



# Vickers Vimy

## Reading Comprehension

Build your knowledge of Australia's Great Air Race,  
explore the concepts and create an inspired, creative response.





# Reading Comprehension

Build your knowledge of Australia's Great Air Race, explore the concepts and create an inspired, creative response.

## Learning Objective:

Read to understand the story of Australia's Great Air Race then locate, and deduce the answers to a series of questions.

Extend your learning to answer the long answer reflection prompts.

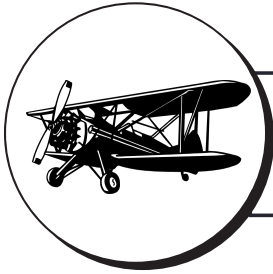
Turn your understanding into a creative response, design a movie poster that reflects the heart of Australia's Great Air Race.

## Success criteria:

Demonstrate learning by responding to structured and reflection-based questions.

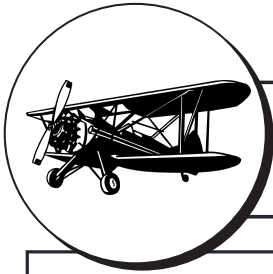
Respond to learning in a creative manner to tell the story of Australia's Great Air Race.

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| <b>Getting Started</b>                             | <p>Have your students ever heard of Australia's Great Air Race? Do they know the names Ross and Keith Smith? If so, what do they know about them? What is their understanding of the beginnings of air travel?</p> <p>Get to know the story with one or both of these short videos:<br/>The Greatest Air Race - Trailer <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDFouHMoDrY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDFouHMoDrY</a><br/>Epic Flight Centenary <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3k7kxsEy4H4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3k7kxsEy4H4</a></p> |
| <b>"Epic Flight"<br/>Reading<br/>Comprehension</b> | <p>Pass out the reading comprehension sheets and ensure students have paper, pens and art materials. Support students in reading the Epic Flight information text and responding to the questions and prompts.</p> <p>Take time for students to share and compare their answers and movie posters. What did they perceive differently and why?</p>  |
| <b>Next Steps</b>                                  | <p>There are so many things to learn, so dive deeper and sink your teeth into one or more of these single-lesson or longer format activities available on the Vickers Vimy <a href="#">Learn</a> page.</p>  |



# Curriculum

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|---------------|---|
| <p>Year 5</p> | <p>English - Use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring and questioning to build literal and inferred meaning to evaluate information and ideas (AC9E5LY05).</p> <p>Visual Arts - Use visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials to plan and create artworks that communicate ideas, perspectives and/or meaning (AC9AVA6C01).</p>  |
| <p>Year 6</p> | <p>English - Use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring and questioning to build literal and inferred meaning, and to connect and compare content from a variety of sources (AC9E6LY05).</p> <p>Visual Arts- Use visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials to plan and create artworks that communicate ideas, perspectives and/or meaning (AC9AVA6C01).</p>                                       |
| <p>Year 7</p> | <p>English - Use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring, questioning and inferring to analyse and summarise information and ideas (AC9E7LY05).</p> <p>Visual Arts - Select and manipulate visual conventions, visual arts processes and/or materials to create artworks that represent ideas, perspectives and/or meaning (AC9AVA8C02).</p>  |
| <p>Year 8</p> | <p>English - Use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring, questioning and inferring to interpret and evaluate ideas in texts (AC9E8LY05).</p> <p>Visual Arts - Select and manipulate visual conventions, visual arts processes and/or materials to create artworks that represent ideas, perspectives and/or meaning (AC9AVA8C02).</p>  |
| <p>Year 9</p> | <p>English - Use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring, questioning and inferring to compare and contrast ideas and opinions in and between texts (AC9E9LY05).</p> <p>Visual Arts - Select and manipulate visual conventions, visual arts processes and/or materials to create artworks that reflect personal expression, and represent and/or challenge, ideas, perspectives and/or meaning (AC9AVA10C02).</p> |



# Epic Flight

The year was 1919. The war was finally over. Prime Minister Billy Hughes offered £10 000 for the first Australian airmen to fly home from England in 30 days. Six crews took up the challenge in planes that were as rudimentary as they were unreliable. And who won? South Australian brothers Ross and Keith Smith, backed by mechanics Wally Shiers (SA) and Jim Bennett (Vic). Their magnificent Vickers Vimy bomber can still be seen at Adelaide airport.

## The Flight

Prime Minister Billy Huges developed the idea for the competition with an eye to the potential of aviation technology, and how it could be used to Australia's benefit. The Commonwealth Government provided the £10 000 prize money and the Royal Aero Club drafted the rules. The challenge was to fly from England to Australia within a period of 30 consecutive days, and competitors had to arrive before midnight on 31 December 1920.

Ross flew as pilot, Keith as assistant pilot and navigator, Wally Shiers and Jim Bennett were the mechanics. The four men left Hounslow in England on 12 November 1919. The journey was difficult, they took off in bad weather, after several delays, and struck more delays en-route making visibility poor and at times forcing Ross Smith to fly low. They were aided in their journey by the Smith brothers' knowledge of parts of the route from their war service. They flew through parts of Europe, the Middle East, India and Southeast Asia to the finish in Darwin.

The Smith Brothers and their crew were successful in the challenge, and the Smith brothers were knighted for their efforts. Only one of the five other groups to take up the challenge actually made it to Australia.

## The Vickers Vimy

The Vickers Vimy was flown by Sir Ross and Sir Keith Smith on their epic flight from England to Australia in 1919, and international historians believe it's now one of the most important aviation artefacts on the planet.

The biplane was designed to bomb German cities in retaliation for raids on Britain, but it came too late for active service in WWI. With a 22m wingspan, it had a fuselage that looked like a long, thin coffin. When the Smith crew first sighted the plane at the Vickers aviation factory in Weybridge, England, mechanic Wally Shiers noted to his fellow mechanic Jim Bennett: "My God Benny, fancy trying to fly this to Australia ... she'd never last half the journey." The crew also joked that the Vimy's registration letters G-EAOU stood for "God 'Elp All Of Us".

Powered by twin 360-horsepower Rolls-Royce Eagle Mark VIII engines, the Vimy was largely made of spruce pine covered by Irish linen. Twenty-five female workers were in charge of the fabric covering, sewing huge sleeves for the wings which were then stitched together with 10,000 knots. Water was used to shrink the fabric over the wooden skeleton before the plane was covered in multiple layers of dope – a kind of lacquer that was so toxic the women were ordered to drink lemonade to stop them from fainting.

Despite the crew's trepidation, the Vimy proved its worth, guiding the crew safely home in 27 days and 20 hours (beating the 30-day time limit



# Epic Flight

... by 52 hours). Ross Smith would later recount looking at the plane after it delivered them home: "Not once, from the time we took our departure from Hounslow, had she ever been under shelter. And now, as I looked over her, aglow with pride, the Vimy loomed up as the zenith of man's inventive and constructional genius."

Today, only two original Vimys remain in the world – Alcock and Brown's Vimy at the British Science Museum (where it was installed immediately after the famous Atlantic crossing in June 1919) and the Smith crew's Vimy at Adelaide Airport. Smithsonian Air and Space Museum curator Alex Spencer believes Ross Smith's Vimy should be as iconic to Australia as Charles Lindbergh's Spirit of St Louis is to the United States.



## The Smith Brothers

Ross and Keith Smith spent part of their childhood growing up on Mutooroo Station, near Broken Hill. They were educated in Adelaide, and in 1910, Ross joined the Australian Mounted Cadets and was selected to represent South Australia in an international tour. He enlisted in August 1914, joining the 3rd Light Horse Brigade and served in the Dardanelles and later at Romani. Following an injury he learned to fly and in 1917 he joined the Australian Flying Corps. Keith Smith joined the Royal Flying Corps in Britain in 1917.

# Q

## Short answer

1. What is a Vickers Vimy and why is it significant?
2. What was the "epic flight" and why did it occur?
3. What was the history of the Vickers Vimy (G-EAOU) before the epic flight?
4. What was the significance of the plane's nickname?
5. Who was involved in the epic flight and what were their roles?
6. Why does the Vickers Vimy reside in the Adelaide Airport?

## Long answer

1. When the Vickers Vimy flew across Australia, many would have never seen an aircraft before. Reflect on what it would have been like to experience seeing a plane for the first time. Then consider how advances in technology have affected the lives of people past and present.
2. Each crew member had a vital role to play. Using examples, discuss what factors help in making a team successful.

# A

Imagine that the Epic Flight has been made into a movie. You are tasked with creating the movie poster. What elements of the story do you emphasise? What tag line, title and wording do you include? What colour scheme and visual elements do you choose?