

Second Reaction: Fly, Girl, Fly!

Nancy Roe Pimm. *Fly, Girl, Fly*. Minneapolis, MN: Beaming Books, 2020. Print.

Scott Thorne



“*Fly, Girl, Fly! Shaesta Waiz Soars Around the World*” written by Nancy Roe Pimm and illustrated by Alexandra Bye, is a great book for any young reader interested in aviation, leadership, or STEM fields. The book follows the true story of Shesta Waiz, and Afghan-American woman who became the youngest woman to fly solo around the world in a single-engine plane. The book chronicles Shaesta's life story, from her early days in a refugee camp in Afghanistan to her upbringing in California, her inspiration and love for aviation, and the pursuit of her dream to fly around the world. Along the way, Shaesta faces obstacles and doubts from those around her, but she perseveres and achieves her dream while also making the decision to inspire children around the world by sharing her story at schools along the way. In so doing, this

introduces young readers to the geography and cultures of the various countries Shaesta visited during her flight around the world. The story aims to inspire young readers, particularly girls, to pursue their dreams and consider careers in STEM fields.

Reading the book to my 5-year-old daughter, I could tell she was invested. She was sad that people did not believe that Shaesta could do great things, excited when she overcame her fears and the doubts of others, and inspired at the difference she made for children across the world. I feel that seeing young women take such an active role in leadership and STEM fields such as aviation is important for not just girls, but all children who are constantly re-defining and re-imagining roles, responsibilities, and possibilities for life as a “grown-up”. The addition of Shaesta’s culture, background, and inspirations added a rich layer to further engage readers from similar challenges and circumstances. With so many children’s books focused on hypothetical characters, it was especially engaging to finish the book with the author’s note and message from Shaesta, and to learn that this person was not only real, but recent.

When reading the book, I kept my daughter engaged by asking questions along the way. When seeing that Shaesta’s family and friends had doubts about her dreams, we talked not only about how it was not very nice, but things they could have said to help her along the way. We talked about why she may have been afraid, and why it was important to Shaesta to travel to and talk with other children to share her story. While only briefly introduced in the story, it was challenging to talk with and answer questions about refugees, soldiers, tanks, and bombs with someone so young who has not been exposed to anything more than a disagreement with peers, a topic that one should be prepared for if introducing to a classroom. To adapt this for a 5-year old we talked about how sometimes people are not very nice, and that Shaesta’s family was afraid they might get hurt if they stayed, a conversation that may be elaborated on in later grades.

The book can be a great tool for parents and teachers to spark conversations with children about goal setting, overcoming obstacles, and cultural diversity while also allowing the opportunity to incorporate geography, culture, and influential people in various fields. Additionally, the story is written in a simple language that is easy to understand, making it suitable for children of all ages. For use in the classroom, I can imagine incorporating a physical or online interactive globe or world map to plot Shaesta's travels throughout the story, introducing customs and cultures from various regions, and identifying influential people in not just aviation, but other fields as well.

In conclusion, "Fly, Girl, Fly! Shaesta Waiz Soars Around the World" is a well-written and inspiring book for young readers. It not only tells the story of a remarkable woman who defied the odds, but it also teaches important life lessons about perseverance, determination, and cultural diversity.

About the Author

Scott Thorne is a Ph.D. candidate in the Technology Leadership and Innovation program at Purdue University, focusing on engineering and technology teacher education. His research primarily centers around dual credit options for engineering courses and the development of instructional tools for teachers. Scott has prior experience as a teacher of engineering and technology for high school students and has been teaching for over ten years. He also holds the position of competitive events coordinator on the board of directors for Indiana's Technology Student Association. In his personal life, Scott is a father of two and finds joy in spending time

with his daughters through activities such as board games, reading books, and working on puzzles.