



# Fearless: the story of racing legend Louise Smith

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When Louise Smith started to race cars, most girls weren't even allowed to drive. Her first wild adventure behind the wheel of her daddy's Model T Ford taught her the thrill of driving fast and the freedom that comes from fearlessly following your heart.

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## Suggested Classroom Activities

### LANGUAGE ARTS & LITERATURE

You are a sports reporter in the late 1940s and you've never seen a woman race car driver before. Make a list of questions to ask Louise Smith. Write a newspaper story about one of her races. Use good description words that help your audience feel the sights, sounds and smells of a race track.

Onomatopoeia is a word or group of words that imitates the sound it describes. Can you find at least five examples from the book? Make a list more "sound" words. Hint: think about cars or other machines.

Writer's Workshop: Louise's dream is to race cars. Write a few paragraphs describing your dream job. Why do you think this is a good job for you? What will you have to learn to be good at your dream job? What challenges or problems do you think you will have?

Compare a sports article from the 1940s to one from today. Do you notice any differences? Are the descriptions more or less interesting to you? Why do you think the reporters wrote that way? Write your own 1940s newspaper article about a sport.

Unfamiliar vocabulary: obedient, permission, automobile, splinters, beautician, promoted, gimmick, broadsiding, wrecked, airborne, rhinestone, legacy. What do these words mean? Choose two to use in a sentence.

A gimmick is something that is used to sell something else or attract attention. Why was Louise a gimmick? If you were trying to bring people to the race track, make a list of the gimmicks you could use to attract an audience. Choose your favorite and write a radio ad that tells people about it. Hint: lots of businesses still use gimmicks today.

## MATH

Find the length of the closest stock car track to your home. Multiply or add to find the number of miles racers cover if they circle the track 10 times. 30 times? 50 times? 500 times? What other math operations did you have to use to find the answer?

A polygon is closed, flat shape with at least three sides. Draw some polygons. Now create a race car using only polygons by drawing or using tangrams or math tiles. Can you do it?

Louise drove from Greenville, North Carolina to Daytona, Florida. Using a 1945 map, how many miles was that? What was the speed limit in those days? About how long did it take Louise to get to Daytona?

Choose three types of vehicles such as a car, a bike and a school bus. Measure the length of the vehicle, the height and the tires. Graph your results. Why are different vehicles different sizes?

Find how many gallons of gasoline a typical 1945 Ford used per mile (fuel efficiency). How many gallons of gas did Louise use to get to her first race? How much did gas cost? Calculate how much Louise spent to get to Daytona.

Louise wrecked her husband's new car. Research the cost of a new car and the average salary in the United States for the decades from 1940 until the present. Create a two line graph of the cost of the average new car and the average salary. Have cars become more or less expensive compared to how much money people make?

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

What are the basic parts of a simple car? Why are those parts needed? Build a car with legos and make sure it has all the basic parts.

What is an assembly line? How did it change the way cars were made? Choose a simple lego car and create a classroom assembly line to build them. Can you build faster this way? How many more can you build? Why were assembly lines important? Is building this way more or less fun?

Build a simple ramp with books and poster board or a piece of plywood. Measure the speed of toy cars as they go down the ramp. Make the ramp higher by adding a book at a time. How does the car's speed change? How does distance change? Now tape washers to the top of the car. How does the speed or distance change? How are speed and distance, weight and height of incline related?

In the author's note there is a description of the safety equipment worn by driver's during the early stock car days. Research the safety equipment used in NASCAR today and compare the safety technology past and present. Which time would you choose to drive in and why?

Using household materials like paper, wood scraps, straws etc. build a car that moves and figure out a fair way to race the cars on the floor. Which car goes the fastest? How did you measure? What features make cars faster? Concepts: Force, Speed, Motion.

Louise raced on the packed sand of Daytona, Florida. Do you think the sand made it easier or harder to drive? Using the cars you built, race them on different surfaces. Good ones to try are: sand or sandpaper, dirt, glass, pebbles and wood. Predict how each surface will affect each car. Did some of the cars get faster or slower than on the original surface? Why? What's the best surface for racing? For safety? Concept: Friction.

## SOCIAL STUDIES

Make a Venn diagram comparing women's roles in the year Louise was born (1916) with women today. You can research jobs, hobbies, sports, leadership, social issues or home life. What has changed? What hasn't changed?

Research another popular female sports figure in the 1940s and 1950s. Make an acrostic poem of her name that tells us where she was from, her sport, her challenges, why she was famous and anything else you find interesting about her.

Discrimination is unfair treatment of a person or group. Interview an older woman relative or member of the community. Did she ever feel discriminated against? How did it happen and why? Have you ever been discriminated against? How did it make you feel?

Do you think there are some things only boys or only girls should do? Explain your reasons.

In the book Louise sometimes doesn't tell the truth. Why? Do you think Louise's fibbing was right or wrong?

Find 5 people in history who were the first to do something. Have you ever been the first to do something in your family or your classroom? Tell about it in a paragraph or a poster collage. Is it always harder to go first?

## RELATED ARTS

A promoter is a person who organizes and tells the public about a sporting event. You are promoting an early stock car event. Draw a poster or flyer that gets people excited about this new sport and gives them the information they need to come out to the track.

In groups, write a reader's theatre about Louise's story. Now choose characters and act out her story.

Find the music and lyrics to popular songs from Louise's childhood. What do they say about being a girl? Was there any music that talked about the changes to come for women?

Look at early stock cars from the 1940s and 1950s using the illustrations in the book. Now look at photos of current stock cars. Draw your own stock car, using some ideas from both past and present cars. Why did you choose these features?

The illustrations in the book show lots of movement. How does the artist do that on a flat piece of paper? Can you draw a "moving" picture?

Most people think of driving as just sitting. Why is race car driving considered a sport? Research the kinds of workouts and physical activities that stock car drivers do to get and keep in shape.