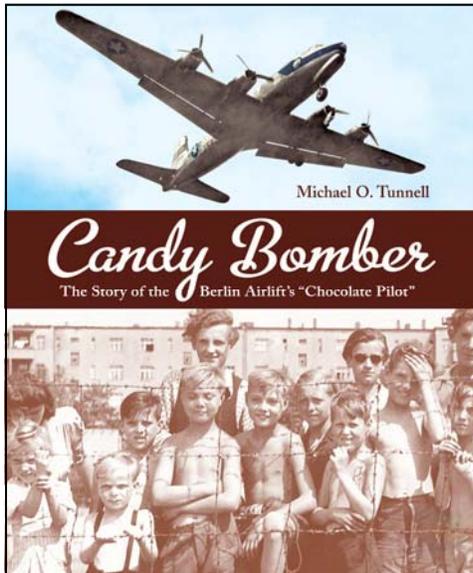


# Candy Bomber

The Story of the Berlin Airlift's "Chocolate Pilot"



978-1-58089-336-7 HC \$18.95  
978-1-58089-337-4 PB \$9.95  
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Ages 9—12

## Discussion & Activity Guide

After World War II the United States and Britain airlifted food and supplies into Russian-blockaded West Berlin. U.S. Air Force Lieutenant Gail Halvorsen knew the children of the city were suffering. To lift their spirits, he began dropping chocolate and gum by parachute.

Michael O. Tunnell tells an inspiring tale of candy and courage, illustrated with Lt. Halvorsen's personal photographs, as well as letters and drawings from the children of Berlin to their beloved "Uncle Wiggly Wings."

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## Discussion Questions

- 1) While describing his experience of meeting the crowd of thirty German children on that day in July of 1948, Lt. Gail Halvorsen said, "These young kids [gave] me the most meaningful lesson in freedom I ever had" (p. 21). What did he mean by this?
- 2) How did the German children react when Lt. Halvorsen gave them the two sticks of gum? How do you think you would have reacted?
- 3) Operation Little Vittles survived because of the donations of candy, cloth for parachutes, and hours of volunteer manpower to fly the planes. Many recipients of the candy parachutes even returned the cloth—a scarce commodity at the time—to the U.S. Air Force so they could be reused on future drops. Did this goodwill and generosity surprise you? Why do you think, in a time of struggle, so many people were able to work together?
- 4) "Hope is still the name of the game" (p. 93). Gail Halvorsen uttered these words fifty years after the start of the Berlin Airlift and Operation Little Vittles, when he was in Albania delivering supplies (and candy) to a Kosovar refugee camp. What inspired him to make this pronouncement? What did he mean by this?
- 5) Since the Berlin Airlift and Operation Little Vittles, similar operations have taken place around the world, many of which Lt. Gail Halvorsen was involved in. How have these operations been similar? How have they been different?
- 6) The Hershey's® chocolate bar became a regular part of the U.S. military ration beginning in World War II and is still a standard component of basic field rations today. Why do you think a chocolate bar is so important? Why do you think a candy bar is included in army rations?

# Reading Comprehension

## Short Answer:

- 1) What happened to Germany at the end of World War II?
  - 2) Who were the Allied Powers?
  - 3) Why did the Allies need to transport food and supplies to Berlin via airplane?
  - 4) What was the difference between the government of Russia and the governments of France, the U.S., and Great Britain?
  - 5) How was the government of Russia treating the people of East Berlin post-World War II?
  - 6) Why was there so much tension between the people of Russia and the people of Germany?
  - 7) How did the candy drops get the name “Operation Little Vittles”?
  - 8) Why did the Airlift end on September 30, 1949, four months after the Soviets lifted the blockade on Berlin?
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## Matching:

Use *Candy Bomber* to match the word, date, or place on the left with its definition on the right.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Reichstag _____               | A) German for “lightning war.” Characterized by quick, surprise attacks that include both land and air forces.   |
| 2. Tempelhof _____               | B) A type of plane used by the U.S. Air Force in the Berlin Airlift.   |
| 3. Chicopee, Massachusetts _____ | C) Germany’s parliament building.  |
| 4. Spirit of Freedom _____       | D) The Air Force Base in West Germany where Gail Halvorsen was stationed during the Berlin Airlift.  |
| 5. June 26, 1948 _____           | E) The airport in the American sector of West Berlin where Allied planes landed and took off in between supply drops.  |
| 6. vittles _____                 | F) The location of the Center for Operation Little Vittles in the United States.   |
| 7. C-54 _____                    | G) This is a former name of Russia. The full name is the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).   |
| 8. Rhein-Main _____              | H) A restoration of an aircraft built by the Berlin Airlift Historical Foundation in 1994. It has become a “flying museum of the Berlin Airlift,” as it travels to many locations for display. |
| 9. blitzkrieg _____              | I) Food supplies.  |
| 10. Soviet Union _____           | J) The Berlin Airlift begins as the U.S. Air Force and the British Royal Air Force begin delivering supplies to the people of West Berlin via airplane.  |

Answers on p. 5

# Historical Studies

1) World War II began in September 1939, when Hitler and the Nazis attacked Poland. The United States didn't enter the war, however, until December 7, 1941, when the Japanese attacked the U.S. naval base of Pearl Harbor. What can you find out about this significant event in U.S. history? Why didn't the U.S. join the war before? How did the rest of the world react to the United States' late entry?

2) In the Historical Note, Michael Tunnell mentions that after World War II, the United States proposed the Marshall Plan, which was a program designed to rebuild the war-torn country of Germany (p. 97). What were the specifics of this plan? What were its advantages and disadvantages? Were there any criticisms of this idea? Was the Marshall Plan effective?

3) Michael Tunnell describes the Cold War as “a period of tension that began with the Berlin blockade and continued with the threat of nuclear conflict” (p. 98). Find out more about the Cold War. Who was involved? How long did it last? What was the “Iron Curtain”? What political, social, and economic effects did the Cold War have on the countries that were involved?



Photograph courtesy of Gail S. Halvorsen

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# World Governments

1) One of the major differences between Russia and the United States, Great Britain, and France after World War II was the governments of these countries. Russia had a communist government and claimed that the United States, Britain, and France's presence in Berlin was the Western Allies' attempt to “[force] their democratic, capitalistic ideals on everyone in Germany” (p. 7). What are the definitions of democracy and communism? What are the differences in these two forms of government? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each? Where in the world have these governments existed? What do the terms “capitalism” and “dictatorship” mean?

# Language Arts

1) *Candy Bomber* is a biography of U.S. Air Force Lieutenant Gail Halvorsen focusing on his life after World War II and his experience as “Uncle Wiggly Wings.” The author Michael Tunnell wrote this book because he was inspired by Lt. Halvorsen’s story. In order to gather accurate information, the author needed to conduct multiple interviews. Who in your own life would you like to know more about? Whose life inspires you? This person may be a friend, a grandparent, a neighbor. Why do they inspire you? Conduct an interview with that person. Come up with questions beforehand, and allow yourself to ask follow-up questions based on his or her answers. Compile all the information into a mini-biography of that person. While you can do an overview of his or her life, you can also focus on a specific time period, as Michael Tunnell does in *Candy Bomber*.

2) “Those two sticks of gum changed my life forever” (p. ix). Gail Halvorsen’s involvement in the Berlin Airlift as the Chocolate Pilot, hero to the children of Berlin, was certainly unexpected. Gail Halvorsen did not know what would unfold when he wiggled the wings of his C-54 to make that first candy drop. Can you think of a time in your life when something unexpected occurred as the result of a seemingly insignificant action? Write an essay about this experience. Was the result a positive one? What were some other possible outcomes?

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# Mathematics



Photograph courtesy of US Air Force

- 1) If a C-54 aircraft can carry 200 sacks of flour, how many planes are needed to carry 1,500 sacks of flour? (Remember, for your answer to make sense, you’ll need to round to the nearest whole number.)
- 2) If one sack of flour is 100 lbs, how much do 1,500 sacks weigh?
- 3) A C-54 is flying at 5,280 feet. If one package falls from the plane at 115 miles per hour, how many seconds will it take to reach the ground?
- 4) In Europe and many other parts of the world, distance is measured in kilometers instead of miles, and weight is measured in kilograms instead of pounds.
  - a) If 110 miles is equal to 177 kilometers, how many kilometers are in 1 mile?
  - b) If 6,500 pounds is equal to 2,900 kilograms, how many kilograms are in 1 pound?

# Answers

## Reading Comprehension

### Short Answer:

- Germany was divided up among the Allied Powers, including Berlin which was within the Russian zone (p. 4).
- The Allied Powers were Great Britain, the United States, France, and the Soviet Union (Russia) (p. 4).
- When Germany was divided between the Allies after World War II, Berlin lay in the boundaries of the Russian zone. After the Allies decided to divide up the capital city as well, the Russians banned all land and water travel in or out of the city, forcing the Allies to deliver food and goods to their section of Berlin by airplane (p. 6–7).
- Great Britain, France, and the United States had democratic governments, while Russia had a communist government (p. 6).
- The people of East Germany suffered a loss of civil liberties at the hands of the Russian government: the Soviets seized the people’s land and property, suppressed free speech, and canceled free elections (p. 18).
- When World War II began, Russia and Germany fought together, but when Hitler and the Nazis attacked Russia on June 22, 1941, Russia joined the Allies. During the war, Germany inflicted terrible pain and suffering on the Soviets, twenty million of whom died during the war. This tension lasted throughout the war and sparked the poor treatment of the Germans by the Russians once World War II was over (p. 95–96).
- A reporter named the candy drops “Operation Little Vittles” after the U.S. Air Force’s name for the Berlin Airlift, “Operation Vittles” (p. 32).
- The Airlift continued because the Allied Powers did not trust that the Soviets would not change their minds and reinstate the blockade. By continuing to supply West Berlin with food and fuel, the Western Allies ensured that Berlin would have back-up provisions in case the Soviets reneged on their word (p. 70).

### Matching:

1. <u>C</u>	2. <u>E</u>	3. <u>F</u>	4. <u>H</u>	5. <u>J</u>
6. <u>I</u>	7. <u>B</u>	8. <u>D</u>	9. <u>A</u>	10. <u>G</u>

## Mathematics:

Use cross multiplication to find the answers. The number you are looking for is your “X.”

- 1) **8 C-54s** would be needed to carry 1,500 sacks of flour.

$$\frac{1 \text{ C-54}}{200 \text{ sacks}} = \frac{\mathbf{X} \text{ C-54s}}{1,500 \text{ sacks}} \quad 1 \times 1,500 = 200\mathbf{X} \quad 1,500 = 200\mathbf{X} \quad \mathbf{X} = 7.5, \text{ round up to 8 planes.}$$

- 2) **150,000 lbs**

$$\frac{1 \text{ sack}}{100 \text{ lbs}} = \frac{1,500 \text{ sacks}}{\mathbf{X} \text{ lbs}} \quad 100 \times 1,500 = 1\mathbf{X} \quad 150,000 = 1\mathbf{X} \quad \mathbf{X} = 150,000 \text{ lbs}$$

- 3) **31.304 seconds**

There are 5,280 feet in 1 mile. There are 3,600 seconds in one hour.

$$\frac{115 \text{ miles}}{3,600 \text{ sec}} = \frac{1 \text{ mile}}{\mathbf{X} \text{ sec}} \quad 3,600 \times 1 = 115\mathbf{X} \quad 3,600 = 115\mathbf{X} \quad \mathbf{X} = 31.304 \text{ sec}$$

- 4) a) **1.609 kilometers** in 1 mile.

$$\frac{110 \text{ miles}}{177 \text{ km}} = \frac{1 \text{ mile}}{\mathbf{X} \text{ km}} \quad 177 \times 1 = 110\mathbf{X} \quad 177 = 110\mathbf{X} \quad \mathbf{X} = 1.609 \text{ km}$$

- b) **0.446 kilograms** in 1 pound.

$$\frac{6,500 \text{ lbs}}{2,900 \text{ kg}} = \frac{1 \text{ lb}}{\mathbf{X} \text{ kg}} \quad 2,900 \times 1 = 6,500\mathbf{X} \quad 2,900 = 6,500\mathbf{X} \quad \mathbf{X} = 0.446 \text{ kg}$$

# Further Resources

Take a look at these online, print, and film resources to learn more about Gail Halvorsen, the Berlin Airlift, and World War II.

**[www.michaelotunnell.com/candy\\_bomber.html](http://www.michaelotunnell.com/candy_bomber.html)**

This page on author Michael O. Tunnell's website is devoted to *Candy Bomber*. Go here to view a short film created and narrated by Gail Halvorsen about the Berlin Airlift.

**<http://www.spiritoffreedom.org/>**

The official website of the Berlin Airlift Historical Foundation.

**<http://www.hersheys.com/discover/history/company.asp>**

Visit Hershey's website for more information about the history of the company, including its involvement in World War II and the Berlin Airlift.

***The Berlin Candy Bomber* by Gail S. Halvorsen (Horizon Publishers)**

This book for adults, written by Gail Halvorsen, details his experiences during the Berlin Airlift.

***Berlin* by Eleanor Ayer (New Discovery/Maxwell Macmillan)**

Learn more about the effects of World War II on the people of Berlin.

***Mercedes and the Chocolate Pilot* by Margot Theis Raven (Sleeping Bear Press)**

This picture book details the true story of Mercedes Simon, one of the children in Berlin whose life was brightened by the efforts of Lt. Gail Halvorsen and Operation Little Vittles.

***The Berlin Airlift* by Scott Westerfield (Silver Burdett Press)**

Part of the *Turning Points in American History* series, this is another great resource for information about the Berlin Airlift.

***Candy Bombers* by Robert Elmer (Zonderkidz)**

This is a fictionalized account of two teenaged children living in Berlin after World War II, during the Berlin Airlift.

***The Berlin Airlift: Breaking the Soviet Blockade* by Michael Burgan (Compass Point Books)**

This book, geared for children grades six through eight, discusses the Soviet Union's plans to blockade Berlin in hopes of creating a communist city.

***The Big Lift (1950)***

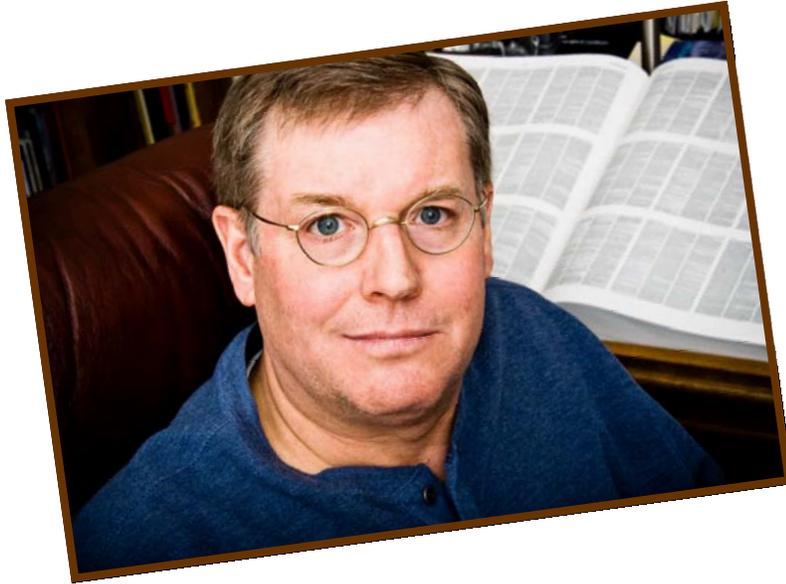
Check out this movie starring Montgomery Cliff about the lives of two fictitious U.S. Air Force sergeants during the Berlin Airlift.

***The Berlin Airlift (2006)*, part of the *American Experience* series from PBS**

This documentary is a detailed historical account of the Berlin Airlift told through personal stories of the people who were there.

# Meet the Author

# Michael O. Tunnell



Michael O. Tunnell's love affair with books began when he was small. Raised by his grandmother, who read to him every day, Michael soon discovered that books were the world's best teachers and entertainers.

As with many avid readers, Michael harbored since childhood the wish to create his own stories. After years of writing—and some rejection—Michael's first picture book, *Chinook!*, was published in 1993 by Tambourine Books.

Today Michael teaches children's literature at Brigham Young University, in addition to writing picture books, informational books, and novels for primary, middle-grade, and young adult readers. Many of his books are about historical topics, such as *The Children of Topaz* (Holiday House), *Mailing May* (Greenwillow), and *Brothers in Valor* (Holiday House). Michael's books have received numerous awards and have appeared on many "best books" lists (ALA Notable Children's Books, Notable Books for a Global Society, CCBC Choices).

Michael has served on the Newbery Award Committee and on the selection committee for the NCTE Award for Excellence in Poetry for Children. He has also published many professional books, including *The Story of Ourselves: Teaching History Through Children's Literature* (Heinemann) and *Children's Literature, Briefly* (Prentice Hall), and has written articles for a variety of educational journals. He and his wife, Glenna, live in Orem, Utah. They have four grown children.

To learn more about Michael and his books, visit him at [www.michaelotunnell.com](http://www.michaelotunnell.com).