

# The World's First Black Female Pilot

## Aeronautics

LIRE & COMPRENDRE = comprendre la description d'événements dans des textes rédigés dans une langue courante ou relative à mon environnement de travail.

B1

Bessie Coleman, better known as Queen Bess, was America's first black woman pilot. She was born in Texas in 1892, into a world of extreme poverty and deepening racial discrimination. Her dream was to "amount to something one day." Bessie fought against overwhelming odds. Working as a manicurist in a Chicago barbershop, she read about World War I pilots. She decided that she wanted to become a pilot. But she was met with the reaction: "You, a Negro and a woman. You must be joking." Undeterred, Bessie sought the advice of a valued customer in the barbershop. "Go to France," he said. "The French are much more accepting of both women and blacks – but first learn the language." That same day, Bessie began taking French lessons. A few months later, she sailed for France and signed up with an aviation school. Her training included everything from baked turns and looping–the–loop to airplane maintenance. In 1921, she became the first black woman to earn a pilot's license. Back in the United States, an African–American woman pilot was big news. Thunderous applause and a rousing rendition of "The Star–Spangled Banner" greeted Bessie at her first air show in New York. Memphis and Chicago followed. Bessie's future never looked brighter. She managed to buy an old Curtis Jenny, a favorite plane among barnstormers. She was heading for a performance in Los Angeles when the engine stalled; she crashed onto the street below, was knocked unconscious, broke one leg, and fractured several ribs. Distraught over having disappointed her fans, she sent a telegram to the local newspaper: "AS SOON AS I CAN WALK, I'M GOING TO FLY!" Seven months later, she was back in a borrowed plane, performing to upbeat crowds in Ohio, Texas, and Florida. Bessie loved flying and accepted its risks, but her real ambition was to open a flight school. Sadly, she didn't live to see her dream realized. In 1926, her old, run–down plane went into a spin. Bessie was thrown out of her seat and fell to her death. At her funeral, thousands paid their respects to the brave young aviator. With her pluck and determination, Bessie Coleman had set an example for many black people. Shortly thereafter, the Bessie Coleman Aero Club in Los Angeles became a reality, introducing young blacks to the world of aviation. Among those inspired by Bessie was Dr. Mae Jemison, the first female African–American astronaut.

Source = Roxie Munro, [30 people who changed the world](#)

~ Avant de débiter, traduisez le titre et réfléchissez au contenu possible du texte.

~ Au fil de la lecture du texte, repérez les mots ou expressions en lien avec ces éléments = nickname – nationality – jobs (2) – school/training before the first flight (3) – main achievement – first plane – dream and ambition – reason of death (3) – people's reaction to her death – tribute

~ Donnez les formes ( BV / P / PP ) des verbes irréguliers = savoir, connaître – être – porter, supporter – combattre – lire – devenir – rencontrer – chercher – aller – dire – apprendre – commencer – prendre – montrer – acheter – casser – avoir – envoyer – voler – voir – jeter – tomber – payer – établir

~ Trouvez dans le texte les équivalents de ces phrases = 1/ Bessie grew up as an unlucky poor girl. 2/ She asked a client to help her make a decision. 3/ In the 1910s, American people were more racist and sexist than French people. 4/ She started learning the French language. 5/ Her achievement made American people very happy. 6/ Her life was absolutely perfect from the moment she became a pilot. 7/ Her engine broke, she had an accident and she got hurt. 8/ She became a role model and an inspirational person.

~ Répondez aux questions sur le texte = 1/ How did she decide to become a pilot? 2/ Did people around her agree with her decision? 3/ What did she do to become a pilot? 4/ How long did it take her to fly again after her accident? 5/ How did she help young black people?

~ Traduisez cette citation de Bessie Coleman = "I decided blacks should not have to experience the difficulties I had faced, so I decided to open a flying school and teach other black women to fly."

