wes stop by the store, we discover that the family is experiencing financial difficulties because the store is not run very well. The two boys take the dog for a walk, but when the train whistle blows, the dog is scared and runs away. It is almost run over by Mr. Boyle, who recognizes the pup as part of the litter he had told his son to get rid of.

Before Reading

Preliminary Research

There is a lot of interesting historical detail in this chapter. Before the students begin reading it, have them ask their parents and grandparents about:

- waxed paper
- iceboxes
- bridge (the card game)
- air raids in London during WWII
- steam locomotives

After Reading

Questions for Discussion

- What does it mean when the author says that the way Bill Waters ran the store was a “bone of contention” between him and Ivy?
- In what way did their styles differ?

Extending the Reading

Reader Response Journal

- Jack says that the tension in the air makes him feel dizzy. How do you feel when there is tension in your home or at school? Does it affect you physically?
- People stop and get involved when Old Boyle confronts Jack about the dog. Would people do that today in the city, or would they just look the other way, assume that the kid deserved it, and just try to ignore it?
- After the altercation with Old Boyle, why does Jack still regard Buddy as a gift? Did you ever have a gift you couldn’t keep?
Music – “There’ll be bluebirds over the white cliffs of Dover…”

- Play Gracie Fields songs while the students find the lyrics of a Gracie Fields song on the Internet and compile a Gracie Fields songbook. Ask the students what they think was so appealing about these songs.
- Play Gracie Fields songs while the class works on other projects.

History/Art – Comics

Show your class examples of comic strips that were popular in the World War II era, including those mentioned in the novel: Mutt and Jeff, Li’l Abner, Dagwood. Are they still funny today? Alternatively, have students find and compile copies of some of these “funnies” into their own classroom version of the Funny Papers.
Chapters Ten and Eleven
Pages 72–86

Summary

The family attends church as usual on Sunday morning, but this time the English lacs that Jack met the day before at the airfield join the congregation. The locals appreciate their singing ability, and they agree to join the choir. Two of the English boys, Trevor and Basil, join the Waters family for lunch and a singalong after the service. When Basil suggests that they should put on a musical revue, everyone gets excited and suggests how the locals could get involved. Bill Waters hurts his back, and Jack gives Buddy to the airmen.

Before the Reading

Anticipation

Can you imagine what it would have been like before there were automatic washing machines, dishwashers and freezers? Women worked especially hard on the prairies during World War II, both in the home and in family businesses and farms. In this chapter, we find out that Ivy actually has a job outside her home and the store, yet we know the family is still struggling because their furniture is frayed and worn. Now we are about to find out how her talents make Cairn a better place to live.

After the Reading

Questions for Discussion

- Which king and queen and princesses do the congregation pray for?
- Why did Canadians feel more connection to Britain then than they do now?

Extending the Reading

History – Questions Big and Small

There are several important historical events mentioned in these chapters. Divide your students into groups to investigate different topics and report to the class.

- The English boys tell the family about what it’s like to live in London in wartime, and talk about why they joined up. Find out about the bombing of London during World War II. (This is a expansion of the information given in Chapter Eight.)
- Basil mentions not wanting to give the Nazi salute to anyone. What is a Nazi? Which countries were members of the Axis during World War II?
- Jack wonders whether his uncle died during the 1918 influenza epidemic. Find out about this “flu” epidemic, how it spread and how it affected the people in your province.
- What’s a “party line”? How did the telephone system work during WWII?
Music – That’s Entertainment

The music of the World War II era is mentioned throughout the book. Have students research the following singers and composers and play songs that would have been popular in 1943 to the class.

- Who was George Formby?
- What was the Pantages Theatre?
- Who were Gilbert and Sullivan?
- Who was Cole Porter?
- What’s a cornet?

Drama/Music – Chautauqua and Mairzydoats

Ivy says she used to be a Chautauqua girl. What is the Chautauqua? Have the class organize and present an old-fashioned Chautauqua at a school assembly. One of the songs that could be taught to the whole school is “Mairzydoats,” which is mentioned in the next chapter.
Chapter Twelve
Pages 87–95

Summary

After arranging for the doctor to look after his father’s injured back, Jack visits the McLeods. When they leave to pick up Wes’s sister Cathy, who is coming home from Normal School to teach in Cairn, Jack heads out to the swimming hole on the Hobbs’ farm. He doesn’t swim, though – he thinks about his sister. What would he do if someone needed his help but it caused his mom more worry?

Before the Reading

Hilarious History

Find out if anyone knows the song “Mairzydoats” and can sing all the words for the class.

After the Reading

Comprehension Questions

- What is Normal School?
- What are liquorice allsorts? Bring a sample for your class.

Extending the Reading

History – Food and the Law

- The Chinese restaurant was a feature of many prairie towns in the 1940s. Have students investigate the causes of this phenomenon.
- Jack’s mother regularly sends food and treats to Flo in England because “it’s the only sweet things she’s likely to get.” Were there food shortages in England during WWII? What other kinds of items were in short supply that soldiers and nurses needed?
- Jack thinks Trevor is too young to be in the air force – under eighteen. How could someone sign up without the government knowing how old they really were?

Music – Mairzydoats

What are the real words to “Mares eat oats”? Where does the song come from?
Chapter Thirteen
Pages 96–106

Summary

Cathy visits the school, and afterwards she and the boys go for milkshakes. Jack finds Cathy intriguing. There is talk of war and who is signing up, but Cathy presents a pacifist point of view, and when they get to Jack’s house, she speaks favorably of men doing “women’s work.” Jack is smitten, but later, when he gets to choir practice, he sees Cathy talking to Basil and Trevor and realizes how slim his chances are.

Before the Reading
Anticipation

• What is a pacifist?
• Would a pacifist be seen as unpatriotic during wartime?
• What was “women’s work” in the 1940s?

After the Reading
Questions for Discussion

• Is Cathy a pacifist?
• Does this have anything to do with patriotism, or loving your country?
• Might she be in danger of losing her job as a teacher?
• Is she showing courage?

Extending the Reading

History – Conscription and Enemy Aliens

Have your students research and report on how Canada treated pacifists during World War II. Were people who didn't believe in war forced to fight? Were they discriminated against at home? How were people of German or Japanese origin treated? Does Jack realize any of this?
CHAPTER FOURTEEN
Pages 107–111

SUMMARY

In her letters, Flo hints that she will soon be sent to the front in France. Angus is injured by a propeller at the airbase, and Jack has to hold the compress on the way to the infirmary. Angus survives, but the accident sets Jack to thinking about aeronautical engineering and how to design a safer engine.

BEFORE THE READING

DISCUSSION – FUTURE PLANS

Ask the students what they want to be when they grow up, and how they got interested in that field. Then tell them that in the next chapter, Jack finds out what he wants to be because of a terrible accident.

AFTER THE READING

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What are Jack's best and worst subjects? What are yours?
- What is Wes's summer job?
- Describe the accident that happens to Angus.

EXTENDING THE READING

FIELD TRIP – ENGINEERING/AIRCRAFT

Arrange for the class to visit a College of Engineering, an airport or an air museum.

CREATIVE WRITING – LETTERS HOME

Imagine that you are serving overseas in wartime. You are not allowed to tell your family exactly what is happening in case your letter falls into enemy hands, but you want them to know something about what you are experiencing. Imagine what your war experience would be like, then write two letters home, one telling the plain truth, the other only hinting at what is really happening.

SCIENCE – AIRCRAFT

Have students investigate the kinds of aircraft engines that replaced the propeller-type engines of World War II. They were not only safer, they allowed aircraft to reach higher speeds. How much more superior were they?

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Chapter Fifteen
Pages 112–123

Summary

At a choir practice, it becomes clear that Cathy and Basil are becoming an “item.” Jack chafes against the restrictions placed on him by his mom – he wants to take risks and grow up, and experience flying – but his mom is worried and suspicious of all moving vehicles. We begin to see the effects of gas rationing on everyday life when it is difficult to manage a trip down the road to Mortlach. We see that trouble might be in the offing for Jack: Jimmy Boyle is on the lookout for him. We learn a bit about the London Blitz, and it becomes perfectly clear that Trevor is under-age – another secret Jack has to keep.

Before the Reading

Questions for Discussion

- How old do you have to be before you can drive?
- Drink alcohol?
- Vote?
- Buy cigarettes?
- Go to war?
- These activities are privileges that go along with adulthood, or approaching adulthood, but they are also responsibilities. Why are young people not allowed to do these things even though they are often responsible and thoughtful people?

After the Reading

Questions for Discussion

- Earlier in the book, we got the idea that kids have to grow up faster in wartime. Why would this be true?
- Kids think about a wider world in wartime, a world outside their immediate experience. Does this cause them to want to find their place in it?
- Do kids grow up faster today than they used to? Why would this be true? What are some examples of this happening?

Extending the Reading

History/Home Economics – Rationing Week

Have the class design a rationing system for themselves and possibly their families. Each should receive coupons for a restricted amount of whatever items they think of as luxuries, perhaps including candy, pop, meat, butter, eggs, dessert, baths, soap, deodorant, makeup, gasoline for the family vehicle, “screen time,” etc. During Rationing Week, students should be asked to report informally on how they and their families are finding the experience. At the end of the week, students may want to produce a video of anecdotes from their week, perhaps with a central message of conservation or simplifying life.
Chapters Sixteen and Seventeen
Pages 124–137

Summary

Wes is working on the base newsletter, the “Moth Monthly,” and Cathy, despite her pacifist views, is volunteering as a secretary at the base, so they are around when Jimmy delivers oil drums to the base and he and Jack end up in a fight. Cathy and Basil are clearly getting serious about each other, which upsets Jack, but he’s proud that he stood up for himself against Jimmy. When Jack gets back to work cleaning Tiger Moths, it’s clear that his interest in flying is equalled by his interest in designing aircraft – his centre of gravity has shifted from Cairn to the flying school and beyond. His reverie is interrupted by a crash landing in which one Anson bomber, piloted by Cheese, lands on top of another, piloted by Dexter.

Before the Reading

Anticipation

- If you were in charge of putting out the base newsletter, what would you call it?
- If one of your friends failed at something that mattered to him, how would you comfort him?

After the Reading

Comprehension Questions

- What does Jimmy Boyle call Jack to insult him? What does Jack call Jimmy?
- How does Jack think Tiger Moths can be improved?
- Describe the Ansons’ landing that goes wrong.
- What is Observer School?

Extending the Reading

Writing – “Moth Monthly”

Have the class put together their own monthly class newsletter. Because a newsletter is intended not for outsiders but for those who are part of a group, such as those on the base or in the class, they should start by brainstorming which articles and features might be interesting and useful to themselves. The newsletter will need an editor and an assistant editor, a data entry team, a layout team, a graphics team, and others. Ideas for names should be brainstormed and voted upon. Deadlines should be established for submissions to the newsletter.
Storytelling – Finding the Humour

Sometimes accidents are serious, and there is loss of life and injury, but sometimes they are not fatal; in those cases, it’s easier to see the humour in the situation. Something like what is described in Chapter Seventeen actually happened. Show your class a picture of two Avro Ansons on top of each other. This is available on the Web site of the Canadian Lancaster Museum, http://www.lancastermuseum.ca/anson.html; a Tiger Moth that landed on a Vampire A79-484 in Australia in 1950, which is available on the Web site of the Australian Military Aircraft Serials and Aircraft History at http://www.adf-serials.com; and many photographs of Tiger Moths involved in accidents in the Image Bank at the Canadian Aviation Museum Web site, http://www.aviation.technomuses.ca/collections/artifacts/aircraft/deHavillandDH82CTigerMoth.shtml. There are many more humorous near-misses that happened during flight training and even flying missions overseas. Some of these stories are outlined in books such as *Flying Under Fire* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2003, vols. 1 and 2); others are available on the Internet, and these could be used in a storytelling exercise, with the best recounted at the class’s Chautauqua assembly mentioned in the Chapter Ten and Eleven section of this guide.
Chapters Eighteen and Nineteen  
Pages 138–152

Summary

The young people head out to Moose Jaw to commiserate with Cheese, who has been “washed out” of pilot training and will be sent to navigator school. On the way to Moose Jaw, Trevor and Jack plan an illicit flight for Jack in a Tiger Moth. At the wholesalers, we learn more about Jack’s mom when she was young, but we still don’t know what happened to Jack’s uncle, even though it seems to be common knowledge in the area.

Basil and Cathy get engaged in Moose Jaw. After dinner and a movie, the boys head to a billiard hall, where they run into trouble: Jimmy and Repete and some other locals who resent the raf flyers for taking the local girls. Strangely, by the end of the night, Jimmy and Jack seem to have evened the score.

Before the Reading

Anticipation

- Does Cheese deserve to “wash out” of pilot training for his error?
- Why would the air force have such a harsh rule?

After the Reading

Comprehension Questions

- When is Jack’s curfew extended to?
- What are Eaton’s and the Army & Navy?
- Why does Jimmy say Jack stole his dog?

Questions for Discussion

- Does it matter if you break the rules as long as you don’t get caught?
- There seems to be a rivalry between the town boys and the raf flyers. Why do they not get along?
- Trevor isn’t afraid because he was “raised on a street of brawlers,” and he says war is about power and control, bullies and victims. Jack was “raised in a house full of rules.” Does he see war the same way?

Extending the Reading

Reader Response Journal – Parents & “A Bucket of Baseballs”

- The wholesaler tells Jack that his mother was “a lively girl, a real beauty.” Has anyone ever told you something about your parents that made you think about them in a new way?
- Have you ever felt like you had “a mass of questions skittering around your brain like a bucket of baseballs dumped on the diamond during practice”? What did it feel like? What was it you were uncertain of? Think of some other similes you could use to describe this feeling.
Chapter Twenty
Pages 153–161

Summary

When Jack gets back to Cairn, he finds that Flo has been wounded and is in critical condition in hospital. Jack and his dad finally talk about his uncle’s death and about the nature of family secrets and life in a small town. After WWI, Jack’s uncle flew with the famous bush pilot Wop May, married Jack’s mom and started drinking, perhaps a result of feeling guilty about surviving when so many of his friends had died. Eventually, he was killed at an uncontrolled railway crossing on the way home from Moose Jaw, either a suicide or a fatal accident. Foreshadowing coming events, one of Jack’s model airplanes has been dashed to the floor in a stiff breeze.

Before the Reading

Explain to the students that while this chapter seems to be all about death, there are a lot of answers when we finally face the truth.

After the Reading

Questions for Discussion

This is the chapter when we finally get to understand what happened to Jack’s uncle. It also gives us some idea of the terrible toll of war on the human mind. Here are some questions for discussion:

- Would it bother you to survive if most of your friends died? What emotions would you feel?
- What is “shell shock”?
- Do you think it would be difficult to resume normal life after you had caused death?
- Jack’s dad says to him that “Losing a brother is really hard, Jack. I’m glad you’ll never have to go through that.” His father knows what he’s talking about because he lost his brother when he died after World War I. But Jack’s sister Flo is injured and in critical condition, and Sandy, who was like a brother to him, is still missing in action. When Cheese washes out of flying school, it’s like losing a brother for his friends. Is it necessary for someone to actually be a brother for you to feel the same kind of loss? Is dying the only form of loss?

Extending the Reading

History – Bush Pilots

What is a bush pilot? Ask your students to investigate early bush pilot Wop May or to write a brief report on the role of the bush pilot in opening northern Canada.
Chapter Twenty-one
Pages 162–171

Summary

Things are coming to a head in flight training, and planning for the musical review or fete is well underway. We learn more about Ivy’s experience as a Chautauqua girl. Jack and Jimmy meet in the Chinese restaurant, but Jack is learning to let Jimmy’s insults wash over him. The high point in this chapter is when Jack takes Sandy’s car to meet up with Trevor to fly in a Tiger Moth.

Before the Reading

Anticipation

Jack’s latest model airplane ends up smashed on the floor of his room at the end of the last chapter. How do you think this foreshadows what is to come in this chapter?

After the Reading

Questions for Discussion

• There isn’t a lot of action in this chapter. Why would the author include it? What information does it add to the story?
• There are hints of things to come in this chapter. What do you think might be foreshadowing future developments?

Extending the Reading

Music – Laughter and Hope

• British comic actor Stanley Holloway eventually starred as Alfred P. Doolittle in the 1964 hit movie My Fair Lady. Show clips from the movie, particularly the song “Wiv a Little Bit of Luck.”
• Why would a song like “We’ll Meet Again” have special meaning during wartime?
Chapter Twenty-two
Pages 172–181

Summary

Later that afternoon, Basil, Dexter, Buddy and Jack swim at the Hobbs’s pond, and the girls – Cathy, Rose and Violet – join them later. Buddy seems agitated, though, and when Trevor flies over in his Tiger Moth, doing tricks, Buddy acts even worse. Soon after Trevor’s last pass, the plane goes down. Trevor is dead.

Before the Reading

Anticipation

Ask the class if they have ever been in an idyllic situation – the perfect day, the best friends, the happiest times, maybe at a beach or party – when some catastrophe occurs and suddenly everything changes. (You may have your own story about this.) Point out that afterward, you no longer feel like the same person as the one who was innocently enjoying life. That is what happens to Jack in this chapter.

After the Reading

Questions for Discussion

- Might Trevor have been at fault in this accident?

Information – What Is a War Bride?

After World War II, approximately 50,000 women who met Canadian servicemen overseas came to Canada to be married. But many Canadian women married airmen who came to Canada with the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, from Britain, Norway, Poland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, etc. Their husbands either joined them in Canada or they travelled to their husband’s home country after the war.

Extending the Reading

The Writer’s Craft – Suspense and Superstition

What makes you feel scared? Do you dread the dark? A stranger? A branch tapping on the window-pane? A caller who just hangs up?

Some of the symbols the author uses in this chapter evoke feelings of impending danger: the dark shadows, the stray wind, the screaming crows. We almost know something is going to happen – we can feel it – so when something bad happens, it’s no surprise to us readers. We almost wish we could have warned the characters, but of course we didn’t actually know what was going to happen in the future. This device is a form of foreshadowing – a hint to the reader that all is not well, that a crisis is lurking just around the corner. It adds to the feeling of suspense.
If the author made us suspect that something bad was about to happen and then it didn’t, we would almost feel let down, but it might make us laugh – we got all worried for nothing! Write a paragraph about an idyllic scene, then in the next paragraph introduce an element of suspense with symbols of impending danger. Finally, in the last paragraph, turn it around quickly – show the reader that there was no danger after all, that it’s just an ordinary day, and they were silly to think anything bad would happen.

**Music – Big Bands**

Play the big band music of Jimmy Dorsey, Glenn Miller and others for the class, or show clips from *A Song Is Born* (1948) with Danny Kaye, *The Glen Miller Story* with James Stewart, or an excellent film set on the Canadian prairies, *Bye Bye Blues*.

**History/Home Economics – Swimsuit Fashions of the 1940s**

Have students look up the swimsuit fashions for men and women in the 1940s, or have them investigate popular Hollywood stars like Esther Williams and Dorothy Lamour and their contributions to swimsuit fashions. Students can then design their own retro swimsuit based on these fashions.
Chapter Twenty-three
Pages 182–191

Summary

Basil takes charge at the dress rehearsal for the musical, which is chaotic but fun. Trevor is still uppermost in his friends’ minds. They struggle with the meaning of life and death, and in the end Wes’s faith is strengthened. There is good news too: Flo has recovered from her injuries and is safe in England, and the family decides to leave Cairn for the city so Jack can go to university and Bill and Ivy can pursue their careers.

Before the Reading

Anticipation

Ask the students if they’ve ever been involved in a school production that seemed like it would never be ready during rehearsal. Did that make them more nervous? What happened on opening night?

After the Reading

Questions for Discussion

• Change can be difficult for everyone, young and old. Would it be harder for Jack’s mom and dad to start a new life in the city, or for Jack, who has never lived anywhere but Cairn?
• Has your family ever had to move to a different town or city? How did you and your family members anticipate the move? What problems came up? What turned out well?

Extending the Reading

Reader Response Journal – Big Questions

Wes and Jack are struggling to understand the issues of sacrifice, personal responsibility, life and death, war and peace, and God. Why do bad things happen to good people? How can people learn to get along with each other? What is the meaning of life? Why are we here? What are we to think when someone dies?

Although Wes and Jack are very good friends, each finds a slightly different answer. These are big questions, and finding the answers for yourself takes a lot of thought. As you develop your own personal philosophy of life, write about your feelings about these big issues. How would you cope if a friend died in war?
Chapter Twenty-four
Pages 192–201

Summary

At the musical revue, the townspeople remember Trevor. The Boyles steal the show with their jigging, and Jimmy is flushed with success. But it is Cathy who captures their imaginations with a song that offers dreams of a better future, of peace and love. After the concert, Jack’s mom and dad tell him he can keep Buddy.

Before the Reading

Focus Questions – Using Your Skills to Benefit Others

We can contribute to our communities in many ways: sometimes we help others by volunteering, sometimes we pool our money and resources to build something and sometimes we contribute by entertaining others. Special events like concerts, plays and other performances are important for communities to come together to perform and enjoy the entertainment. Ask your students what kind of talents and skills they have that could entertain others, from jigging to juggling, from acting to auctioneering, that could allow them to make a voluntary contribution to their community. What “worthy causes” can they contribute their skills to?

After the Reading

Questions for Discussion

- When someone like Trevor dies, is it appropriate to have a celebration?
- Would having a celebration make you feel better? Would it help you to forget or help you to remember that person?

Extending the Reading

Reader Response Journal – Hope

It has been said that the darkest hour is just before dawn. Has this been your experience? If you have hope for a better future, are you more tolerant of problems you are experiencing in the present?

Music – Over the Rainbow

Show a clip from the movie The Wizard of Oz where Judy Garland sings “Somewhere Over the Rainbow,” and have the class learn the words and practice the song, perhaps for the class's Chautauqua assembly.
**Physical Education (Dance)/Special Events – Jigging**

Have students who are familiar with Irish, Métis, French, or Cape Breton jigging demonstrate how it’s done for the class, or play clips from Michael Flatley’s *Lord of the Dance* video. Introduce a short unit on jigging in Physical Education. This can be part of the class’s Chautauqua assembly. Students who play the fiddle or flute can make a special contribution during this performance.

**Reader Response Journal – Freedom and Responsibility**

Jack’s mom wants to keep him safe, to keep him young and innocent. She doesn’t want him to feel sad or to lose his dreams. But Jack already knows what it is to be sad. His friend Trevor has died, and he has faced many other trials and challenges over the past year. And if the war continues when he graduates from high school, he may have to join up.

Do your parents encourage you to try new things and to take responsibility for your own choices? Or are they concerned about protecting you from dangers in the world? Will this gradually change as you get older and become more responsible? When should parents stop trying to protect their children from the hard realities of life? Write about this.

**Lyrics/Music/Poetry – Gilbert & Sullivan**

Basil makes up new words to a classic Gilbert and Sullivan song from the operetta, *H.M.S. Pinafore*, replacing

> Stick close to your desks and never go to sea
> And you all may be rulers of the Queen’s Navy.

with

> Keep your feet on the ground, stay out of the blue
> And you’ll all make Marshals of the King’s Air Crew.

Have your class listen to the soundtrack or view a movie of a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta such as *Pirates of Penzance* or *H.M.S. Pinafore*. A movie is particularly useful because the students can better understand the story, but in any case, the lyrics, which are available online, lend themselves to rewriting. Instruct the students to form small groups to rewrite the lyrics, using their own experiences as students in your school. It helps if they try to keep the rhymes similar, but most importantly, to pay close attention to preserving the original rhythm. They can perform these for each other in class, then choose the best for the Chautauqua assembly they put on for the rest of the school.
Chapter Twenty-five
Pages 202–216

Summary

Jack and Wes see another Tiger Moth crash, and they race to the scene, meeting Old Man Boyle, who is headed in the other direction. As they get closer, they see it is Basil’s favourite plane, and when they get there they discover Basil, still alive but unconscious. The boys, suspecting broken bones and a concussion at least, are afraid to move him, but it’s too far to go for help. They know the longer Basil is unconscious, the worse it could be. Jack decides that the only way to help Basil is to fly him back to the base in the damaged plane. Jack has taken off once, but he has never landed a plane, and he realizes that he could kill them both. Still, it is their only hope. He and Wes quickly clean and repair the plane as best they can and Jack takes off, barely clearing a poplar bluff. Luckily, Jack remembers all the procedures and he lands the plane successfully. He has made his first solo flight.

Before the Reading

Anticipation

Jack has had to deal with a number of tragedies and near tragedies. From each incident he has learned something. The author still expects more of him. What further serious incident might occur? Who might be involved? What will Jack have to do to prevent another tragedy?

If you saw someone in trouble, would you help? Would you feel guilty if you didn’t help? What if putting yourself at risk would affect those you loved? What if your family needed you?

After the Reading

Research Questions

- What are Station Standing Orders?
- Why should you take off into the wind?

Extending the Reading

Discussion – Courage

“Courage is not a gift; it is a decision,” Jack remembers Arnie Hobbs saying. Jack is an ordinary boy, and all his life, his parents – especially his mother – have encouraged him to be careful, not courageous. Yet as he grows up, circumstances force him to choose to undertake challenges that require great courage. The war brings the question of courage and choices to a head for all the young people in the book, whether it is the courage to go to war, to fly, or to stand up for what you believe.
Key Questions

- What does it mean that “Courage is not a gift; it is a decision”?
- Can you decide to have courage?
- Do you think of yourself as courageous?
- Have you ever wondered what you would do in a crisis?
- Are some people more courageous than others? If so, why?

Reader Response Journal – “It’s like riding a bike…”

What does it mean to think yourself back into the mind of a flyer? Are most skills like those needed to ride a bike – once you learn how you never forget? Is there a skill you learned a long time ago but haven’t used in years? Could you use those skills if you had to?
Chapter Twenty-six
Pages 217–224

Summary

Despite his worries, Jack’s mom and dad are very proud of him for saving Basil’s life. Jack is surprised at how well his mom has taken the news of his escapade. First Jack and then Buddy bathe in the big copper tub in the kitchen, then they both have a long nap. Later, when Jack, Wes and Cathy visit Basil in the infirmary, Jack realizes he really did save Basil’s life, and that everyone in town knows the story. Jack feels like he grew up that day and is now even more committed to designing safer planes.

After the Reading

Questions for Discussion

• Why doesn’t Jack bathe in the bathroom?
• Explain that in rural areas in those days, indoor plumbing was still quite rare. People heated water on the stove, then poured it into a big tub that they placed in the kitchen, close to the stove so the water didn’t have to be carried a long way. It was also the warmest place in the house in the days before central heating. It was hard work to fill the tub, so people bathed only once a week, usually on Saturday night so they would be clean for church on Sunday.

Comprehension Questions

Skim read Chapter One. What strands of the story’s plot did the author mention in the first chapter? Can you think of any strands of the story that had not been resolved by the end of the last chapter?
Concluding Activities

The following questions are suitable for Think-Pair-Share activities, group discussions and essay questions. Teachers may wish to use a combination of these concluding activities to provide summative evaluation for the novel study.

Thinking about the Characters

- One of the major themes of the novel is that courage is a decision, not a gift. Give examples of how different characters decide to be courageous in the story.
- Flo and Cathy both exhibit bravery but in different ways. Explain how courage can involve things you do and things that you believe.
- Wes and Jack are friends and share many of the same experiences and questions about life, but they choose very different careers. Explain why each one chooses the career he does.
- Jack knows his mom worries about him, but in Chapter Thirteen he wonders what he would do if someone needed his help. Explain how this foreshadowing helps prepare us for Jack’s decisions later on.
- Jack’s mom likes things to be under control, but as the world changes she finds it hard to keep them that way. Describe how she changes from being worried about the risks her son faces to being proud of his courage.
- Jack’s dad is more easygoing. How does he help Jack and his mom get along?
- Many of the characters in this novel change over time. Describe these changes and their causes for each of the following characters: Jack, Wes, Ivy, Bill, Basil and Cathy.

Thinking about the Story

- The people in Cairn support each other when things go wrong or when someone is facing difficult times. The community also gets together to have fun and celebrate. Think about the times in the novel when the people of the community help each other when there is trouble. How does their support and concern make a difference to their friends and neighbours?
- People need to be courageous in wartime because they may have to leave their homes and risk their lives. But it’s not just war that forces people to be brave. Give other examples of courage in the story.
- In Chapter Eleven, Jack notices that the English boys know what they think about the war and aren’t afraid to say it. In Chapter Thirteen, Cathy presents another point of view about war. What are some of the reasons Cathy and the boys from England have developed different opinions about war?
- Jack’s uncle felt guilty that he had survived a war when so many of his friends did not. How do the young people deal with Trevor’s death? Why does that make it easier for them to go on with life?
Jack and his friend Wes struggle to understand why God lets Trevor die. How do they explain it?

Do young people have to become more responsible for making their own choices in wartime?

There are many differences of opinion that come up throughout the story, even between friends and family. Describe these, and outline some of the reasons why the characters in the novel believe and behave as they do.

The amenities offered by Cairn differ from the attractions in Moose Jaw. What could the young people do in their spare time in each community?

**Inquiry Projects**

- We know Canada helped train pilots from all over the British Commonwealth during World War II through the British Commonwealth Air Training Program. Where did the pilots come from to train in the BCATP? Why did the program end? See the background information pages at the end of the novel and the beginning of this guide for information.

- Does Canada still help train flyers? Today, pilots from countries who are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) train at Canadian Forces Base Moose Jaw. The NATO Flying Training in Canada (NFTC) program trains military pilots, especially fighter pilots. Find out more about this program. Include information on which countries are members of NATO.

**Creative Writing Opportunities**

Letters were very important during World War II. Many families did not have phones and long distance calls were not common. Imagine that you are one of the English boys training in western Canada. Write a letter home to your family that describes the place you are staying, the people and your training. Don’t forget – your letter may be censored!
About Coteau Books

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