

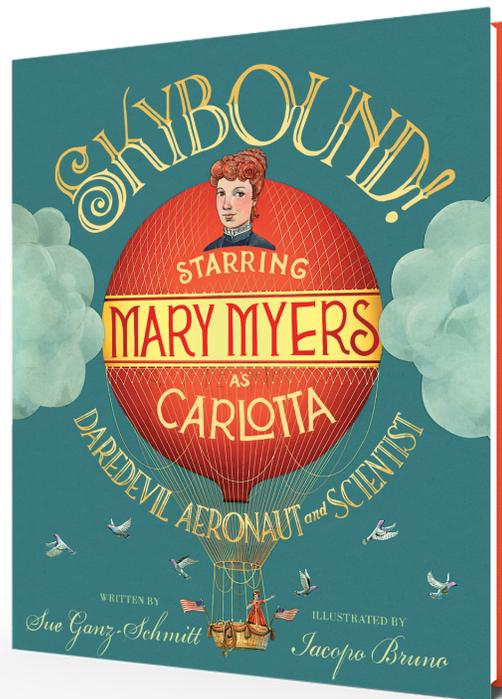
DISCUSSION GUIDE

SKYBOUND!: Starring Mary Myers as Carlotta, Daredevil Aeronaut and Scientist

Written by Sue Ganz-Schmitt
Illustrated by Iacopo Bruno

\$18.99 US / \$24.99 CAN
ISBN 9781635928150 HC
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Ages: 7-10



ABOUT THE BOOK

In this STEAM picture book, take to the skies with Mary Myers, aka “Carlotta,” an aeronaut and inventor whose careful scientific work improved balloons and our understanding of flight, weather patterns, and the atmosphere.

In the 1850s, proper young ladies were supposed to keep their feet on the ground (literally and metaphorically), but Mary dreamed of flying. Luckily, she married Carl Myers, a balloon enthusiast whose dreams were just as lofty as hers. Together, they designed and constructed balloons of all shapes and sizes, a difficult and dangerous job that required knowledge of chemistry, engineering, and meteorology. But how could they know which balloon designs worked best? They needed someone adventurous who could do balloon tricks for crowds while recording flight data. Mary knew just the person . . . herself! She gave herself the stage name Carlotta and anxiously awaited her first flight. Would she make it into the air? Could she collect the data they needed? Mary battled thick clouds and bone-chilling cold, but she went higher and farther than she hoped, and returned ready for her next flight.

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PRAISE FOR SKYBOUND!

★ "Loaded with information, this meticulously researched tale about one high-flying woman's exploits will captivate readers; quotes from Mary/Carlotta are incorporated. The crisp ink illustrations are superb, beautifully capturing period details and settings; note some eye-popping typesetting creativity. This fascinating book flies high and definitely rises to the occasion." —**Kirkus Reviews, starred review**

★ "The life of Mary Myers takes flight in this captivating biographical picture book about a barrier-busting woman scientist...Stunning illustrations with intricate details follow the highs and lows—literally—of her life and career. Her story will inspire budding scientists to let their dreams carry them up, up, and away." —**Foreword Reviews, starred review**

"The amazing account is beautifully told via urgent, animated text and elegant illustrations. Bruno intersperses delightful depictions of antique ephemera (posters, certificates, blueprints) throughout...A soaring story of a remarkable and memorable woman." —**Booklist**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. At the start of the book, author Sue Ganz-Schmitt writes that Mary Breed Hawley “soared into the world” in 1850, yet she was expected to live a life where she was “tethered to her home”. What were women expected to do with their lives at this point in history? How does illustrator Iacopo Bruno’s artwork in the beginning of the book help you understand this?
2. Many words and phrases throughout SKYBOUND! foreshadow what’s to come in this story. For example, Mary dreamed of “floating freely in space” and her future husband Carl had “high in the sky” ideas. As you’re reading the book, identify other key words or phrases that point to what might happen in this book.
3. When Mary marries her husband Carl Myers, she strays from the norm of what women could or should accomplish in the late 1800’s. What did Mary do that started her ascent to becoming an aeronaut? How did Carl feel about Mary’s ambitions?
4. Mary and Carl hire an aeronaut to test their first balloon, but why did Mary think *she* would be the best person to do this job after that? What did the first aeronaut tester do, and not do? What did Mary and Carl want to find out while their balloon was in the air?
5. Why did Mary feel it was necessary to change her name in order to fly in the balloon? Why did she choose the name “Carlotta”?

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6. When the date of her solo flight finally arrived, do you think Mary was taken seriously by the person who gave her instructions on how to fly the balloon? Why did Mary doubt herself?
7. The author quotes Mary/Carlotta as saying: “The earth is a picture painted for beauty.” What did Mary mean when she said that?
8. When Mary ascends two miles into the skies, she describes it as the “loneliest place” she had ever been. Why? What were the “ghost clouds” she describes while she’s in flight?
9. Mary/Carlotta takes her homing pigeons with her on her first flight. How did they help her? What other tools did Mary/Carlotta bring with her to assist with her flight and her collection of information?
10. Talk about the farmer’s reaction when he sees Mary/Carlotta at the conclusion of the book. How does he represent the attitudes towards women from this time in history? Was Mary/Carlotta’s trip a success? Why or why not?

EXTRA CREDIT

1. Re-read the quote at the beginning of the book from Mary Myers as Carlotta: “*There are times when one has to decide what to do, and do it in a twinkling of an eye.*” Now that you’ve finished reading the book, what does this quote mean to you?
2. Take a closer look at illustrator Jacopo Bruno’s beautiful artwork throughout SKYBOUND! How do his illustrations support the story and help you to understand Mary/Carlotta better?
3. In SKYBOUND!, author Sue Ganz-Schmitt writes that “Balloon madness sailed in from France and captivated America.” Read and research more about the French and American fascination with hot air balloons in the late 1700’s and 1800’s.
4. Mary/Carlotta helped her husband Carl invent “groundbreaking” balloon fabric made of boiled linseed oil and turpentine. Find out more about how the fabric for hot air balloons was created at that time. Why was it considered groundbreaking? Is the fabric still produced the same way today?
5. The “More About Carlotta” and “Even More About Carlotta!” sections of the backmatter give readers a deeper glimpse into the life of this trailblazing woman. After reading these sections, share with your class what else you learned. What fascinated you the most about Mary/Carlotta?

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6. Identify other ambitious and impactful women who lived during Mary/Carlotta's time. Who are her inventor contemporaries? Who else was breaking barriers and defying society's norms?
7. How has the field of flight changed for women since Mary/Carlotta's time? Research other women who have made a significant impact in this field throughout history.
8. What's the difference between an "aeronaut" and an "astronaut"? Define both words and discuss the differences between the two.
9. After reading the backmatter in the book, research more about The Balloon Farm, a place in upstate New York where Mary/Carlotta and Carl lived and manufactured balloons. Does it still exist today?
10. Are there other places in the US that celebrate balloons and aeronauts? Where are there balloon festivals throughout the US? Find out more!

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