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# Flygirl



## Synopsis

For fans of *Unbroken* and *Ruta Sepetys*. All Ida Mae Jones wants to do is fly. Her daddy was a pilot, and years after his death she feels closest to him when she's in the air. But as a young black woman in 1940s Louisiana, she knows the sky is off limits to her, until America enters World War II, and the Army forms the WASP-Women Airforce Service Pilots. Ida has a chance to fulfill her dream if she's willing to use her light skin to pass as a white girl. She wants to fly more than anything, but Ida soon learns that denying one's self and family is a heavy burden, and ultimately it's not what you do but who you are that's most important. Read Sherri L. Smith's posts on the Penguin Blog

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: HL680L (What's this?)

Paperback: 304 pages

Publisher: Speak (September 16, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0142417254

ISBN-13: 978-0142417256

Product Dimensions: 8.2 x 5.5 x 0.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 76 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #40,612 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #27 in [Books > Teens >](#)

[Historical Fiction > United States > 20th Century](#) #28 in [Books > Teens > Historical Fiction >](#)

[Military](#) #188 in [Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Girls & Women](#)

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Smith (Lucy the Giant) brings a gripping perspective to bear upon a lesser-known piece of America's past: during WWII, the government recruited women pilots to fly non-combat missions, e.g., ferrying planes. Driven by a desire to fly and wanting to help her enlisted brother, Ida Mae decides to pass as white so she can join the program. The author has an expert grasp on her subject, and readers will learn plenty about the Women Airforce Service Pilots, from their impractical uniforms to the dangerous missions they flew without reward. Ida Mae's unique point of view gives her special insight into the often poor treatment of women: when a pilot friend gets frustrated by a stunt they are asked to perform, Ida realizes, Lily's just finding out what I've been living with my

whole life. She's never known what it was like to be hobbled by somebody else's rules. Key scenes demonstrate how much Ida has sacrificed by passing, as when her much darker mother visits her on Christmas and, *À la Imitation of Life*, poses as the family housekeeper. Although this book feels constructed to educate, readers will find the lesson well crafted. Ages 12–18. (Jan.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

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Grade 6–10 • Readers first meet 18-year-old Ida Mae Jones, a Louisiana girl who longs to be a pilot, in December 1941, on the eve of America's entrance into World War II. She is pretty and smart, but she has two huge strikes against her. She is black in an America where racism holds sway, and a competent pilot in an America in which she is denied her license because she is a woman. Smith explores these two significant topics and does a wonderful job of melding the two themes in one novel. Ida Mae is a likable character who is torn by the need to pass for white and fake a license in order to fulfill her dream. Readers learn a great deal about what it must have been like to be African American in the South during this period, as well as about the Women Airforce Service Pilots, WASP, a civilian group that performed jobs that freed male pilots for other things. The women's close friendships and the danger, excitement, and tragedy of their experience create a thrilling, but little-known story that begs to be told. The book is at once informative and entertaining. In the end, readers are left to wonder what Ida Mae Jones will do with the rest of her life. • Carol Jones Collins, Columbia High School, Maplewood, NJ Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A wonderfully empowering story about a woman of color. I assigned this as required reading for my sixth grade class. I hope this book becomes a classic on par with *Island of the Blue Dolphins*.

A historical fiction book that goes into a few themes. First and foremost it is about the WASP and deals with women and African Americans in service during WWII. It is also about belonging vs fitting in. This is a great way for middle school and early high school students to learn about civil rights struggles other than the period of the 50's and 60's. Ida struggles to know who she is and questions why she has to be defined as anything other than who she is on the inside. The style of writing was easy to follow and Ida's voice is clear and you want to see what happens and the decisions she makes at the end. You never find out, which will lead to a lively discussion within the book club I run

of middle schoolers.

I have so many good things to say about this book, I don't know where to start... First, I loved the heroine, Ida Mae. Ida is a small town farm girl whose father introduced her to crop dusting at an early age. Ida loves to fly and when America enters World War 2, she gets tired of collecting silk stockings and cleaning houses and decides to join the WASP. Despite her amazing flying abilities, the WASP will turn her away simply because she is half black. Ida's desire to fly and aide her brother overseas in the only way she knows how overcomes her fears and she passes herself off as white so that she may do so. Her mother gets upset, her best friend gets upset, but Ida doesn't let them stop her and off she goes Sweetwater, Texas to fly. On top of getting a firm feel for life at Avenger Field during world war 2 and the flight training and procedures, readers also get a look at what it is like to be black in the 1940s. Ida is always having to worry about her hair curling too much or somebody figuring out her secret because back then, her secret could get her killed. On top of the racial tension is the fact that she is a woman to boot. I doubt anybody had it harder back then. Women in general had it rough, but being a black woman... most of us would not have had Ida's courage. Also in the story is how Ida deals with conflicting emotions regarding her family in New Orleans (she feels she is denying her own heritage and family, especially when her mom comes to visit and has to act like her maid) and her family in Sweetwater. How would her newfound white friends act if they knew the truth? My only complaint about this novel is we never found that out. There is also a situation with the loss of a friend. Ida has to deal with her grief as she watches a friend die and her conflicting emotions about the situation as she realizes it could happen to her. I absolutely loved the courageous flight Ida takes with Lily in a B-29. Great way to end this novel. Readers see how the WASP was literally used and discarded. I feel for all the women that were involved. Yet, this does not stop Ida Mae. Despite the fact that the Army betrays her and her female comrades in the end, Ida Mae still wants to fly, not as a white woman, nor a black woman, but as Ida Mae. Ms. Smith, I would like to see a sequel to this book. I would like to see Ida Mae go work for Walt and come clean about her heritage. I'd like to see her overcome the 1950s and keep on flying despite all odds. We need more books with strong female heroines, white, black, latina.... Thumbs up, Ms. Smith.

This book is a beautiful story about how a girl made her dreams come true even if that means giving up everything to act white.. What I did not like about the book was that the end of the book never told you what happen to the girl or if she decided to stay color or play white the rest of her life,

it left you up in the air with wonders as though the author wanted you to give the story a end to suit you. This is why I give the book 4 stars instead of 5 other than that this book is perfect.

This book accurately captures the era of de facto segregation in the US military. It's a quick read suitable for children of about age 10 and older. This book should spark many discussions in classrooms. I hope that school districts will consider adding this to recommended literature.

This enjoyable read transported me back to WW II. There was a taste of what life was about in 1940's. It showed the difficulties of being black trying to be white. There was also the theme of living In a man's world.Go ahead and take a read and feel yourself soar.

The book was an anomaly with the message it carried. It was inspiring and thought provoking. However, the condition of the book was less than casual wear and tear. Its condition left a horrible presentation for a birthday gift!

This was an enjoyable read. It is important to remember the bravery of women before us who sought to actualize their dreams with so many barriers.

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