

THE AVION MY UNCLE FLEW

by

Cyrus Fisher

Bon jour! Parlez-vous francais? Well, you will make a good start after reading this mystery story by Cyrus Fisher. Not only will you enjoy the exciting adventure, but without even trying, you will learn enough French to read several pages written exclusively in French. It is a fun and ingenious way to be introduced to a new language.

Young John Littlehorn lives in Wyoming on a ranch with his French born mother. It is the time of the Second World War and John's father is away fighting in Europe. Because of an accident on a horse, John has damaged his leg and cannot walk without great pain and difficulty. When his father returns from the war, it is decided that John should have an operation to help him walk again. The best doctor to do this happens to be in France where John's father needs to return to do some work for the military.

The family sets sail for France where John's adventure begins. He is sent to the village of St. Chamant, where his mother was born, to live with his Oncle Paul Langres for three months while his parents go to England to finish their war work. Oncle Paul (By the way, that is not a typo. It is French for uncle.) is designing and building a new type of airplane that he hopes will restore his fortune which was lost during the war. On the way to St. Chamant, John and his oncle are followed by a mysterious and threatening man who has tried to buy property belonging to John's mother and uncle in St. Chamant. It is the site where their family home stood for hundreds of years before being burned down during the war. There are some very tense moments as we learn who this man is and why his interest is so strong in the Langres' family property.

John has been challenged by his parents to exercise and gain back the strength in his legs and also to learn enough French to write his mother a letter. His motivation is a new bicycle with gears and an electric head lamp. In a very effortless way you will learn French along with John so that you will be able to read what he writes for his mother. For example:

...Finally I heard Charles say, "Jeveux voir l'avion, s'il vous plait."

I asked what he'd said.

Mon oncle replied, "You know what 'je' is, by now?"

I did: "Je" was "I" in French.

He explained "'Je veux' is 'I wish.' And 'voir' is 'to see.' And you know what 's'il vous plait' is. That is 'please,' or 'if you please.'"

It was like fitting a puzzle together. All at once it was simple. "Je veux voir l'avion, s'il vous plait," fitted together perfectly: "I wish to see the airplane, please."

The wonderful thing about the book is that the language lessons are given in a completely natural manner in the midst of an exciting story that will hold your attention from beginning to end. Before you begin reading *The Avion My Uncle Flew*, turn to the back of the book and look over the report John writes for his mother. Then read the book. When you finish, you will delight yourself and amaze your family as you translate those pages into English. C'est amusant! Au revoir!

Choose from the following suggested activities to continue your enjoyment of *The Avion My Uncle Flew*:

1. Translate the report at the end of the book into English.
2. If you would like a greater challenge, put the book aside and using only your English translation, translate it back into French.
3. Research why and when the Romans occupied France.
4. Using the directions John gives you in the beginning of Chapter 5, draw a map of France.
5. You have learned to read a bit of French by reading this book, but speaking French is a little more difficult because it is somewhat different phonetically than English. Either have someone who can speak French help you with the pronunciation or find a French dictionary.
6. If you have enjoyed learning the French language in this book, now would be a good time to actually start taking French lessons and expand what you have learned.
7. What is the copyright date of this book? Why is that significant?
8. John had to have a very tempting reward held before him before he achieved his goal. Is there anything difficult that you would like to accomplish in the near future? Ask your parents to help you set a goal and choose an appropriate reward that might help you reach the goal.
9. *The Avion My Uncle Flew* is a Newberry Honor book. Find out what that means.
10. Try composing a letter or story using the French vocabulary words you have learned. You may have to use some English words to make your thoughts flow more easily.

Teacher's Helps:

1. Translation:

The Festival by, Jean Littlehorn

It is the day of the festival. The boy is going to the house. The boy is Jean Littlehorn. Jean goes down St. Chamant's street. Here is Jean.

Jean sees a boy. The boy is Charles. "Good day, Charles," says Jean Littlehorn.

Charles sees Jean. Charles says, "Good day, Jean."

Jean says, "Good day. The day for the celebration of my uncle's airplane is nice!"

Charles says, "Where is your Uncle Paul?"

Jean says, "My Uncle Paul is on the mountain. Everyone is going to the mountain."

Jean and Charles walk towards the mountain. Jean sees a girl. The girl is Suzanne Meilhac. Jean says to Suzanne Meilhac, "Good day, Suzanne."

The girl says, "Good day, Jean. Good day, my brother." Charles is Suzanne Meilhac's brother.

Charles sees Suzanne. "Bon jour, Suzanne," says Charles.

Jean asks, "Suzanne, are you going to see my Uncle Paul's airplane?"

“Yes,” says Suzanne. “Certainly, I am going to see your Uncle Paul’s airplane.”

Charles remarks, “Suzanne, will you come with Jean and me?”

Suzanne says, “Yes, I’ll come! I will come with Jean and you!”

“Good!” says Jean.

Charles also says, “Good!” Suzanne and Jean and Charles come up onto the mountain. Everyone is on the mountain. The blacksmith, Mr. Niort, is here. The blacksmith is also the mayor of St. Chamant. Mr. Capedulocque is not the mayor. Mr. Capedulocque is a traitor to St. Chamant. The doctor is also here. The doctor is Mr. Guereon. Philippe Graffoulier is here; his mother, Madame Graffoulier is here. And Madame Meilhac is here. Everyone is here and everyone is happy.

Jean sees Uncle Paul. Jean sees the airplane. Ah! The airplane is grand. The airplane is ready to fly. Uncle Paul says, “Good day, Jean. Good day, Suzanne. Good day Charles.”

Suzanne and Charles and Jean reply, “Good day.”

“Are you ready, Uncle Paul?” asks Jean.

“Yes,” responds Uncle Paul. “I am ready. I am going to fly a long way.”

“A very long way?” asks Jean.

“Yes. A very, very, long way,” responds Uncle Paul.

Suzanne says, “The airplane is not broken?”

Uncle Paul says, “Oh, no. The airplane is repaired. The airplane is ready to depart.”

Charles says, “Good. If you please Mr. Langres, do not fly far.”

Uncle Paul demands of Charles, “Are you scared?”

Charles responds, “No, I am not scared.”

Quickly Suzanne says, “I am scared, Mr. Langres.”

Uncle Paul says gravely. “Fear is not good, Suzanne. The airplane is completely repaired.”

The mayor, Mr. Niort, arrives. Mr. Niort asks, “Are you ready Paul?”

“Yes,” replies Uncle Paul.

The mayor Niort cries to everyone, “THE AIRPLANE IS READY! THE AIRPLANE IS GOING TO FLY VERY FAR!” Everyone watches the airplane and Uncle Paul. Everyone is happy. The airplane is going to fly. The airplane is going to fly very far. . .

Uncle Paul enters the airplane. Uncle Paul cries, “Good bye, good bye!” Mr. Niort, the mayor of St. Chamant, pushes the airplane.

Everyone cries, “Good luck, Mr. Langres! Good luck!”

Ah! The airplane goes! The airplane flies! The airplane goes over the mountain. The airplane flies toward the city. The airplane flies for many minutes. The airplane flies very far.

Suzanne is afraid. Suzanne says, “I am afraid. The airplane will not fall will it?”

“No,” says Jean. “The airplane will not fall.” The airplane descends. . . Mr. Langres’ airplane descends to the ground. . . Suzanne and Jean and Charles descend the mountain. Everyone descends the mountain. Everyone comes to St. Chamant. Everyone goes to the airplane.

Here is the airplane! Here is Uncle Paul! The airplane is not broken. Uncle Paul is not broken. Jean comes up to Uncle Paul. Jean hugs Uncle Paul.

Mr. Niort says, “Good job, Paul!”

Dr. Guereon says, “Good job, Mr. Langres! I am happy!?”

Everyone is happy. Doctor Guereon and Mayor Niort lift the airplane up on their shoulders. Everyone goes to St. Chamant.

Uncle Paul says to Jean, his nephew, “I am very happy.”

“Good!” says Jean. “Me, too. I am happy.”

“Good!” says Charles.

“Very good!” says Suzanne. Ah, all is good on the day of the festival for the airplane of Jean Littlehorn’s uncle.

The End

6. 1946. The book was written right after the Second World War. This is one reason Germans are seen as suspicious and dangerous.

8. The Newberry Medal is awarded annually to the author of the most distinguished contribution to American children’s literature. The award is named for John Newberry (1713-1767), an English publisher and bookseller. He was the first person to print and sell children’s literature.