

Class VII English

Night Witches

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Theme of the Chapter

The "Night Witch" is a chapter on themes of courage, service and gender equality. It profiles Nadezhda Popova, known as Nadia. She was a member of the Soviet Union's all-female 588th Night Bomber Regiment, referred to as the "Night Witches," during World War II.

Message of the Chapter

Courage, determination and patriotism do not require gender to show. Everyone, men or women, can prove themselves as courageous and brave, and can show the patriotism even with less or no resources.

Understanding the text

A. Answer these questions.

1. What were the disadvantages of the type of aircraft used by the female fighter pilots? What was the advantage?

Ans. The aircraft used by the female fighter pilot were built mainly of plywood and Canvas. They were small and usually reserved for training and crop dusting. These planes, if hit by bullets, could burst into flames. One plane could carry only two bombs at a time. A strong wind could toss the plane about. However, the advantage of these small and flimsy planes was that they could be maneuvered quickly and easily.

2. Nobody could understand why the brave lad who had taken on a Nazi squadron wouldn't drink vodka.

What mistake were the people in this situation making? What does this say about female fighter pilots - were they a common or an uncommon figure at that time?

Ans. The people in this situation were making the mistake of thinking that the brave pilots must have been a man - a brave lad. This shows that the female fighter Pilots were an uncommon figure at that time. The people did not immediately think that the pilot might be a woman.

3. How did the female fighter pilots earn the title 'Night Witches'?

Ans. The female fighter Pilots flew their planes at night, often quietly and secretly, running their engines slowly as they neared their targets, gliding their way to the bomb release points and then dropping the bombs. Because of this mode of operation, their planes only made soft whooshing noise as

the flew by. This noise sounded like witches' broom stick to the Germans. That is why they gave the title night witches to the Soviet female fighter pilots.

4. Which factors made the Night Witches' missions particularly dangerous?

Ans. Limited Technology was available to the night witches. They had no radar to navigate their paths through the night sky - only maps and compasses. They flew only in the dark. They carried no parachutes. Their craft could burst into flames if hit by bullets. Frequently they had to fly through a Wall of Enemy fire. Each plane flew, multiple missions in a night, as the Planes could only carry two bombs at a time this increased the risk of being shot. The Planes had open cockpit so the women had to suffer freezing cold. A strong wind could toss their small planes. All these factors made their mission particularly dangerous.

5. "Katya, my dear, we will live long".

(a) Who said this to whom?

Ans. Pilot Nadezhda said this to her navigator.

b. What had happened just before this?

Ans. Just before this, Popova and her navigator had completed a flight. They had survived the flight but forty two bullet holes were studding their little plane, with bullet holes in Popova map and Hamlet.

(c) Why do you think the speaker said this? What does this line say about her character?

Ans. the speaker must have said this because she had a lot of courage and a fine sense of humour human that if they could survive such a flight with so many bullets stuck there plane maps and even their helmets without killing them they were very lucky and would live long life they would not die easily.

6. And they did all that while decorating their planes with flowers and using their navigation pencils as lip colour.

a. What is referred to as 'all that'?

Ans. All that refers to the female fighters pilot's bravery and achievement - the thousands of missions they flew, the bombs they o

dropped and the challenges they overcame.

b. Why do you think they decorated their planes with flowers?

Ans. The female fighters Pilots decorated their planes with flowers because along with courage they also had a sense of beauty and wanted to make the planes which they flew look as nice as possible.

c. Using their navigation pencil as lip colour - does this indicate cleverness, a sense of humour, a sense of style or something else?. Explain.

Ans. This indicates a sense of humour the night witches must have used their navigation pencil as lip colour as a good joke.

B. Which sentences in the text tell you these?

1. The fight in 1943, in which Tamara Pamyatnykh was caught up, was sudden and unexpected.

Ans. Their passage was on its way to being a routine patrol until the pilots found themselves face-to-face with a collection of German bombers.

2. There were female pilots in other countries, but very few female fighter pilots.

Ans. Other countries, the US among them, may have allowed women to fly as members of their early airforce; those women, however, served largely in support and transport roles.

3. Nadezhda Popova's death reminded the world of the Night Witches' achievements.

Ans. And the obituaries that resulted, celebration of a life and legacy largely unknown to many of us around the world, serve as a reminder of the great things the female flyers accomplished.

4. The pilots did not mind being called 'Night Witches'— if anything, they enjoyed it.

Ans. The witches (they took the name given by the Germans as a badge of honour) flew only in the dark.

5. Behind the creation of the Night Bomber Regiment was a woman.

Ans. The Night Bomber Regiment was one of three female fighters pilot units created by Stalin at the insistence of Marina Roskova -an aviation celebrity who was, essentially, 'the Soviet Amelia Earhart'.

6. Marina Raskova trained the fighter pilots to face unfair attitude.

Ans. She also prepared them for an environment that preferred to treat women as bombshells rather than bombers.

Appreciating the text

1. How did these people regard the night witches?

a) German soldiers

b) Soviet Soldiers

Ans a. The German soldiers hated and feared the night witches. It was they who gave the title of 'Night Witches' to the female fighter pilots. Any German pilot who could down one of these female fighter pilots was awarded an iron cross.

b. Soviet soldiers did not - at least at first -respect the Night Witches as much as they should have. A male general had initially complaint of being sent a bunch of 'girlies' instead of proper soldiers.

The lack of respect and trust from the Soviet soldiers would be an extra challenge for the Night Witches because they were fighting on the same side. Just as the mail soldiers were respected for their courage and work, the female fighter pilots should also have been respected for what they were doing for their country. If people from their own country or soldiers from their own side did not trust them or appreciate them then it would be unfair and discouraging.

Another example of how the Night Witches were considered inferior to male soldiers was that the Night Witches' uniforms were hand-me-downs from male pilots.

2. Which of these words would you use to describe the night witches? Why?

Ans. The Night Witches could be described as brave, young, skilled and resourceful. We know from the text that the Night Witches ranged in age from 17 to 26. They were skilled as they could manoeuvre their tiny planes quickly, easily and quickly. They were brave - they flew numerous missions without parachutes or radar through any fires, in freezing cold and despite discouraging attitudes of their brothers in arms. They were also resourceful - they used planes meant for training and crop-dusting to drop bombs. The last line tells us that they also used the navigation pencils as lip colours, meaning that these women are capable of using whatever was available to them to suit their purpose.

Extra Question

Answer in 100 - 120 words

1. Why do you think the women pilots were given the name 'Night witches'? What were the reactions of the women pilots by the name in contrast to the Germans who gave that name to them? Were these women pilots renowned to the world at the time of the World War?

Ans: The Soviet female fighter pilots flew their planes mainly at night, and often quietly and secretly, running their engines slowly as they neared their targets, gliding their way to their bomb release points. Due to this, their planes made soft whooshing noises as they flew by. This noise reminded the Germans, of the sound of a witch's broomstick. So, the Nazis began calling the female fighter pilots *Nachthexen* which meant 'Night Witches'. In this way, the Soviet female fighter pilots earned the title 'Night Witches'.

The Germans had feared of the women pilots. Out of fear, anger and hatred they named them witches. On the contrary the women pilots of the Soviet Union took the title as pride and honour.

No, the women pilots did not get that much popularity what they had deserved. They were not renowned in the world at the time of the World War.

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