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## **PEOPLE WHO SHAPED OUR WORLD**



## **THE HISTORY OF FLIGHT**



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## PEOPLE WHO SHAPED OUR WORLD

### THE HISTORY OF FLIGHT

#### THE CAST

##### The Class

##### The Teachers

MR FITZ: Teacher (Fizzy, to his class)

MISS SMITH: Teacher – moderate and child friendly

##### The Pupils

PETER: The practical one

GEORGE: The geek – mentally active

SALLY: The pacifier – a friend to all

JESS: The feminist

MARY: The motherly type.

##### The Characters

JACQUES MONTGOLFIER

CITIZENS OF FRANCE (CROWD)

JOSEPH MONTGOLFIER

VOICE OFF

SIR GEORGE CAYLEY

HENRI GIFFARD

OFFICER - of patent office.

M. P. W. BOULTON

ALPHONSE PÉNAUD

PAUL GAUCHOT

OTTO LILIENTHAL

GUSTAVE LILIENTHAL

AGNES FISCHER – Otto's wife.

ORVILLE WRIGHT

WILBUR WRIGHT

*21 speaking parts. Unlimited non-speaking. Running time approximately 30 minutes.*

**PEOPLE WHO SHAPED OUR WORLD****THE HISTORY OF FLIGHT**

*(A classroom. Standard tables/desks and chairs. There is an interactive white board centre (or flip chart) SEE PRODUCTION NOTES. Two tables are required, one a modern style with a 'control box' with a large red button on it and the other an older basic style. The pupils enter with their bags and books.)*

**SALLY**

Only two more days before the summer break. All those weeks of lazing about.

**PETER**

Are you going away?

**SALLY**

Yes. We're flying off to spend some time with my grandparents. What are you doing?

**PETER**

My dad and me are going gliding. He's already got his licence and I'm going to be working towards getting mine.

**GEORGE**

Wow! That sounds great.

**JESS**

I wouldn't like that! No engine.

**MARY**

I wouldn't like it either. Too small. I like my planes big.

**GEORGE**

I had my first glider flight last year, it was fantastic! I felt just like a bird, soaring around the sky. I can't wait to get back up there.

*(FIZZY and MISS SMITH enter.)*

**FIZZY**

Back up where George?

GEORGE

In a glider, Mr Fitz.

FIZZY

It's wonderful isn't it, soaring around like a bird?

MARY

Have you been gliding, Mr Fitz?

FIZZY

Yes, I have. It's a wonderful experience.

SMITH

Settle down class.

*(They all sit at their desks.)*

SMITH

Today we're going to finish off the physics questions we started yesterday.

FIZZY

Flying is all about physics. Who would like to study some of the physics of flying?

TOGETHER

*(Individual positive responses.)*

GEORGE

Could we go back to the beginning of flying?

FIZZY

Well, it's a long story.

SALLY

Please Mr Fizz...

*(The class explode into laughter.)*

SALLY

Oh, sorry Mr Fitz. Please - can we hear the whole story?

FIZZY

Okay. Is that what you all want?

TOGETHER

*(Individual positive responses.)*

FIZZY

Right, let's get started then...

Throughout history man has dreamed of flying, envious of the birds who do it so effortlessly. Back in the late fifteenth century, Leonardo da Vinci was drawing flying machines which showed he had given his designs careful consideration. But the first time a man was physically lifted into the air we have to go back to Versailles, France in 1783. Are you all holding tight?

TOGETHER

*(Individual positive responses.)*

FIZZY

Here we go.

*(FIZZY presses the large red button on the control box on his desk, there is a whooshing sound as everyone holds on to their desks as though moving at high speed.)*

FIZZY

Here we are in Annonay in the south of France. Two brothers, Joseph-Michel and Jacques-Etienne Montgolfier.

SMITH

The brothers have been experimenting with balloons and are ready to make the first flight carrying a man.

*(THE MONTGOLFIER BROTHERS enter. They speak with a French accent and are dressed in 18<sup>th</sup> century costumes. SEE PRODUCTION NOTES.)*

JACQUES

The King has said we cannot be the first men to fly, we must use convicts from the prison.

SMITH

He refers to King Louis XVI of France who attended the public demonstration of the first flight with his Queen, Marie Antoinette.

JOSEPH

That is no good. Convicts will not be able to learn anything from the flight. We'd be better off with a sheep and a duck.

JACQUES

Then that's what we'll do! And add a rooster for good measure! Let's light the fire now. *(Calling out)* Light the fire!

*(IMAGE 1. MONTGOLFIER's balloon and a modern hot air balloon. SEE PRODUCTION NOTES.)*

*(CITIZENS OF FRANCE, enter to represent the crowd. They watch the action with excitement, looking out towards the audience.)*

FIZZY

They were experimenting with hot air balloons. They built a fire under the balloon and the hot air filled the envelope and the craft rose into the air. The modern version using exactly the same principal has a burner fitted above the basket which carries the passenger. We've all seen them at meetings and fairs. One thing they still have in common is they are both brightly coloured.

JOSEPH

The fire's good and hot, the balloon is straining against the ropes, it's time to let it go.

JACQUES

*(Calling out.)* Release the ropes!

*EVERYONE looks slowly upwards as if watching the balloon ascend. They are all gathered on stage, eventually, looking up above the audience.)*

MARY

It's lifting off, I can hear the sheep bleating. Is it safe?

SMITH

It is, it's tethered in the space for passengers.

GEORGE

Look how high it is, wow, what a sight!

JOSEPH

Come Jacques, we must chase it and see it is safe when it lands!

*(JACQUES and JOSEPH exit. EVERYONE gradually looks downwards as if watching the balloon descend. THE CITIZENS OF FRANCE remain on stage.)*

FIZZY

This first flight was a great success. The balloon landed safely and the animals were unharmed. It flew for two miles in eight minutes and reach a height of about fifteen hundred feet. *(CITIZENS applaud)*

SMITH

But using hot air was not the only way to make a balloon rise. Another French team of Jacques Charles and Brothers Anne-Jean and Nicolas-Louis were experimenting with hydrogen to carry a balloon into the air. *(CITIZENS gasp.)*

*(IMAGE 2. Charles hydrogen balloon.)*

FIZZY

Two months after the Montgolfier brothers, the Charles' team flew an unmanned balloon, filled with hydrogen, from the site where the Eiffel Tower now stands. It travelled thirteen miles, flying for forty five minutes. *(CITIZENS cheer)*

JESS

Who was the first to make manned flight?

FIZZY

Some men selected by the Montgolfier Brothers.

*(JACQUES and JOSEPH enter.)*

JACQUES

The weather looks good, a light breeze and quite warm for November. I think we can safely try a manned flight today.

JOSEPH

It's perfect. Pilâtre de Rozier and the Marquis d'Arlandes are already preparing for the flight, they're in the balloon and instructing the handlers where to stand.

*(The CITIZENS are getting excited again.)*

JOSEPH

Look, *(points off stage.)* Isn't that Benjamin Franklin over there? The diplomatic representative of the United States of America?

SMITH

It was, Benjamin Franklin, who was one of the founding fathers of America.

JACQUES

It's straining against the ropes. They must let it go.

VOICE OFF

Get ready to release the ropes, steady, steady. NOW!

*(The CITIZENS cheer loudly. EVERYONE gathers together again on the stage, facing the audience and slowly raise their heads as if watching the balloon ascend.)*

PETER

Wow! Look how fast she's rising! It's fantastic!

JESS

Just think, this is nearly two hundred and fifty years ago!

JOSEPH

Well brother, we've done it! Man is finally flying free!

JACQUES

*(Slapping JOSEPH on the back.)* What a moment! The take-off was good, let's hope the landing is too. Come on we've got to chase it now!

*(JOSEPH and JACQUES exit and the CITIZENS follow them.)*