

AIRBORN

Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Award Nominee 2007 Grades 6-8

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Airborn by Kenneth Oppel. Harper Collins Publishers (Morrow/Avon), 2004. 355 p.

Summary

Airborn is a wonderfully written, imaginative Victorian-era adventure story. Matt Cruse is a young boy working aboard the beautiful airship Aurora, which he calls home. One night while working he sees a hot air balloon in distress and assists in the rescue of the pilot. Before dying, the man tells Matt of beautiful creatures in the sky that never touch the ground. A year later, the granddaughter of the man, Kate de Vries, boards the Aurora in search of these beautiful creatures. *Airborn* is an action-packed novel with all the ingredients of a gripping page-turner: pirates, undiscovered animals, mango-scented tropical islands, a brave cabin boy and a wealthy girl.

Awards

The Ruth Schwartz Award --Finalist
BBYA Top Ten Book
BCCB Blue Ribbon Book
Michael Printz Honor Award (American Library Association)
Governor General's Award for Children's Literature
Young Adult Book Award, Honor Book (Canadian Library Association)
Book of the Year for Children, Honor Book (Canadian Library Association)
Quick Pick for Reluctant Readers (Young Adult Library Services Association)

Author's Biography

Kenneth Oppel was born in 1967 in Port Alberni, British Columbia. At the age of twelve, he decided that he wanted to be a writer. Some of Oppel's first writings were science fiction epics. In 1985, at the age of fourteen, he wrote his first children's novel, *Colin's Fantastic Video Adventure*. Kenneth Oppel completed his education by earning a Bachelor's degree at the University of Toronto. After he graduated from college, he married and moved to Oxford. He spent three years there while his wife finished her doctoral studies in Shakespeare. He now lives in Canada with his wife, daughter and son. Oppel has since written over 20 books for children and young adults.

Other Titles by Kenneth Oppel

Silverwing Trilogy (*Silverwing*, *Sunwing*, *Firewing*)
Skybreaker (Sequel to *Airborn*)
The Devil's Cure
Deadwater Zone

Related Titles

Kensuke's Kingdom by Michael Morpurgo.
Planet of Adventure by Jack Vance.
Jack Black and the Ship of Thieves by Carol Hughes.
Ilse Witch by Terry Brooks.

Dr. Eckener's Dream Machine: The Great Zeppelin and the Dawn of Air Travel by Douglas Botting.

Classroom Connections

***Airborn*: Curriculinks: The Education Network of Ontario**

- Martha Martin, teacher and librarian, has developed a literature unit for *Airborn*, which is on this website: <http://curriculum.enoreo.on.ca/arts/english13.html>. The unit contains “student-tested materials and rubrics for each chapter of the novel, including discussion questions, vocabulary activities, and a wide variety of writing tasks.” Click on the link “Airborn Novel Study” to open the study guide either as a word document or a pdf.

Harkness *Airborn* Novel Guide

- Another study guide for *Airborn* is available at <http://www.agsd.ca/student-services/harkness/airborn/>. This excellent study guide, created by Lorrie Anne Harkness, includes information about the author, suggested activities, printable units for each chapter, resources, and story synopsis.

Connections by Elizabeth Dumas, Good Hope Middle School, West Monroe Grade 7

ELA Unit 1: Modern Fantasy-Through the Wardrobe

Activity 2: Fantasy Book Review. This title can be included on the class list of fantasy novels for the students' selection for independent reading.

Activity 4: Elements of Fantasy. Chapter 15 – “The Cloud Cat” includes good examples of literary techniques and story elements.

Activity 5: What is Next? This title is a good choice for the teacher-selected fantasy students will be reading during this activity.

Grade 8

ELA Unit 5: Novel

Activity 1: Sustained Silent Reading. This book can be included on a recommended reading list that students will use to self-select a novel to be read independently. It can then be used for the other follow-up activities in this unit.

Science

- Have the students compare and contrast the aircraft in *Airborn* and the aircraft of today.
- Search the Internet for websites dealing with airships and ocean liners. Have them compare and contrast an airship to an ocean liner. Some good websites are <http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/blnautical.htm>
<http://inventors.about.com/od/astartinventions/ss/airship.htm>

Web Links

About.com: History of Ships and Nautical Inventions

<http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/blnautical.htm>

The history and building of different types of boats.

History World: History of Boats and Ships

<http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?groupid=111&HistoryID=aa14>

Includes a history on boats and ships.

Monterey's Official Navy Ship's Boats: Homepage

<http://www.93950.com/boats/index.htm>

Consists of information about how a boat is built.

Kenneth Oppel

<http://www.kennethoppel.ca>

This site ncludes information about Oppel, reviews of his books, and excerpts from several books including *Airborn* and *Skybreaker*. The following web links are on the author's site:

- **Airborn and Skybreaker by Kenneth Oppel** www.airborn.ca This is the actual website of *Airborn*. This website has tours of the *Aurora*, the log of the *Endurance*, and a motion picture of *Airborn*.
- **Airship Resources** <http://www.myairship.com> The manufacturing of airships is explained in detail on this website.
- **Airships: DJ's Zeppelin Page** <http://www.airships.net> Has original documents from past airships that have had passengers on board.
- **Airship Association** <http://www.airship-association.org/whatis.html> Includes frequently asked questions about airships and explains how they are made.
- **Pirates Site** <http://www.piratesinfo.com> This website contains information about pirates and the history of piracy.
- **About.com: History of Airship and Flight Balloons** <http://inventors.about.com/od/astartinventions/ss/airship.htm> Includes definitions and history of airships and balloons.