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Amelia Earhart
THIS BROAD OCEAN

by Sarah Stewart Taylor and Ben Towle

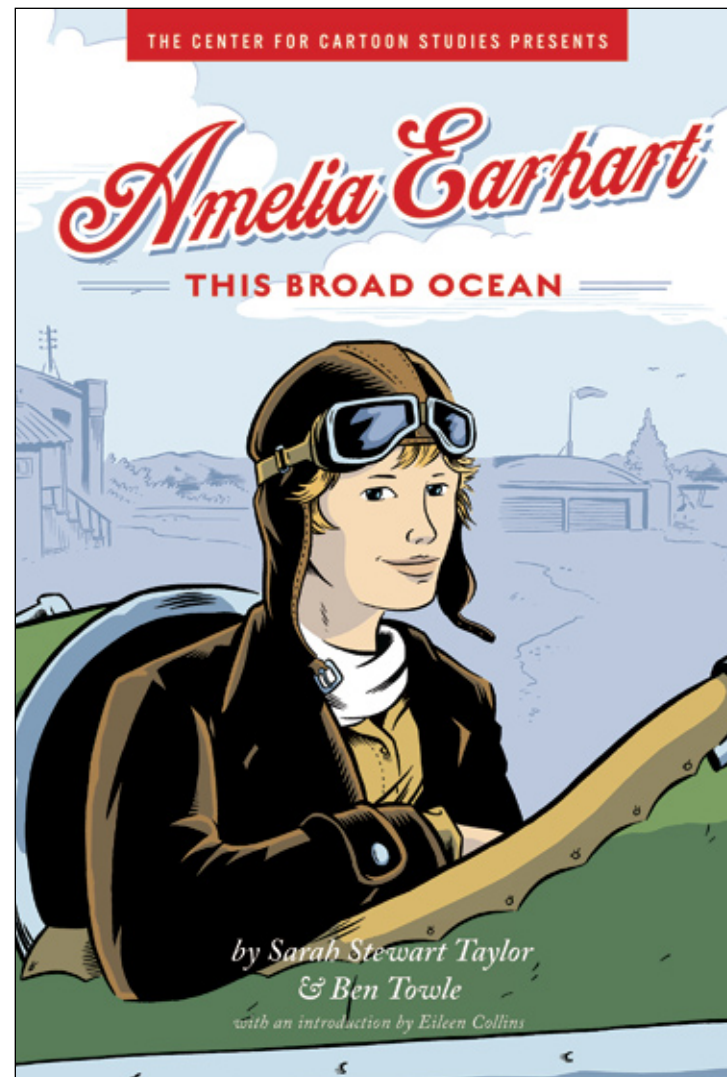
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DISCUSSION GUIDE

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About the Book

“Women must try to do things as men have tried. When they fail, their failure must be but a challenge to others.” —*Amelia Earhart*

Amelia Earhart developed a love of flying at a very young age . . . and she wasn't about to let any man get in the way of her dreams. What began as a simple joy became something much deeper—a commitment to opening doors for all women. As Amelia built a name for herself in the field of aviation—breaking numerous records along the way—she inspired future trailblazers to soar to new heights.

In *Amelia Earhart: This Broad Ocean*, Sarah Stewart Taylor and Ben Towle focus on Amelia's triumphant crossing of the Atlantic Ocean in 1928, offering us a glimpse of her relentless ambition and her tireless will to promote women's rights. But above all, author and illustrator leave us with a sense of her deep-rooted desire to touch the sky.



Discussion Questions

- 1 Why does Amelia Earhart come to Trepassey, Newfoundland? Why is this location ideal for flying across the Atlantic Ocean? Would you put your faith in a place called “Dead Man’s Bay”?
- 2 Why does Grace’s mother call her “Nosy Nelly”? List careers where being a nosy, questioning person is an asset.
- 3 Explain why Earhart and her team have so much difficulty getting airborne. How do they try to solve the issues?
- 4 Theorize how the *Trepassey Herald* got started. Why do you think Grace created it? What clues lead you to believe this?
- 5 Summarize what happened to the other women who tried to fly across the Atlantic Ocean. Would you want to be the first at something? What?
- 6 How does the flight become a race for Earhart? Do you think competition makes something more interesting or worthwhile?
- 7 What do the men on the team do to pass the time? Explain why this is probably not the best idea. What do you do when you’re bored?
- 8 Determine how Amelia Earhart became interested in flying. Do you think her father regretted introducing it to her or not? Why?
- 9 Consider Amelia Earhart’s choices compared to most women of her time. How did she behave compared to her contemporaries? Do you consider her brave?
- 10 “The ocean up here is hungry for foolish souls.” Would you consider Earhart foolish or not? Why?



- // How does Grace learn the outcome of Amelia's Atlantic flight? What does she do with the information?
- // By the end of the book, how has Grace changed? Do you think Amelia Earhart was a big influence on her life or not? Who are your personal heroes? Why?



Projects

ART

Create a new series of cartoons that depict another event in Amelia Earhart's life. Use the illustrations by Ben Towle as inspiration and include at least ten frames. Be sure to vary the perspective in at least three.

HISTORY

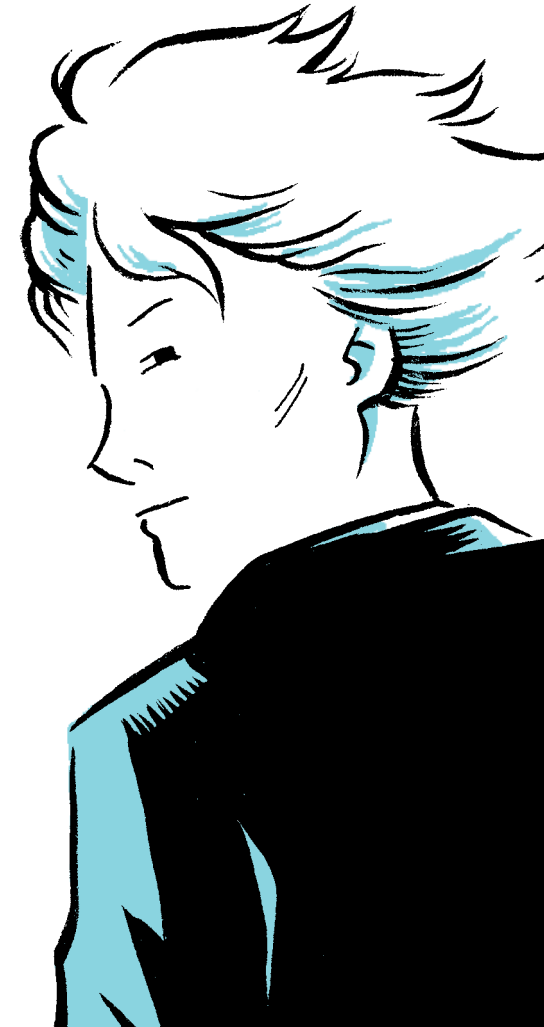
Research life in the 1920s and create a poster, pamphlet, PowerPoint presentation, or commercial about what you learned. Consider one of the following topics: women's rights or issues, music, art and architecture, technology, transportation, medicine, or entertainment.

MATH

In pairs, create equations to calculate either how much gas is needed per mile for Amelia Earhart to fly her plane or how many hours it would take her to complete a trip across the Atlantic.

SCIENCE

Create a diagram explaining the physics of flight. Be sure to define any necessary terms for the layperson to understand it.



About the Creators

SARAH STEWART TAYLOR is the Agatha Award–nominated author of the Sweeney St. George mystery series. She teaches writing at the Center for Cartoon Studies, and is co-founder of the Writer’s Center, a teaching space and drop-in workshop open to the public in White River Junction, Vermont. *Amelia Earhart: This Broad Ocean* is the first graphic novel she has written. She lives in North Hartland, Vermont, with her husband and two sons. Visit her Web site at www.SarahStewartTaylor.com.



BEN TOWLE is an Eisner Award–nominated cartoonist and comics educator whose most recent graphic novel is *Midnight Sun*, which chronicles the fate of an Italian airship expedition to the North Pole in 1928. He is currently hard at work on *Oyster War*, a raucous adventure story set around the Chesapeake Bay at the turn of the twentieth century. Ben lives in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Learn more at www.benzilla.com.



Q & A WITH THE CREATORS

Sarah Stewart Taylor

1 What fascinated you most about Amelia Earhart’s story?

I think I’d always thought of Amelia Earhart as someone who was destined from an early age to be an American icon. This just wasn’t true. She had a difficult childhood and she bounced around a lot as a young adult, unsure about what she wanted to do with her life. Of course, she loved flying and was certainly a pioneer in that world as a young woman, but at the time that she made her historic transatlantic flight from Trepassey, she was thirty years old and was working as a social worker in Boston. She was called in to interview to make the flight only after Amy Phipps Guest was prevented by her family from making it herself. I was fascinated by the idea that she was more of a regular person than I’d always thought, and that though she had a lot of luck in her career, she also thought very strategically about what she wanted to do. She was a groundbreaker for women in so many different ways.

2 Could you describe a bit about your process for research and writing this book?

I spent a couple of months reading everything I could get my hands on about Amelia Earhart. I really just tried to learn her biography so that I could sift through it for the most compelling episodes. I was tempted to focus on what was arguably the most dramatic moment in her life, her 1938 disappearance over the Pacific, but the more I thought about it, the more interested I became in the flight that made her “Amelia Earhart, American icon”: her first historic flight across the Atlantic. There was a lot of drama during the weeks she and her crew were trying to take off from Trepassey, and I loved the idea of this small fishing village witnessing this incredibly significant moment in history.

3 What advice would you give young people who would like to write or become a cartoonist?

Read, read, read! All writers and cartoonists have a love of stories in common. You’ve got to read all the time and learn how to tell compelling stories from the best writers you can find. And of course you’ve got to write all the time, too.

Make a daily practice of writing (or drawing) and just keep trying new things so you'll see what works and what doesn't. Also, show your work to other people. It's so important to get feedback and to learn how to take criticism.



Ben Towle

1 How would you describe your process for bringing Amelia Earhart's story to life?

Working on *Amelia* was a fantastic experience. I tend to be interested in things historical when it comes to my cartooning work, so this was a great fit for me creatively—and I really, really like drawing aircraft!

With any comic's work, as an artist your primary job is to create a believable world for your readers, so that's how I began work on *Amelia*. After working with Sarah to get some basic character designs down, I began looking through photographs from the era—not just pictures related specifically to Amelia Earhart, but really any pictures from that era I could get my hands on. It's often the little things that create the look and feel of a particular era and can give your work a feel of authenticity, and the more you know about it, the better. Libraries often have books of old Sears catalogs, for instance, which are very helpful for clothing.

Before drawing any of the scenes in *Trepassey*, I actually hired a college student who lived within driving distance of the town to spend an afternoon there taking digital pictures. We wound up taking some liberties with the layout of the town in order to accommodate the narrative (the book is, after all, historical *fiction!*), but even things like the appearance of the local rocks and seashore came in handy.

From there on out, I work as most cartoonists do: everything is drawn by hand on big (11" x 17") sheets of bristol board, first in pencil, then in India ink. I do, though, scan the artwork and add the layer of blue in the computer.

2 Is revision a big part of an artist's work as it is for writers?

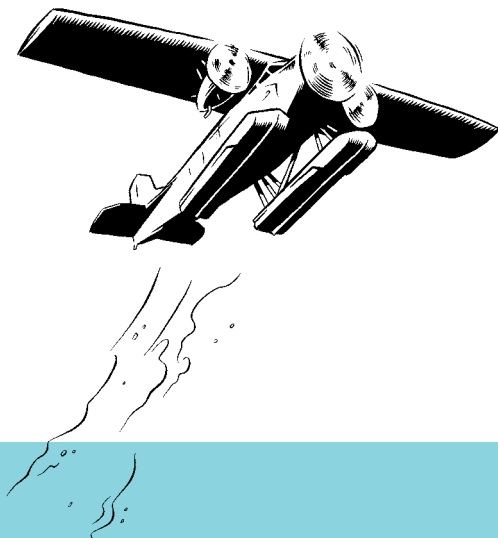
Yes, absolutely. The final images you see in a finished graphic novel are usually just the last in a series of different versions of the book that have been gradually honed and shaped into the book's final version. In order to do as little intensive redrawing as possible, though, these early versions are usually done as "thumbnail drawings"—very small versions of the pages in which the figures

are shown basically as stick figures. Only once the thumbnail version of the whole book is completely nailed down does the artist sit down at the drafting table and start rendering the actual pages.

Even then, though, there are going to be some changes after the fact. With *Amelia*, probably the biggest change of this sort was the addition of the two-page spread of Los Angeles/Long Beach on pages 34 and 35. Amelia's aerial view from her first flight initially just occupied a single panel, but after reading through the inked pages, everyone agreed that this moment needed to have a special impact. Accordingly, I drew that big spread and we rearranged things so it could appear where it did in the story. We also used that moment to establish that in the book, big changes in Amelia's life would be punctuated visually by similar two-page spreads that are "full bleeds"—meaning that the printing goes all the way to the edge of the page.

3 What is your next project?

I'm currently working on a book called *Oyster War*. It's historically based, but takes place in a fictional town called Blood's Haven on the Chesapeake Bay. After *Amelia*, I wanted to tackle something with some adventure and fantasy elements, so this story draws on a lot of nautical lore and features things like pirates and sea monsters. I'm also in the early planning stages for doing a graphic novel adaptation of Alexandre Dumas's great revenge tale, *The Count of Monte Cristo*.



Graphic Novels

FROM THE CENTER FOR CARTOON STUDIES AND
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The Center for Cartoon Studies produces comics, zines, posters, and graphic novels. For those interested in making comics themselves one day, The Center for Cartoon Studies is also America's finest cartooning school—offering one and two-year courses of study and summer workshops. **Visit them at www.cartoonstudies.org.**

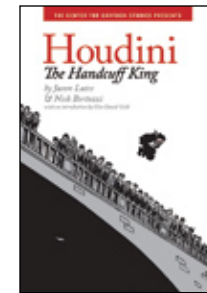


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