

**BECAUSE  
OF THEM  
WE CAN**

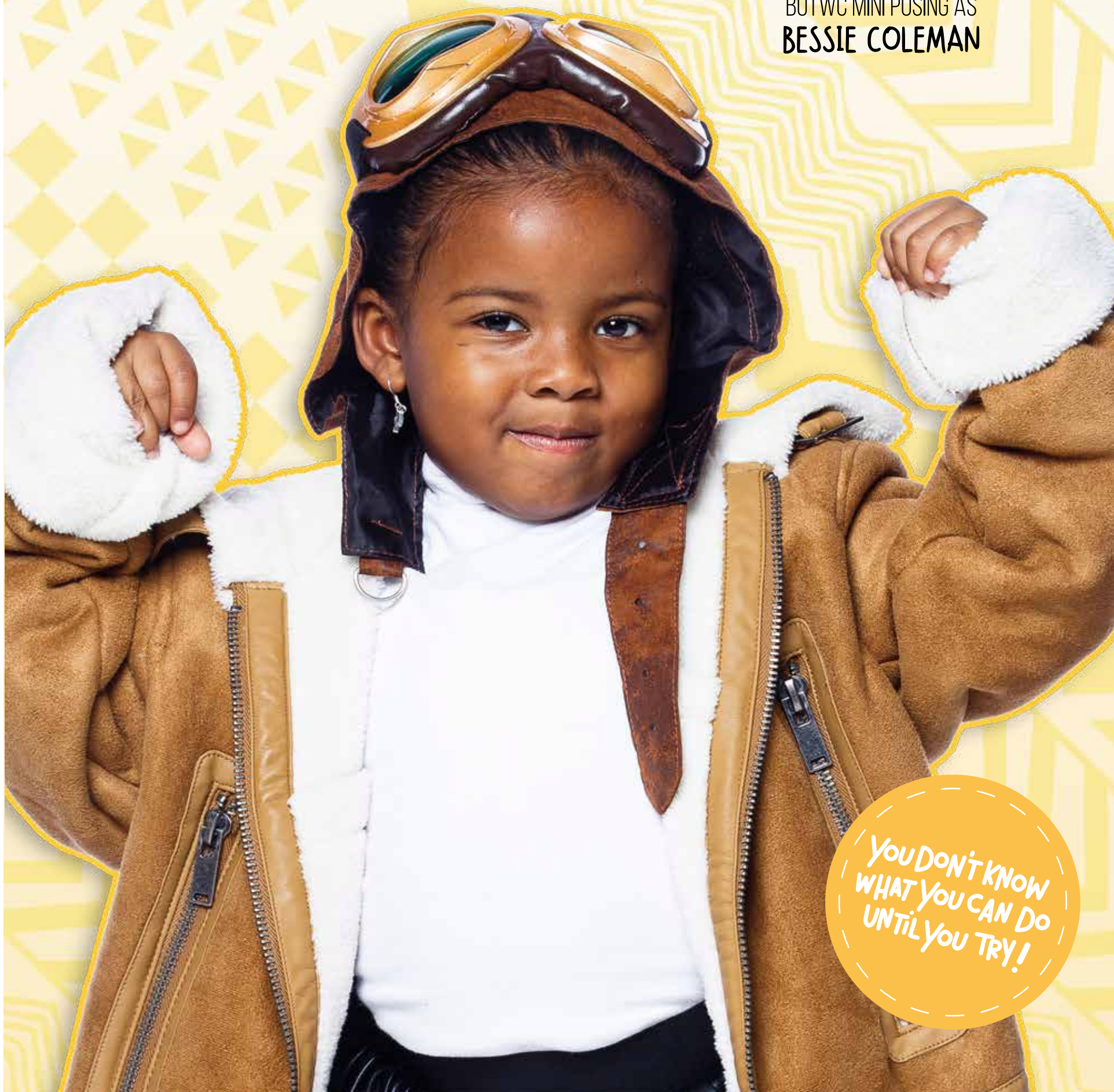
**BOX**

**JUST FOR KIDS**

# BECAUSE OF BESSIE COLEMAN

ISSUE 7, 9-12

BOTWC MINI POSING AS  
BESSIE COLEMAN



*YOU DON'T KNOW  
WHAT YOU CAN DO  
UNTIL YOU TRY!*

# BESSIE COLEMAN: SOARING TO NEW HEIGHTS!

DIRECTIONS: READ THE PASSAGE BELOW AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS THAT FOLLOW.



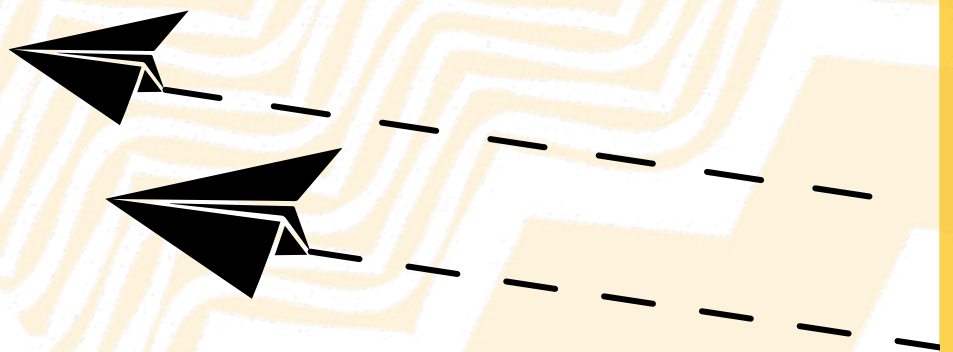
PHOTO CREDIT: THE SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL POSTAL MUSEUM

ELIZABETH "BESSIE" COLEMAN WAS BORN IN TEXAS ON JANUARY 26TH, 1892 IN A ONE-ROOM, DIRT-FLOORED CABIN. BESSIE LOVED SCHOOL, AND ALTHOUGH THE ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE WAS LIMITED TO THE 8TH GRADE, BESSIE EXCELLED IN MATH AND READING.

AT THE AGE OF 23, BESSIE MOVED TO CHICAGO TO LIVE WITH TWO OF HER OLDER BROTHERS, IN HOPES OF A BETTER LIFE. SHORTLY AFTER MOVING, SOLDIERS RETURNED FROM WORLD WAR I WITH WILD STORIES OF FLYING WHICH SPARKED COLEMAN'S INTEREST IN **AVIATION**. AT THE TIME, PILOTS WERE ONLY WHITE MEN OR WEALTHY WHITE WOMEN. AFTER VISITING MANY AVIATION SCHOOLS, COLEMAN HAD NO LUCK OF FINDING SOMEONE TO TEACH HER AVIATION IN THE U.S BECAUSE OF HER RACE AND GENDER. THANKFULLY, LOCAL AFRICAN AMERICAN LEADERS IN CHICAGO HELPED COLEMAN MOVE TO FRANCE, WHO WERE THE WORLD'S LEADERS IN AVIATION AND ALLOWED ALL WOMEN A CHANCE TO GAIN THEIR AVIATION LICENSE.

BESSIE COLEMAN WAS AWARDED HER INTERNATIONAL PILOT'S LICENSE IN JUNE 1921, MAKING HER THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN PERSON IN THE WORLD TO BECOME A LICENSED PILOT. UPON HER RETURN, BESSIE'S GOAL WAS TO OPEN A FLYING SCHOOL FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS TO BECOME PILOTS. BESSIE LEARNED MANY TRICKS AND DAREDEVIL STUNTS AND PERFORMED COUNTLESS AIR SHOWS ALL OVER THE U.S. THE PLANES COLEMAN USED FOR HER SHOWS DID NOT HAVE A ROOF OR ANY PROTECTION. IN APRIL 1926, COLEMAN TOOK A PRACTICE FLIGHT TO PREPARE FOR HER UPCOMING SHOW. DUE TO ENGINE MALFUNCTIONS, THE PLANE FLIPPED OVER, AND BESSIE WHO DID NOT HAVE ON A SEATBELT IMMEDIATELY FELL OUT OF THE OPEN PLANE AND DIED.

BESSIE COLEMAN WAS AN **INNOVATOR** AND **PIONEER** IN THE FIELD OF AVIATION. BESSIE'S COURAGE TO OVERCOME OBSTACLES AND HER PERSISTENCE TO CHASE HER DREAM AND HAS MADE HER LEGACY SOAR.



# READ & ANSWER!

1. WHAT EVIDENCE CAN YOU FIND TO SHOW WHY BESSIE COLEMAN MOVED TO FRANCE TO BECOME A PILOT?

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2. WHAT FACTS DID YOU LEARN ABOUT BESSIE COLEMAN?

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3. BESSIE COLEMAN WORKED HARD TO OVERCOME STEREOTYPES AND DISCRIMINATION TO ACHIEVE HER DREAMS. NAME A TIME YOU WORKED HARD TO OVERCOME AN OBSTACLE TO ACHIEVE A GOAL. HOW DID YOU ACHIEVE IT?

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# DID YOU KNOW:

- BESSIE COLEMAN WAS THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMAN TO EARN HER PILOT'S LICENSE!
- BESSIE COLEMAN HAD 13 SIBLINGS.
- BESSIE COLEMAN WAS KNOWN AS "QUEEN BESS" OR "BRAVE BESS" FOR THE DAREDEVIL STUNTS AND TRICKS SHE PERFORMED IN THE AIR.



## GLOSSARY

**AVIATION:** THE FLYING OR OPERATING AN AIRCRAFT

**INNOVATOR:** A PERSON WHO INTRODUCES NEW IDEAS

**PIONEER:** A PERSON WHO IS AMONG THE FIRST TO DEVELOP OR APPLY KNOWLEDGE

## CROSSWORD

### DOWN:

1. BESSIE BECAME THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN TO EARN HER INTERNATIONAL PILOT'S \_\_\_\_\_

3. ONE REASON BESSIE WAS REJECTED FROM FLIGHT SCHOOLS WAS BECAUSE SHE WAS A \_\_\_\_\_

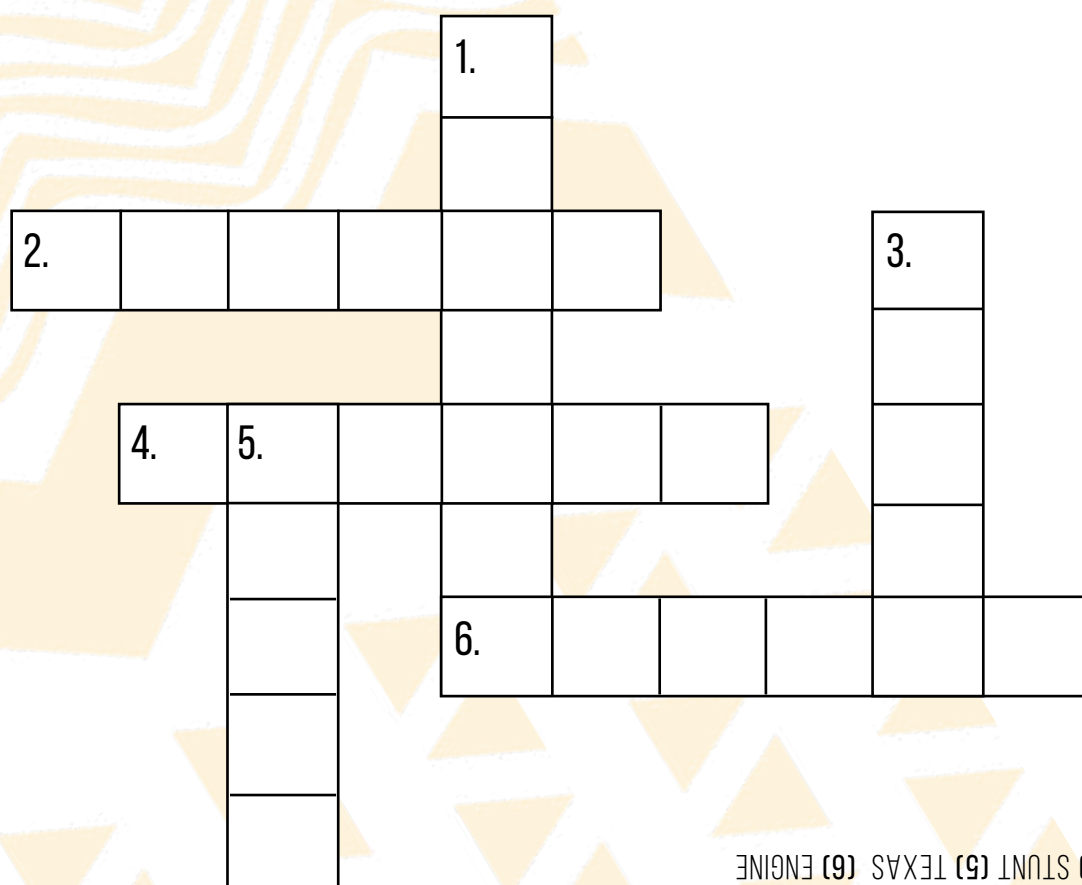
5. THE BIRTHPLACE OF BESSIE COLEMAN

### ACROSS:

2. BESSIE MOVED TO THIS COUNTRY TO BEGIN AVIATION SCHOOL

4. BESSIE PERFORMED MANY \_\_\_\_\_ AT HER AIR SHOWS

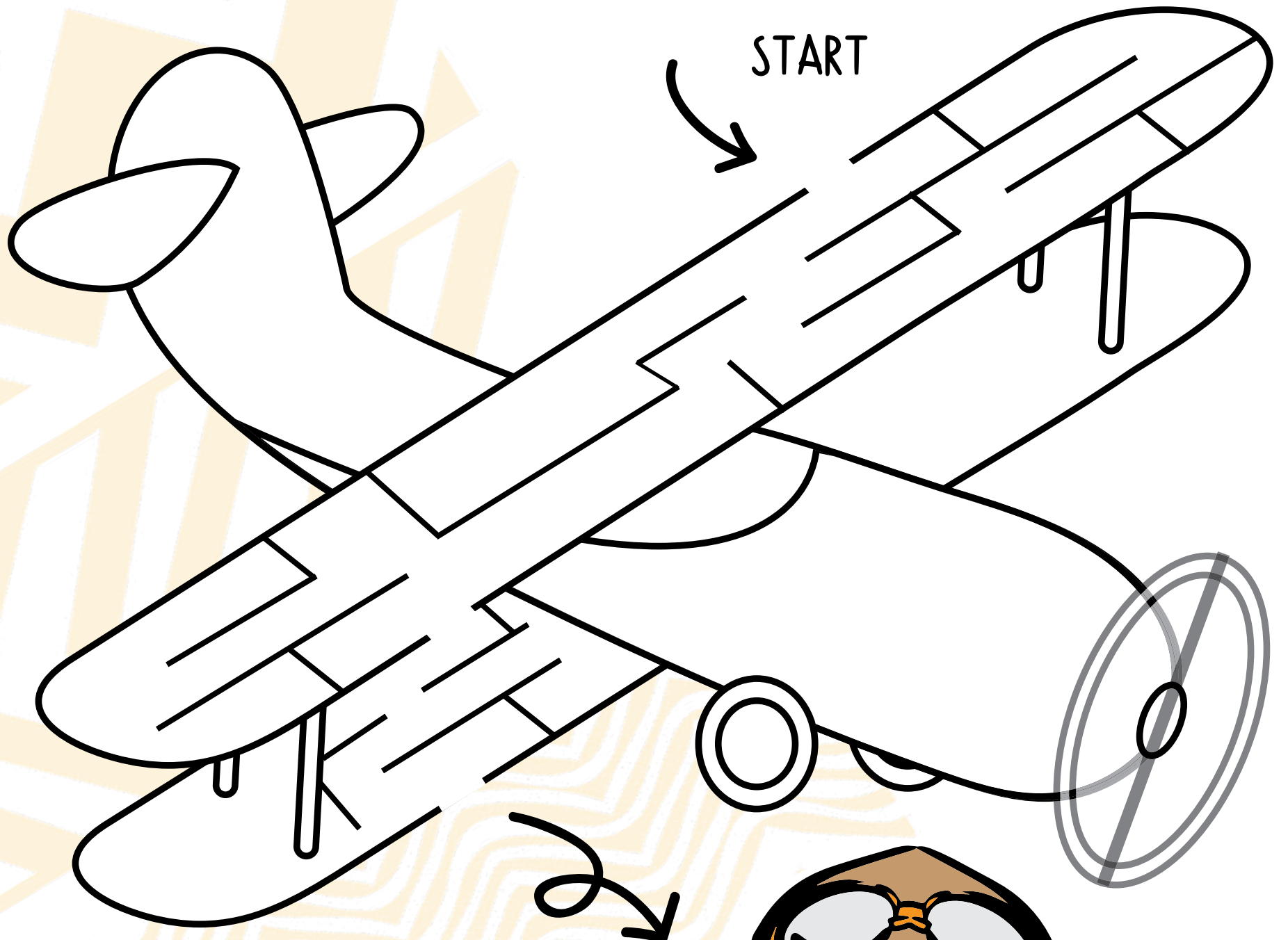
6. BESSIE COLEMAN EXPERIENCED \_\_\_\_\_ PROBLEMS DURING HER LAST PRACTICE FLIGHT



ANSWERS: (1) LICENSE (2) FRANCE (3) WOMAN (4) STUNT (5) TEXAS (6) ENGINE

# MAZE ACTIVITY

FIND YOUR WAY THROUGH THE PLANE TO BESSIE!



START

END!

**#BOTWCCHALLENGE**

SEE HOW FAR YOU CAN MAKE YOUR  
BESSIE COLEMAN AIRPLANE FLY!  
PUT ON YOUR AVIATOR GLASSES AND  
HEAD OUTSIDE!

**BESSIE COLEMAN**

# MATH ACTIVITIES

1. THE TABLE BELOW SHOWS HOW MANY HOURS PER MONTH BESSIE COLEMAN SPENT FLYING.

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL
115 HOURS	120 HOURS	122 HOURS	140 HOURS

A. WHAT IS THE TOTAL NUMBER OF HOURS BESSIE COLEMAN FLEW?

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B. COMPARED TO MARCH, HOW MANY MORE HOURS DID BESSIE FLY IN APRIL?

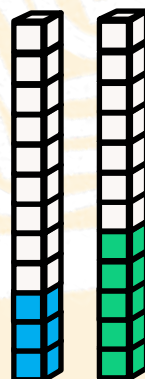
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CHALLENGE QUESTION:

IF 60 MINUTES = 1 HOUR, HOW MANY MINUTES DID BESSIE COLEMAN FLY IN JANUARY?

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2. BESSIE COLEMAN'S PLANE ENGINE REQUIRES  $\frac{5}{12}$  DIESEL OIL AND  $\frac{3}{12}$  ELITE AIR OIL. WHAT IS THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF OIL DOES BESSIE NEED FOR HER PLANE?



ANSWERS: (1A) 497 HOURS (1B) BESSIE FLEW 18 MORE HOURS IN APRIL  
CHALLENGE QUESTION: 6,900 MINUTES (2)  $\frac{8}{12}$

## TAKE THE PLEDGE

**I WILL HONOR**  
THE SACRIFICES OF  
MY ANCESTORS.

**I WILL BELIEVE**  
IN ME.

**I WILL PURSUE**  
MY DREAMS.

**I WILL HELP**  
OTHERS ALONG  
THE WAY.