



2016

Flying Solo: How Ruth Elder Soared into America's Heart

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Packard, Abigail (2016) "Flying Solo: How Ruth Elder Soared into America's Heart," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 37 : Iss. 8 , Article 15.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol37/iss8/15>

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Book Review

Title: Flying Solo: How Ruth Elder Soared into America's Heart

Author: Julie Cummins

Illustrator: Marlene R. Laugesen

Reviewer: Abigail Packard

Publisher: Roaring Book Press

Publication Year: 2013

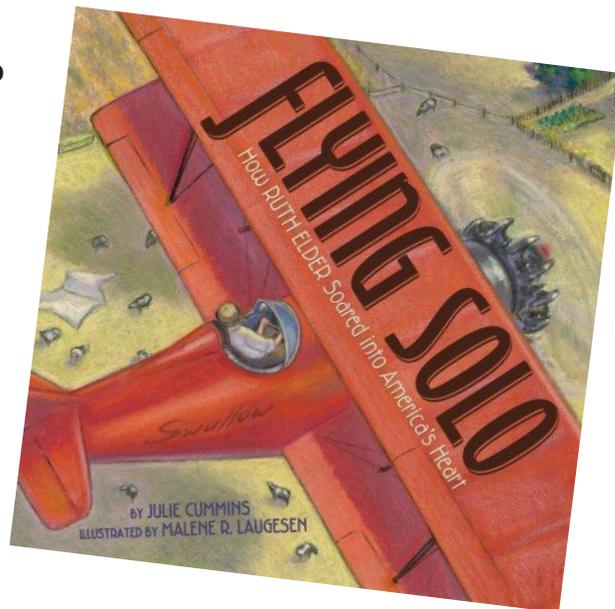
ISBN: 9781596435094

Number of Pages: 29

Interest Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Review



Flying Solo: How Ruth Elder Soared into America's Heart is a nonfiction picture book that illustrates Ruth Elder's adventures as one of the first female pilots. She was the first woman to attempt to fly across the Atlantic, even before Amelia Earhart. Unfortunately, her plane malfunctioned and she was forced to land on the ocean. She was rescued by a ship which brought her to France. Despite her failed attempt, she was hailed as a heroine for her "daredevil feat" and became famous. She later starred as an actress in several western films but decided to revisit the world of aviation again. She participated in the first ever women's cross-country air race, later called a "powder puff derby." She came in fifth place behind Louise Thaden and other women whose time as pilots was influential in opening doors to the world of aviation to women in later generations.

This story was fun to read. We often hear so much about Amelia Earhart, for obvious reasons, but don't hear much about other female pilots that were also influential in breaking social barriers surrounding aviation. This story was refreshing in its originality. It was also filled with solid information backed by an insightful bibliography. For instance, the last two images of the women that participated in the first powder puff derby and later women that become firsts in the field of aviation. These images were followed by a very helpful guide that gave each woman's name and some of her crowning achievements in this field. The illustrations were appropriately fun and bright. They highlighted the key characters, making Ruth and the other female pilots the center of attention. The story was a little choppy as it moved from one aspect of Ruth's career to another. But overall this book was charming and would be a fantastic addition to a library as a resource for students hoping to learn more about female pilots.