



A Young Girl's Dream: Sophie Blanchard

Pat Lowe, Wasatch Range Writing Project

Summary:

The picture book tells the story of Sophie Armant, a French girl who dreamed of flying.

Objectives:

- Students will become familiar with Sophie and some history of hot-air balloons.
- Students will identify ideas in the book that have a personal connection to their own life interests, dreams, or goals.
- Students will write or draw a selection about an important aspiration or interest in their life.
- Fulfill Core Standards in Language Arts of Speaking & Listening and Writing.

Context:

This lesson could be used during the study of writing. The lesson would be appropriate for elementary students; however, it could be used with secondary students in the exploration of personal identity, interests, and life goals.

Materials:

- A copy of the picture book, *Lighter Than Air: Sophie Blanchard, the First Woman Pilot*
- Large sheets of poster paper for display in the classroom or projector system
- Blank drawing paper and individual student notebooks/journals

Time Span:

The material can be presented in multiple sessions of 45 minutes each with periods of several days between for student reflection and writing.

Procedures:

1. Read aloud the picture book.
2. Use videos available on the Internet to understand hot-air balloons.
3. Discuss the strengths and characteristics of Sophie Armant.



4. Converse about the ways in which she persisted in her dreams and took advantage of opportunities presented to her.
5. Talk about what students like to do and who they want to become. What did Sophie do in real life to achieve her dreams and goals? Ideas might be recorded on chart paper posted in the classroom or in a virtual format for future reference.
6. Using their journal or blank paper, have students jot down ideas and memories that were prompted by something in the book or class discussion.
7. Let students draw simple pictures about their interests, dreams, and goals.
8. Have them write captions for the drawings.
9. Work through the writing process to help students complete a narrative memory or opinion. It need not be a long piece but should reflect their personality.
10. As a class, orally share the students' writings.

Extensions:

- Older students could write several pieces and publish them as a collection. The format of narrative, poetry, or opinion might vary from one selection to another.
- Students could investigate the geographic locations mentioned in the books.
- Individuals might conduct research about hot-air balloons and develop a written piece to share new knowledge.
- The class could divide the subject of ballooning and produce a book to share with younger students.

Rationale:

Students can be encouraged in building on their interests and dreams to begin a lifelong pursuit. By knowing about Sophie's life, students might begin to realize how they could flourish in later years. They will communicate those aspirations in written form.

Resources:

Smith, Matthew Clark. *Lighter Than Air: Sophie Blanchard, the First Woman Pilot*. Somerville, Massachusetts: Candlewick Press, 2017.

A number of videos are available using ask.com or youtube.com.

They differ in length and complexity and can be used for varied ages of students.

Searches could include: Montgolfier brothers; history of hot air flight; hot air balloons

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