



2009

Flygirl

Pat Frade

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Smith, Sherri L. *Flygirl*. Putnam's, 2008. ISBN 9780399247095. \$16.99. 275 p.

Reviewer: Pat Frade

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Fiction; Historical fiction;

Subject: Women Airforce Service Pilots (U.S.)--Juvenile fiction; World War, 1939-1945--Participation, Female--Juvenile fiction; Air pilots--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Ida Mae Jones is a fair-skinned African American living in Louisiana during WWII. Her crop-dusting father taught her to fly, which she absolutely loves. But because she is "half-black," she can't even get a pilot license. While her brother is serving his country in the South Pacific, she is cleaning houses. One day her younger brother shows her an ad in the newspaper for women pilots. Ida Mae decides to take a chance, passes the entrance test, and heads for Sweetwater, Texas, for training in the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) program. Ida Mae and her fellow women pilots go through months of rigorous training so that they can assume responsibility for military flight tasks on the homefront. Ida Mae has to "pretend" to be white by not curling her hair too much and watching what she says. She has to deal with conflicting emotions regarding her black family and friends in Louisiana and her new white friends in Sweetwater.

Smith has done excellent research and accurately depicts the beginnings of the WASP program and the lives of those first women pilots. Ida Mae is a character that readers will like from the very beginning—a patriotic, gusty, strong black woman, who must figure out who she really is.

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