

**The Great Depression****Biography**

# Charles Lindbergh

1902–1974



**WHY HE MADE HISTORY** Charles Lindbergh was an American aviator who made the first solo non-stop flight across the Atlantic Ocean.



*As you read the biography below, think about how Charles Lindbergh's determination helped him accomplish all that he did.*

Charles Lindbergh was born in Detroit, Michigan, and grew up in Minnesota. As a child, Lindbergh was bright and mechanically gifted. He attended the University of Wisconsin and although he studied engineering, he was very interested in the exciting new field of **aviation**. After two years he left school, bought his first plane, and became a **barnstormer**.

In 1924 Lindbergh enlisted in the United States Army. He was trained as a pilot by the Army Air Service Reserve and graduated as the best pilot in his class. He then joined the U.S. Air Mail Service as a pilot, flying the Chicago to St. Louis route.

In 1919 a New York City hotel owner offered \$25,000 to the first aviator to fly nonstop from New York to Paris. By 1927 the contest had not yet been won, although several pilots had made attempts. Lindbergh believed he could win with a superior plane. With some financial assistance, Lindbergh helped design and build a special plane he called the *Spirit of St. Louis*. He believed it could make the transatlantic flight.

On May 20, 1927 Lindbergh took off from Roosevelt Field, near New York City. He landed in Paris, France, just over 33 hours later, having flown a distance of more than 3,600 miles. He



Picture Desk

**VOCABULARY**

**aviation** the design, development, and production of aircraft

**barnstormer** a pilot who performs daredevil stunts at fairs

**sensationalized** exaggerated to attract listeners or readers

**trivia** something that is unimportant

received the Congressional Medal of Honor and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

At the request of the U. S. government, Lindbergh flew to Mexico and South America as a symbol of American good will. In Mexico, he met and later married Anne Morrow. Together they took many flying expeditions, charting new routes for airlines.

In 1932 Lindbergh and his wife endured the tragic kidnapping and murder of their infant son. The American press **sensationalized** the tragedy causing the Lindberghs to move to Europe in 1935.

The Lindberghs returned to America in 1939, and in 1941, Charles joined the America First Committee. This organization opposed voluntary American entry into World War II. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, however, Lindbergh flew combat missions in the Pacific.

Lindbergh also loved nature. He opposed the development of supersonic planes because he feared possible effects on the earth's atmosphere. "In wilderness, I sense the miracle of life, and behind it our scientific accomplishments fade to **trivia**," he stated. Today, Lindbergh is often considered the most famous aviator in American history.

### WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. What was one of Charles Lindbergh's greatest accomplishments?

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2. What did Lindbergh believe was the key to the first transatlantic solo flight?

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### ACTIVITY

3. On a separate sheet of paper, sketch your neighborhood or school as Lindbergh might have seen it from his plane.