

It's a Bird, It's a Plane, It's a Night Witch

Sr. Group Exhibit
Kamden Victory and Tylea Underwood
Exhibit Word Account: 500 words
500 Word Exhibit word count: 500 words

This year's theme, "Communication in History, Key to Understanding," fits the Night Witches' story in many ways. The brave women communicated their desire to fight for their country and gained permission. Unfortunately, when they were handed their missions, they realized how little their country's Air Force appreciated their contributions. The Air Force gave them ill-fitting uniforms, unsafe equipment, and no communication devices. These women completed 23,000 missions without radio or radar. They used old techniques, but when these techniques failed the last communique between the fellow flyers was often seeing a plane descending in flames. The 588th regiment lost many lives and made many sacrifices during the war, then received little appreciation. They climbed out of their planes and went home. History wouldn't exist without communication. The Night Witches' history was carved into stone when they communicated their stories to family, friends, and interviewers. We feel our subject fits the theme because of the many facets of communication within the Night Witches' story.

As we created our team, we realized we had different interests. Kamden liked aircraft, and Tylea was drawn to World War II. When we partnered up we weren't sure what subject we would choose. The Night Witches' story was the perfect combination. It demonstrated that women made an impact and more importantly, it touched our heart. The more we researched, the harder it was to believe these young girls' journeys. We knew instantly the Night Witches would not only be a great fit for the theme but also a great fit for us.

In the past, we both enjoyed creating exhibits. This year was no different. An exhibit is an outstanding way to spotlight photos, quotes, and important information. Artifacts can be neatly exhibited as well. We decided that the Night Witches would be best displayed by a board, and with certain techniques, we could bring their story to life. Many details were incorporated into our board. We felt they would've been overlooked in a play or documentary.

Our process after districts began with the evaluation of our exhibit and the judge's critiques. We began to recompose a storyline that incorporated communication. While writing our script, we decided that we wanted to show the many perspectives of communication in the Night Witches story, but not overuse the word. We used synonyms and different phrases. Our favorite part of composing the exhibit was selecting the backgrounds and the border colors for our content. We chose a "starry night" background to resemble one the Night Witches would have flown through. We chose colors for the borders that resembled the colors on their uniforms. We gathered our content and incorporated everything into our exhibit. We used quotes to let the Night Witches communicate their own stories. Artifacts completed the look while the 500-word essay and bibliography supported the exhibit. It was stressed at our district competitions not to inflate our bibliography so we tried to include only sources that we used to gain information and background about our subject.

Bibliography

Primary:

Interview:

Night Witches. Gunilla Bresky. 2008. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17ZHHEQQdUg>

This was a gem we found while looking through videos on Youtube. The Gunilla Bresky Russian film is part of a series on Youtube. It included an interview with one of the Night Witches, Rufina Gasheva. We used many quotes made by Rufina on our board which were beautifully spoken by the inspiring and legendary woman.

Magazines:

Alliluyeva, Svetlana. "The Intimate Recollections of Stalin's Daughter." *Life*.

September 15, 1967. September 22, 1967.

This magazine article was written by Stalin's daughter, Svetlana, and she gave an intimate understanding of her experiences during and after the War. We put these on our display in front of our board because very little was written by women in Russia, particularly not by Stalin. The articles reflect some of the feelings the Night Witches experienced. These articles are part of a two part series.

Photographs:

We found photographs at various different websites: History.com, ForgottenHistory.com, GettyImages.com; HistoryofWar.com, The Soviet Night Witches | Wright Museum of World War I <https://www.wrightmuseum.org>, Women's History Month: The WWII pilots known as Night ... <https://www.washingtonpost.com> > history, Who Are The Night Witches? - The Museum of Flight Blog, <https://blog.museumofflight.org> > who-are-the-night-wi..., GettyImages.com,

We used the images we found on our exhibit. All are identified on the exhibit. It really wasn't all that easy to find images for this subject.

Secondary:

Books:

Bartels, Diane Ruth Armour. *Sharpie*. Dageforde Publishing. 1996.

Sharpie is the life story of Evelyn Sharp, a Nebraska girl who became one of the first women to ferry the US Army Air Force fidgeted during World War II. Her story shows reason why women were such an asset to the winning of the war. This biography of a legendary woman gave us information more on how women were important in the war.

Beer, Edith. *The Nazi Officer's Wife: How one Jewish Women Survived the Holocaust*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2000.

We loved this book! Not only was it inspiring and interesting, but it really showed how people had to adapt and overcome. This Jewish woman is an inspiration to all women. She was very brave in this hard time. I learned the struggle to stay alive in WW II in this book. We compared her struggles to the Night Witches.

Ennis, Garth. *The Night Witches*. England: Dead Reckoning. March 13, 2019

Germany pushes on to defeat the Soviet Union, but a group of women risk dying a fiery death to bomb the Nazis. This book covers all of the things important about how they would freeze flying over the Arctic Ocean just to fend off Germany.

Lebow, Eileen F. *Before Amelia*. Virginia: Brassey's, Inc. 2002.

Before Amelia is a read about the history before Amelia Earhart. The start of the book begins with a shout from a French woman, Raymonde de Laroche, who was the first woman to gain a pilot's license in 1910. After she gained her license, she had influenced many other women from around the world to break gender stereotypes by also earning pilot licenses.

Mason, Fergus. *Night Witches*. California: Golgotha Press, January 2021.

This book was released recently and is exciting because it's a new source we could use! Something interesting I learned from the book was that the women usually flew in pairs. Each plane flew 4 or 5 missions almost every single night. And when there was a big mission to be sent on, the whole Regiment would be shipped out to attack.

Mendelsohn, Jane. *I Was Amelia Earhart*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1996.

A story about Amelia's story of what could've happened after her and her partner Fred Noonan disappeared. It is a fictional story but it does provide good facts about Amelia and her life in the world of women pilots.

Morgan, George D. *Rocket Girl*. New York: Prometheus Books. 2013.

Mary Sherman Morgan was America's first female rocket scientist. This is a book about her story as a woman who helped design the space program and worked as an engineer to get the women into space. We looked through several books about women who accomplished many things in their lives. It gave us a better idea about women's determination to succeed.

Myles, Bruce. *Night Witches: The Amazing Story Of Russia's Women Pilots in World War II*. Academy Chicago Publishers, 1990.

This book is written by Bruce Myles, someone who is quite interested in history. It's more of a biography of all the women and their time fighting for World War II. All the information in this book was helpful in helping us understand more of the women's missions.

Nevin, David. *Architects of Air Power*. Virginia: Time-Life Books, 1981.

The book, *Architects of Air Power* helped us gain extra background information about

how planes had been used through the years. It also gave much information about wars in the past and how successful bombers were during them.

Pearson, P. O'Connell. *Fly Girls*. Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division. 2018.

"The daring American women pilots who helped win WWII," as the story says, were 1,100 women who flew planes from factories to targets and artillery training. They tested repaired planes, new equipment and more. This book showed that WWII needed women to get the job done. In the end, women were one of the main reasons the Allies won. This story was about United States flyers.

Smith, Sherri L. *Flygirl*. Penguin Group. 2008.

This was a story about a girl named Ida Mae Jones and her journey of being in the WASP program during World War II. It gave insight on women working in World War II. It was interesting as we found out more about the Russian pilots, just how similar they were.

Stokesbury, James L. *A Short History of World War II*. New York: Harper, 2001.

We wanted to gain some more knowledge about World War II, so we skimmed this book. It contained some great information about the War and its many facets. It didn't mention the Night Witches, but did discuss the WASPs, the women pilots, who weren't part of the American Airforce but helped win the War.

Periodicals:

Pennington, Reina. "Not Just Night Witches." *Air Force Magazine*. October 2014

This is a great story that was published in the *Air Force Magazine*. It gave us a great story about individual women who became Night Witches. This was one of our favorite articles.

Video:

Chronicles of Courage: Night Witches. NBC News Learn (Youtube Channel). May 3, 2020.

This mini five minute documentary included an interview with Irina Rakobolskaya, the Regiment Chief of Staff Soviet Air Force. We learned from this video that Joseph Stalin had put together the 588th Regiment to fight against the winning Germans.

The Night Witches Part 1: Marina Raskova. MagzTV (Youtube Channel). November 2, 2018.

We learned in this video that Marina Raskova went on a trip that beat the international women's world record flight at the time at 24 hours. On September 25th, Marina bailed out of her plane and landed on a tree needing to cut herself free.

The Night Witches of World War II. The History Guy: History Deserves to Be Remembered (Youtube Channel). March 25, 2017.

On this video, "The History Guy" has an 8 minute long Youtube video explaining who the Night Witches were. He talked about how important the 588th Regiment (the Night

Witches) was as an asset in WW2 . He starts the video talking about Maria Raskova and talked about their

Website:

All About History Team. "Night Witches: How the USSR's Female Flying Aces Took the Fight to Berlin." [Night Witches: How the USSR's Female Flying Aces Took the Fight to Berlin | All About History \(historyanswers.co.uk\)](https://www.historyanswers.co.uk) May 11th, 2016. (Accessed: February 10, 2020)
This site was also another website that gave us plenty of information on the women. We used the site as a way to gain new pictures for the board as some last few week tough ups. The website also offered good quotes we can use on our board.

Dowdy, Linda. "The Night Witches; the True Story of an Incredible Group of Women." <http://www.seizethesky.com/nwitches/nitewtch.html> (Accessed: January 14, 2021)
This website provided us with information on Marina Raskova, tactics used by the women, and pictures that were used on our board. And there was some information on the planes they used.

Everipedia.org. "Yevdokia Bershanskaya." [Yevdokia Bershanskaya Wiki \(everipedia.org\)](https://everipedia.org) (Accessed: December 23, 2020)
This site was used as a way to get to know Yevdokia Bershanskaya. We could learn that she was the regimental commander of the 46th Taman Guards Night Bomber Aviation Regiment during World War II. The site really helped us get to know who she was and what part she had in WWII.

"Germany Annexes Austria" *History 2014*. (Accessed: February 25, 2021.)
This was a great resource for understanding Hitler taking over Austria. It provided us with background knowledge and gave us an insight of why the Soviet Union was under distress. A needed resource to complete our foundational resource.

Grundhauser, Eric. "The Little-Known Story of the Night Witches, an All-Female Force in WWII." *The Little-Known Story of the Night Witches, an All-Female Force in WWII | Vanity Fair* June 25, 2015. (Accessed: December 20, 2020)
Eric Grundhauser's website provided us with some quotes that we decided to use on the project. There were a few pictures that we took into consideration, but did not decide to use on the board.

"Holocaust Encyclopedia." *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*. Accessed: February 25, 2021.
This website gave us great information on what Hitler's intentions. This resource contributed to our background knowledge. A key resource in understanding World War II and the Holocaust. We wanted to know a little more about the reasoning behind World War II.

Hammer, Joshua. "Hitler's Children." Newsweek International: 2010. Accessed February 25, 2021.

Another useful background source. Heartbreaking to read about, but incredibly important to be educated about. Completing a project under World War II, it is crucial to be well informed about all parts of it.

Holland, Brynn. "Meet the Night Witches, the Daring Female Pilots Who Bombed Nazis By Night." June 7, 2019. (Accessed: November 30, 2020)

The HISTORY site is always something we use as a beginner information holder. HISTORY always provides pictures, facts, quotes, and sometimes even timelines. With this site, we could learn our base of the whole board to understand who the Night Witches were and how they impacted World War II.

"Night Witches 588th Night Bomber Regiment." Forgotten History-"Night Witches" 588th Night Bomber Regiment – History of Sorts (dirkdeklein.net)
(Accessed: November 31, 2020)

On this website, we used many of the pictures for our board. The site also provided us with plenty of information about the 588th Regiment. We gained more knowledge on their planes they used, their bombing, and more.

"Meet the Night Witches, the Daring Female Pilots Who ..." [https://www.history.com > news > meet-the-night-witch...](https://www.history.com/news/meet-the-night-witch...) (Accessed: March 16, 2020.)

This was a story about the Night Witches and their importance to the Russian Air Force, but we found it terrible that no one really gave them the credit they deserved.

Night Witches: The female pilots who struck fear into the Nazis ...

[https://www.wearethemighty.com > mighty-history > ni...](https://www.wearethemighty.com/mighty-history/night-witches)

We found some information on this website that was well-documented. It talked about the women pilot's lack of equipment. It was sad that they couldn't even say, "Goodbye," when a plane went down because they didn't have radios.

Stalin orders deployment of Night Witches | Sabaton Official ... [https://www.sabaton.net > historical-facts > stalin-orders...](https://www.sabaton.net/historical-facts/stalin-orders...) (Accessed: February 14, 2021.)

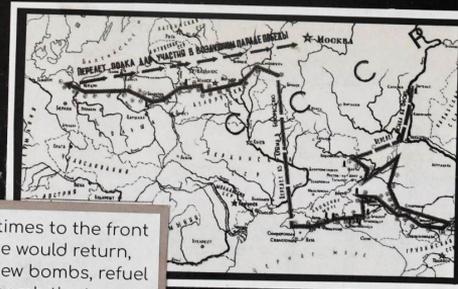
Stalin approve the deployment of an all-woman Air Force Unit because he was desperate. Germany was defeating the Russians and killing many soldiers in the process. He knew how important they were, but he still didn't give orders to treat them Well.

Left Top Panel Photo

One Mission at a Time



In 1942, the women regiments began their missions. The goal--disrupt Nazi behavior as much as possible and kill while doing so.



"One girl managed to fly seven times to the front line and back in her plane. She would return, shaking, and they would hang new bombs, refuel her plane, and she'd go off to bomb the target again. This is how we worked, can you imagine?"
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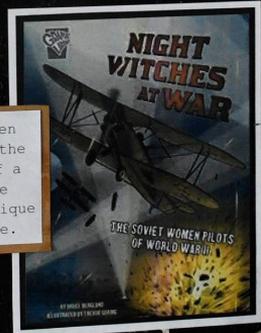
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There was no way to communicate a distress signal. A downed pilot was expected to use the issued pistol to commit suicide to avoid capture.



The wind scratching across the wooden wings created a swishing noise that the Germans associated with the sound of a broom and death. They nicknamed the pilots, "The Night Witches," a nickname the pilots were proud to acknowledge.



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Source Credit Text:

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- Kathryn Lasky



"I saw the German aircraft flying along our roads filled with people who were leaving their homes, firing at them with their machine guns. Seeing this gave me feelings inside that made me want to fight them."
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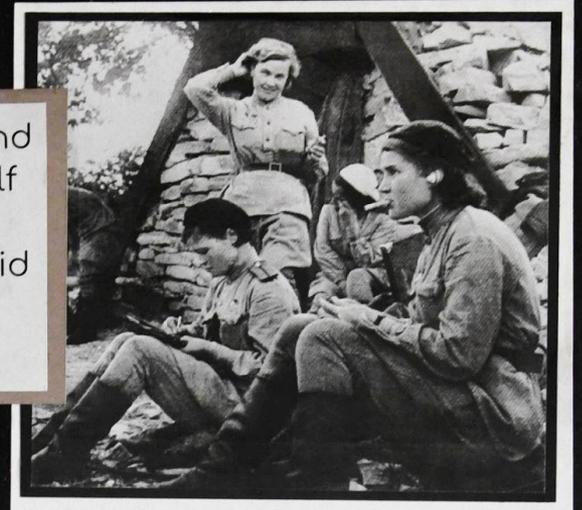
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Telling Their Story

In later years, the remaining Night Witches communicated their stories through printed and digitized interviews.

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to the USSR War lines. For several months the flight of a Moscow theater meeting inside it was one who met Soviet women pilots and later with the assistance of its American society. Please to People, organized this trip for their benefit.

An advertisement program invited the guests in Kiev and Leningrad, where they later met in Moscow was devoted to historical issues. It was prepared by the all-Russian Society of Soviet Building. The women pilots visited the Heroes Museum of Aviation, Cosmonaut Training Centre in Zvenigorodsk City, and were guests of honor at the Victory Flight in Red Square. However, the most touching and impressive experience for these American women were meetings and talks with women pilots of the USSR and the legendary 48th air regiment - members of the Soviet Union heroists, Puzova and Larina Lifonova-Popkova. These same "right-witch" women-brothers found the daylight out of the festival, the American women pilots were especially impressed by the first pilot of the Moscow Aviation Institute, where they were accompanied by veteran pilots and students, and talked with them in the museum. They received a most precious gift from museum's Museum, former navigator of the 48th regiment's air division, a book about their service in the 48th regiment, who had not been destined to live up to this meeting. They were lucky to see the "right-witches" in a newspaper. They were laughing, singing and spring their arms before a light aircraft could have been left for them. At a large meeting, the head of the delegation president of Soviet Barbara Lazareva said, "You are grateful to you for having come our place, we hope to remain friends."

There will be other meetings of Soviet and American women to follow. An advertisement program devoted to the US constitution is being held in a variety of places for the forthcoming meeting held in Japan. The guests made friends with the famous helicopter pilots, Galina Stepanovna and Lyudmila Polyanskaya who, help to their credit, wrote Soviet records, established for the 50th anniversary of victory. Together with them, Popova, a many-time world record holder, who has accompanied the most flying hours in the world, these two women spread the American cooperation spirit. They, too, helicopter pilots want to make a joint Soviet-American flight to write our continents with the another bond of friendship.

NATALIA RYBALKINA
Photograph by Boris BIKER

A VISIT TO THE "NIGHT WITCHES"

Faith Richards, Galina Stepanovna, Lyudmila Polyanskaya, Nancy Ruth Johnson, Majorie Niosi, Charlene Greer

These American women were our allies during World War II without ever flying overseas. On the eve of the 45th anniversary of victory they got a chance to meet with those whom they considered dear, although they had never met before.

Founded in 1943-1944, the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) carried about a thousand veteran pilots now. When war broke out male pilots flew overseas, and women served aircraft to the coast, transported cargoes, lugged out air targets for shooting practice and tested radio-controlled models. Thirty-eight of them were killed although none took part in action.

At present WASP continues to struggle for peace, establishing contacts and friendly ties. They learned from a book by a West German writer about the Soviet women's air regiment which took part in action during the war. That was a revelation for them, and since then they have cherished the dream to visit Russia and meet the Soviet women pilots.

Majorie Niosi, a retired English language teacher, has been

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Right Bottom Panel Photo

"We were students. We were going to be geographers, physics, chemists, mathematicians. Who would want people like us, we had to fight to defend our motherland. We were born here, brought up here."

-Rufina Gasheva



"That night, I flew with a new pilot. Our task was to bomb the searchlights and not get in their beams. That's how we survived."

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"Our regiment is a legend."

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Between 1942 and 1945, 400 Soviet women manned ill-equipped and dilapidated aircraft to fight for Russia. The key to understanding their contribution is to see them as soldiers not women.

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