

Black Thunder

Chapter Four – by Kay Hively

On every page of the books Joey looked at in the Carnegie Library, there was a picture of an airplane. He also found stories about all of them.

In some of the pictures, planes were flying through the air, shooting at each other. There were even pictures of planes falling through the sky. These planes had black smoke coming from them. In some pictures Joey could see the pilot floating safely in a parachute.

Joey could hardly sit still as he looked through the books. In his imagination he could hear the roar of the motors and the rat-a-tat-tat of the guns and cannons.

Of all the planes, Joey liked the P-40 best. He even liked its nickname – the Flying Tiger. In one picture he could see a leaping tiger that had been painted on the nose of a P-40. The book said pilots liked to have nose art on their planes.

Joey hoped Tommy was learning to fly a P-40. He thought it would be fun to see his brother flying a fighter plane – and maybe taking him along for a little ride. Just thinking about it made Joey daydream about putting on a flight suit and pulling the goggles down over his eyes. He was sure it would be the greatest thing in all the world.

But as Joey sat in the chair with airplanes flying through his head, he suddenly felt something squeeze his shoulder. Startled out of his daydream, Joey nearly fell out of the chair. Turning around he saw the worried faces of his parents, and the smiling face of the nice gray-haired lady.

Mrs. Cooper told Joey that she had been searching for him all afternoon. She was afraid something bad had happened to him.

Joey handed the three books back to the librarian. The nice lady took the books and smiled. She told Joey that some new airplane books would be in the library soon. She invited him to come back

to read them. Or, she said, he could check them out and take them home.

As Joey left the library with his parents, he could see a big clock on the wall. It was 4 o'clock. He had been in the library for almost six hours with nothing to eat or drink. He hoped his mother had saved a sandwich for him.

After that first visit to the library, Joey went there every Saturday, reading all he could about airplanes. His parents were happy about that and they never worried about him again. When it was time to go home, they always knew where to find him.

The summer passed quickly. When the weather turned cooler, school started and Joey began thinking about the holidays. It would really be special this year. Tommy was coming home for Christmas. Joey could hardly wait!



Author Kay Hively and Illustrator Billie Gofourth-Stewart are both of Neosho, Missouri. Produced in partnership with this newspaper and the Missouri Press Foundation. Copyright 2004.

Classroom Extensions

Things to Think About and Do –

A. Joey saw a plane decorated with a tiger. Find a picture of a P-40 airplane, then draw your own picture of the plane. Decorate your plane with nose art.

B. Visit a library in your school or town. See how many airplane books you can find. Find a fighter plane, a passenger plane, a cargo plane and a helicopter. Learn the difference between a regular plane and a jet plane.

STANDARDS: G1:9; G1:2; G1:4; G2: 1; CA:3; CA:5; FA:5; S:7

Next Week: Chapter Five – Christmas is Coming