

Flying Fillies: The Sky's the Limit

Christy Hui

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A girl with big dreams encounters women pilots and witnesses cultural roadblocks to progress during World War II in the illuminating historical novel Flying Fillies.

In Christy Hui's powerful historical novel *Flying Fillies*, a girl encounters women pilots during World War II.

Dawn is thrilled to move from Chicago to Sweetwater, Texas. She dreams of being a cowgirl and becoming a fighter pilot. On her grandfather's horse ranch, she's sure that she'll accomplish the former, but she does not anticipate that her dreams of flying will also be aided by her move. Dawn's aunt, Georgia, who volunteered with the British Royal Air Force, returns to Sweetwater to join the Women Airforce Service Pilots, or WASPs.

In Texas, Dawn also forms crushes, faces bullying at school, and contends with the reality of her alcoholic parent. She faces such challenges with aplomb, nurturing a deep longing for adventure. She remains motivated, even when her attempts to fulfill her dreams stall. Riding horses is harder than she first thought; she volunteers to help the WASPs and is assigned tasks that represent odds and ends.

Dawn's Aunt Georgia and her fellow pilots occupy a considerable portion of the narrative too. Individual chapters shift to incorporate their points of view, and the switches between perspectives are seamless. In the chapters that focus on the WASPs, Dawn is still present, but the pilots' more mature worldviews dominate; nonetheless, their narrations are cognizant of what's appropriate for young audiences.

Dawn's narration incorporates historical details to provide context and flesh out the setting. The events that pertain to the WASPs, including how they came to be and the role they played in the war, are conveyed in accurate terms; these elements are enlightening. The book also takes note of the era's bigotry, including among those in the military; Sophie, a Chinese American WASP, and Walter, a Black employee at Dawn's grandfather's ranch, both endure it. Walter himself dreams of being a pilot, but he is rejected at first because of the color of his skin. And the WASPs face their own challenges: men who are pilots react to them in sexist ways.

With overarching themes of hope, joy, and love, the delightful historical novel *Flying Fillies* follows a girl who dreams of becoming a pilot as she meets and assists military women who are already working in that capacity.

CAROLINA CIUCCI (July 22, 2022)

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