

# The 'Night Witches' of World War II

From ['A Mighty Girl' on Facebook](#)

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On this Halloween, we remember the contributions of Mighty Girl witches of a different sort... "The Nazis called them 'Night Witches' because the whooshing noise their plywood and canvas airplanes made reminded the Germans of the sound of a witch's broomstick. The Russian women who piloted those planes, onetime crop dusters, took it as a compliment. In 30,000 missions over four years, they dumped 23,000 tons of bombs on the German invaders, ultimately helping to chase them back to Berlin. Any German pilot who downed a "witch" was awarded an Iron Cross.



These young heroines, all volunteers and most in their teens and early 20s, became legends of World War II but are now largely forgotten. Flying only in the dark, they had no parachutes, guns, radios or radar, only maps and compasses. If hit by tracer bullets, their planes would burn like sheets of paper."

So begins a NY Times tribute to one of the most famous "Night Witches," Nadezhda Popova, who flew 852 missions during the war, including 18 in a single night. She passed away last year at the age of 91. To read about Popova's incredible life story and learn more about these largely forgotten heroines of WWII, visit <http://nyti.ms/JbnOMC>

While there aren't any books available for young readers about these courageous women, there are several books for older readers about the role of Russian women combat pilots during WWII including "Flying for Her Country: The American and Soviet Women Military Pilots of World War II" (<http://amzn.to/1mTMad9>), "Wings, Women, and War: Soviet Airwomen in World War II Combat" (<http://amzn.to/1fyPOs8>), "A Dance with Death: Soviet Airwomen in World War II" (<http://amzn.to/1jJb79N>), "Red Sky, Black Death: A Soviet Woman Pilot's Memoir of the Eastern Front" (<http://amzn.to/NhxvM4>).

For an excellent documentary for ages 10 and up about the WASPs, the American women flyers of WWII, check out "Fly Girls," at <http://www.amightygirl.com/american-experience-fly-girls>

For more true stories of courageous women heroes of WWII, check out the inspiring book for ages 13 and up "Women Heroes of World War II: 26 Stories of Espionage, Sabotage, Resistance, and Rescue" at <http://www.amightygirl.com/women-heroes-of-world-war-ii>

For two highly recommended novels, both for ages 13 and up, about women resistance fighters of WWII, check out "Code Name Verity" (<http://www.amightygirl.com/code-name-verity>) and "Rose Under Fire" (<http://www.amightygirl.com/rose-under-fire>).

For stories for all ages about girls and women living through the WWII period, visit our "WWII / Holocaust" section at <http://www.amightygirl.com/books/history-biography/history-world?cat=186>

And, to introduce your kids to more famous female flyers like Amelia Earhart, Bessie Coleman, and Harriet Quimby, visit A Mighty Girl's "Planes" section at <http://www.amightygirl.com/books/general-interest/transportation?cat=129>