



Poetry Illustration

Children's Art Week

To celebrate Children's Art Week we would like you to pick up a pencil, paintbrush or get digital and illustrate the poem of aviators, High Flight.



High Flight

Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds, – and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of – wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air...



Up, up the long, delirious burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace
Where never lark, or ever eagle flew –
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

John Gillespie Magee Jr.



High Flight was written by the Canadian pilot, John Gillespie Magee Jr.

John loved writing, especially poetry and he won prizes for his work when he was at school.

In October 1940, just over a year after the outbreak of the Second World War, John made the decision to join the Royal Canadian Air Force, instead of starting university. After learning to fly he was sent to the UK. He wrote this poem after a high altitude flight in his Spitfire.

Illustration Inspiration

Have a flick through some of the books or comics you have at home or get online and look at the work of some famous book illustrators to give you some ideas.

- French Aviator, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry – **The Little Prince**
- Judith Kerr – **The Tiger Who Came to Tea**
- EH Shepard – **Winnie the Pooh and Wind in the Willows**
- Quentin Blake – **Matilda and The Boy in the Dress**
- Hirohiko Araki – **Manga comics**



Or take inspiration from the Graphic Novel (see image left) created for the Museum by Middlesex University students, to celebrate the centenary of the RAF.

rafmuseum.org.uk/documents/novel/index.html

Tips and Ideas

- The poem describes colours, feelings and emotions as well as actions and backgrounds
- The poem was written in the Second World War, so you may want your illustrations to show this, but you can set it at any time in the history of aviation, or even the future
- Think about the layout, do you want one illustration in between the verses or lots of small drawings around the outside of the poem?
- If you have a printer at home, you can print out the poem and then add your illustrations where you want them
- Read the poem out loud to someone else and ask someone else to read it out to you
- If you don't have a printer, hand write the poem and add your illustrations.



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