


ALBUM [BESSIE COLEMAN: AMERICA'S FIRST BLACK FEMALE AVIATRIX](#)

Album Description

We have all heard of Amelia Earhart, but many people still do not know the story of Bessie Coleman. The first female aviation pilot in America, Bessie's story is one of incredible tenacity and an example of women making history. With February being Black History Month, Bessie Coleman is a wonderful example of an individual who changed the course of history, not only for Black women but for women of all backgrounds, ethnicities, and races. I was inspired to write this post based on my own studies and  [Cheryl Best](#)'s [post](#) from 2019. We SHOULD be having more conversations about why amazing and groundbreaking women like Bessie aren't as widely discussed and documented as other figures in aviation.

Bessie Coleman is known as the first Black and Native American woman pilot in the United States. Her nicknames included "Brave Bessie" and "Queen Bess." Teased by her brother for wanting to be a pilot, Bessie moved to France where she could attend flight school and became a stunt pilot. She faced many challenges, including plane crashes and bad press, but none as bad as the discrimination against her on the basis of her race and sex. Nevertheless, she persevered and overcame many of the challenges presented to her. She was also a fearless activist and fought for the rights of Black Americans.

Bessie Coleman is a wonderful historical figure to teach in your classroom, regardless of age. I would likely use a variety of primary sources, photos, newspapers, and videos. Compare headlines from Bessie's accomplishments - which newspapers printed which stories? How do the press and media distort our perception of current events, both today and in the past? It may also be interesting, especially with older students, to compare Bessie with other women pilots and the similarities and differences in hardships they faced. Do we still see these hardships today?

Here are some primary sources you could use in the classroom (both in-person and virtually).

[aviation](#) [flight](#) [women making history](#) [bessie coleman](#)

THE CHIC

2, IMAGE 2



Teaching Notes:

Bessie Coleman Aviatrix performance advertisements

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86056950/1922-10-14/ed-1/seq-2/>

Reference Link: https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86056950/1922-10-14/ed-1/seq-2/print/image_681x648_from_1683%2C2613_to_3948%2C4770

Newspaper: The Chicago whip. (Chicago, Ill.) 1919-19??

Newspaper Link: https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86056950/1922-10-14/ed-1/seq-2/print/image_681x648_from_16...

Image provided by: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library, Urbana, IL

PDF Link: <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86056950/1922-10-14/ed-1/seq-2.pdf>



Teaching Notes:

Thank you for this addition, Mary!



Teaching Notes:

Fly High: The Story of Bessie Coleman, is an early primary grade level picture book on the Library of Congress Science Reference page of "[Biographies of Women Scientists: For Girls and Young Women](#)." The list includes three additional biographies of Coleman for intermediate, middle, and high school grade levels, too.

undefined



Teaching Notes:

Thanks, Mary Alice!



EARLY WOMEN IN AVIATION: TOPICS IN CHRONICLING AMERICA



AMERICAN FEMALE PILOTS: TOPICS IN CHRONICLING AMERICA

EVENING



, IMAGE 12

Teaching Notes:

Title: Plane Crash Killing Colored Aviatrix Laid to Wrench Jammed in Controls

Reference Link: https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1926-05-01/ed-1/seq-12/print/image_681x648_from_2118%2C3567_to_4347%2C5690

Newspaper: Evening star. [volume] (Washington, D.C.) 1854-1972

Newspaper Link: https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1926-05-01/ed-1/seq-12/print/image_681x648_from_2...

Image provided by: Library of Congress, Washington, DC

PDF Link: <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1926-05-01/ed-1/seq-12.pdf>

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1926-05-01/ed-1/seq-12/>



Teaching Notes:

<https://www.msnbc.com/know-your-value/7-unsung-heroines-who-changed-course-history-n1259314>

The link is for an MSNBC March 2021 feature **7 unsung heroines who changed the course of history**.

"In honor of Women's History Month, Know Your Value is recognizing seven, relatively unknown women who conquered all odds to change the course of history" There is a photo of her at the top of the page; scroll to feature #6 to read the information.

THE NORTHW



1922, IMAGE 1

Teaching Notes:

Title: Colored Aviatrix Is Granted Pilot's License in Berlin

Reference Link: https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn90060931/1922-07-15/ed-1/seq-1/print/image_681x648_from_1689%2C410_to_3773%2C2395

Newspaper: The northwestern bulletin. [volume] (St. Paul, Minn. ;) 1922-1924

Newspaper Link: https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn90060931/1922-07-15/ed-1/seq-1/print/image_681x648_from_16...

Image provided by: Minnesota Historical Society; Saint Paul, MN

PDF Link: <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn90060931/1922-07-15/ed-1/seq-1.pdf>

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn90060931/1922-07-15/ed-1/seq-1/>



Teaching Notes:

A newspaper article covering the death of Bessie Coleman.

Reference Link: <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/00225879/1926-05-07/ed-1/seq-1/#date1=1777&index=2&rows=20&words=Bessie+Coleman&searchType=basic&sequence=0&state=&date2=196>

Newspaper: The monitor. (Omaha, Neb.) 1915-1928

Newspaper Link: <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/00225879/1926-05-07/ed-1/seq-1/#date1=1777&index=2&rows=20&w...>

Image provided by: University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries, Lincoln, NE

PDF Link: <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/00225879/1926-05-07/ed-1/seq-1.pdf>

EL TUC



IMAGE 2

Teaching Notes:

Title: Una Joven Aviadora, de Raza Negra, Hará Algunos Vuelos el 9 de Agosto

Reference Link: https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn95060694/1925-07-28/ed-1/seq-2/print/image_681x648_from_1053%2C205_to_4706%2C3684

Newspaper: El Tucsonense. [volume] (Tucson, Ariz.) 1915-1957

Newspaper Link: https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn95060694/1925-07-28/ed-1/seq-2/print/image_681x648_from_10...

Image provided by: Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records; Phoenix, AZ

PDF Link: <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn95060694/1925-07-28/ed-1/seq-2.pdf>

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn95060694/1925-07-28/ed-1/seq-2/>

THE KUSKO

21, IMAGE 2



Teaching Notes:

Title: Chicago Negress, 24, Deserts Nail File for Flying Togs

bottom of second column

Reference Link: https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn95063172/1921-11-23/ed-1/seq-2/print/image_681x648_from_1086%2C4149_to_1945%2C4967

Newspaper: The Kuskokwim times. [volume] (McGrath, Alaska) 1921-19??

Newspaper Link: https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn95063172/1921-11-23/ed-1/seq-2/print/image_681x648_from_10...

Image provided by: Alaska State Library Historical Collections

PDF Link: <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn95063172/1921-11-23/ed-1/seq-2.pdf>

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn95063172/1921-11-23/ed-1/seq-2/>



BESSIE HEADS TROUPE OF STUNT ARTISTS

[A FEMALE AVIATOR]



[LADDIE BOY]

Reference Link: <http://www.loc.gov/item/2005677277/>

Created / Published: [between 1920 and 1923]

Subject Headings: - Harding, Warren G.--(Warren Gamaliel),--1865-1923--Animals & pets

- Dogs--Washington (D.C.)--1920-1930

- Air pilots--Washington (D.C.)--1920-1930

Notes: - Title devised by Library staff.

Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA

Digital Id: cph 3c35248 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3c35248



BESSIE COLEMAN BIO FROM NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MUSEUM



Teaching Notes:

It's interesting to see how many resources the Library has on Amelia Earhart, but not Bessie Coleman!

Reference Link: <http://www.loc.gov/item/2004671909/>

Summary: Portrait, head and shoulders, facing front.

Created / Published: c1928.

Notes: - Copyright by Underwood and Underwood.

- This record contains unverified, old data from caption card.

Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA

Digital Id: cph 3a22092 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3a22092

RINGEL WITH CAMERA ON TOP WING



Teaching Notes:

Not a photo of Bessie, but this demonstrates "barnstorming," a common trick performed by Bessie - WOW!

Reference Link: <http://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.53157/>

Summary: Photograph shows aerial barnstormer "Jersey" Ringel standing with camera on top of wing of airplane in flight.

Contributor Names: Cline, Walter M., 1873-1941, photographer

Created / Published: [1921]

Subject Headings: - Ringel, Jersey

- Photographers--1920-1930

- Daredevils--1920-1930

- Stunt flying--1920-1930

Genre: Photographic prints--1920-1930

Notes: - J249018 U.S. Copyright Office

- Title from item.

- Exhibited as a digital copy in: "Not an Ostrich: And Other Images from America's Library" at the Annenberg Space for Photography, 2018; Photographers section.

- Annenberg batch 14

Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print>

Digital Id: ppmsca 53157 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/ppmsca.53157

cph 3b18311 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3b18311

ABSENCE OF

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Reference Link: <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83004231/1949-10-22/ed-1/seq-12/#date1=1777&index=1&rows=20&words=Bessie+Coleman&searchType=basic&sequence=0&state=&date2=19>

Newspaper: The Miami times. [volume] (Miami, Fla.) 1923-current

Newspaper Link: <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83004231/1949-10-22/ed-1/seq-12/#date1=1777&index=1&rows=2...>

Image provided by: University of Florida

PDF Link: <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83004231/1949-10-22/ed-1/seq-12.pdf>