



Imagining Flight: Aviation and Popular Culture (Centennial of Flight Series)

A. Bowdoin Van Riper

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The history of the air age has mostly been written from the perspective of aircraft designers, builders, and pilots.

Imagining Flight is a history of the air age as the rest of us have experienced it: on the pages of books, the screens of movie theaters, and the front pages of newspaper--and in airline cabins during peacetime and bomb shelters during wartime. It is a book about the ways in which people outside the aviation business have looked at, dreamed about, and worried over powered flight in the century since the Wright brothers first showed a startled world that it was possible.

Imagining Flight focuses on the United States, but also contrasts American ideas and attitudes with those of other air-minded nations, including Britain, France, Germany, and Japan. Among the topics covered are: dreams of aviation's future, from the Wright brothers to the space shuttle; pilots as heroes, including Lindbergh, Earhart, Yeager, and the "Red Baron"; the promise (and threat) of aerial bombing; five decades of airline advertising and the changing expectations it created; aviation disasters, and the stories we tell about them; and flight in film and television, stories and songs.

Imagining Flight carries these themes into the twenty-first century and considers them in light of the September 11 terrorist attacks and the *Columbia* disaster. It is thus the first book to explore the *entire* first century of flight through the eyes of those who watched it from the ground.

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