

In July 1909 a Frenchman, Louis Blériot crossed the Channel in a plane with a 25 horse-power engine, at a speed of 30 miles per hour. Less than twenty years later, the American pilot Charles Lindbergh crossed the Atlantic Ocean in a non-stop flight from New York to Paris – a distance of 5700 kilometres.

An American newspaper had offered a 25,000 dollar prize for a non-stop flight from New York to Paris. Lindbergh made up his mind on one of his night flights in September 1926. Eight months



later he was ready. His plane had a 220 horsepower engine and a top speed of 200 kilometres per hour. After some test flights he flew to New York. The weather was bad, and he had to wait there for nearly a week. At last the weather changed. He slept only a few hours and arrived at the airfield before 3 am. It was raining a little, but the weather forecast for the Ocean was good. It was 7.50 am when his plane left the ground and

the long and lonely flight to Paris began. Lindbergh had no radio with him.

The flight was over Newfoundland and Ireland. It was 9 p.m. when Newfoundland passed under him. Then he left North America and turned east, across the ocean.

So far the weather had been perfect. But now there were suddenly clouds all round him and he got into a terrible storm. It was so bad that he almost turned back.

Slowly the night passed. He had been in the air for 22 hours. He wanted to lean back, to close his eyes, to sleep. It was a terrible effort to keep awake. Suddenly he thought he saw land – a coastline with hills and trees. But when he came nearer, he saw that there were only bits of mist. The ocean seemed endless. He flew on and on, hour after hour. Suddenly he saw dark spots on the water below – fishing boats. He knew now that the coast of Europe was not far away. The worst was over. He was awake again.



At 10.52 he saw a coastline, then hills and trees and fields. This was Ireland. He flew over a village. People were running into the street and looking up. And then he was over England. How different from America it looked – the villages, all those small farms with their hedges. Twenty minutes later the plane was again over water: the Channel. Suddenly Lindbergh remembered: he had no passport, and he knew no French. Too late to get a passport now. It was evening. Then the lights of Paris and the airfield of Le Bourget. His plane, the "Spirit of St. Louis", touched the ground and stopped. The flight was over. It was 21st May 1927, 9.52pm.

**make up one's mind:** make a decision  
**engine** motor  
**speed** rate of movement  
**less** a smaller amount of  
**weather forecast** analysis of next days' weather  
**lonely** feeling alone

**radio** wireless  
**almost** nearly  
**mist** cloud that limits visibility  
**touch** come into contact with  
**effort** a determined attempt

### **Comprehension questions:**

1. Lindbergh was
  - the man who invented the airplane.
  - the first pilot who crossed the Atlantic Ocean in a nonstop flight.
  - the German pilot who crossed the Channel after Blériot.
  
2. Lindbergh
  - had his little dog Laika with him.
  - was together with a newspaper reporter.
  - was alone on his plane.
  
3. Lindbergh had
  - a radio on board the plane.
  - his flight well prepared.
  - his passport with him.
  
4. The Spirit of St. Louis was
  - an airplane.
  - an airfield.
  - an airship.
  
5. Le Bourget is the name of
  - an airplane.
  - an airfield.
  - an airship.
  
6. Lindbergh flew over
  - Portugal, Spain, and Scotland.
  - Denmark Norway, and Sweden.
  - Newfoundland, Ireland, and England.
  
7. In 1909 the French Blériot
  - flew from Paris to New York.
  - flew over the Channel.
  - flew from St. Louis to New York.
  
8. Lindbergh
  - could only fly in daylight, never at night.
  - was used to night flights.
  - was for the first time on a night flight.
  
9. Lindbergh's flight lasted
  - for more than 22 hours.
  - exactly 22 hours.
  - less than 22 hours.
  
10. Lindbergh
  - could sleep during the flight.
  - couldn't sleep during the flight.
  - could only sleep for one hour.
  
11. The weather
  - was perfect during the whole flight.
  - was bad and Lindbergh almost turned back.
  - wasn't important, because the pilot was in his cockpit anyway.
  
12. The first things of Europe Lindbergh saw were
  - the lights of an English village.
  - fishing boats.
  - the icebergs of Newfoundland.