

Workshop Overview for *Charles Lindbergh: The Lone Eagle*

(Themes: aviation, heroism, privacy and the media, anti-Semitism, conservation)

At 25, Charles A. Lindbergh arrived in Paris, the first man to fly from New York to Paris — and in the process became a legitimate hero and the first "media superstar." But the challenge of being "Lucky Lindy" would take a toll on him and his family. Crowds pursued him and reporters invaded his private life. His marriage, the kidnapping and murder of his first child, and his political views all found their way to the front page.

1. Discuss the question "What makes a hero?" Ask the class to suggest several individuals whom they consider to be heroes. Have them examine their choices, discussing a list of qualities or accomplishments that they consider heroic. Help them understand that the concept of heroism is personal; people do not always share the same heroes or even the same definition of heroism.
2. Discuss the creation of a play. Ask what sources a performing artist might use in a presentation about a historic figure. Sources might include books, historical footage and newsreels, contemporary newspapers, photographs, interviews with contemporaries, family members, or historians, etc.
3. Have the class attempt to draw a conclusion about Charles Lindbergh's career and historic importance.

Probing Questions

What conclusion did you draw about Charles Lindbergh? Was he a hero? Could you consider someone a hero if you disagreed with his or her political ideas or behavior in their private life?

Do you think that Lindbergh's beliefs, such as those on white supremacy and marriage, reflected America's thinking at the time? If yes, how does that affect how you judge Lindbergh's character?

Today, as in Lindbergh's day, the media often expose public figures to constant attention, which can become harassment. Debate the following proposition: Freedom of the press is a constitutional right. Therefore, the media should be allowed to do whatever is necessary to get a story.

Although Bruno Hauptmann was convicted and executed for the murder of the Lindbergh's first child, the case has remained controversial ever since. Hauptmann's widow fought to have his name cleared to her dying day, and many people believe that circumstantial evidence was used to make Hauptmann a scapegoat. Discuss the trial and evidence, and present your own opinion about Hauptmann's guilt or innocence.

In several speeches he made as an Isolationist, Lindbergh made remarks about Jews, African Americans, Asians and other groups, which brought the heavy weight of public opinion down on his head. Discuss the effects of these speeches on the society of his time and compare them to how today's society might react.

In his later years Lindbergh became a conservationist, using Pan American's worldwide air routes as his own personal inroads to "preserve wildness." Discuss how a man whose fame was built on technology and the advancement of aviation would turn away from these things in his old age to say, "If I had to choose, I would rather have birds than airplanes."