

Chuck Yeager Goes Supersonic: An Action-Packed, True Flying Adventure

Alan W. Biermann

Yaejin Lim, Illustrator

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Kids with a strong interest in airplanes will love *Chuck Yeager Goes Supersonic*, the graphically illustrated life story of Chuck Yeager, an American pilot who was the first to break the sound barrier.

The man who became a national hero had an ordinary childhood, helping his father out on the farm in Hamlin, West Virginia, and venturing into forests with friends in his free time. Young Yeager learned about machinery through his father's work in the local gas fields. When the Second World War began, he signed up for pilot training and showed such aptitude that he was promoted to the rank of captain.

The book details Yeager's involvement with the US Air Force and some of the friends he made along the way. It also describes some of the pilot's mishaps—for example, a crash landing on a farm during pilot school—and explains in detail how sound travels and what it means to break the sound barrier. This portion is well written and presented in a format that is easy to understand despite its somewhat complex nature.

Author Alan W. Biermann includes just the right amount of information in this forty-five-page book. The text never feels onerous but still includes sufficient facts that allow young readers to trace the outline of Yeager's life. Biermann's father worked in the airplane propeller business, so Biermann himself spent time around planes as a child, even working in a propeller factory in his summers during college. Biermann also became a pilot and flew near where Yeager had flown many of his record-breaking flights.

Chuck Yeager Goes Supersonic describes Yeager's setbacks and achievements, his moments of good judgment and bad. Yeager had a desperate love of flying and excellent instincts about what he could do with a plane. He once managed to safely land a shaking plane in test-pilot school when one of the controls failed, and he landed another plane when the windshield had frosted over and there was zero visibility. But there were also occasions when Yeager's judgment was less than superb, as when he broke his ribs in a horseback-riding accident and failed to inform his superiors or the military doctors about what had happened. He flew despite those injuries—and it was during this flight that he actually broke the sound barrier.

Yaejin Lim's full-color illustrations are beautiful and vivid. The book's cover is colorful, and the title and subtitle nicely describe the content. However, there are a couple of pages that are difficult to decipher because they are printed in black ink against a dark background.

Biermann is to be commended for making this story accessible to young readers (ages nine to twelve) and doing so in a way that communicates his admiration for Yeager and helps kids understand the relevance of the pilot's achievements. The book paints a portrait of a very human Yeager, a man who was not only passionate and immensely knowledgeable about flying but also an individual who worked hard and overcame significant obstacles to reach his goal.

LAUREN KRAMER (March 22, 2013)

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