



**Suggestions for using Gayle Cruthirds World War II Flight Log as a teaching tool:
Applying 5th Grade Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)**

The introduction to the Social Studies, Grade 5 TEKS includes (section 2) an encouragement to utilize primary and secondary source material to support the teaching of the essential knowledge and skills. The Gayle Cruthirds World War II Flight Log is an excellent and accessible example of a primary source. Mr. Cruthirds' diary records his actions as a gunner based in Italy, flying bombing missions over Europe at a critical juncture in the war. He was wounded, received the Purple Heart, returned to his duty, and completed his 50 missions.

Students should identify with Mr. Cruthirds, a young man who grew up in an East Texas sawmill town. He reports on his missions matter-of-factly, giving details about the length, location, and conditions. There is no better way for students to get a sense of the war than to read one man's first hand account.

This resource primarily relates to section "(5) History. The student understands important issues, events, and individuals of the 20th century United States." This one source, although not relating to a famous person, should give students the opportunity to study different aspects of World War II, arguably the event that most defined the 20th century.

Big Ideas related to the flight log:

- When, Why, and How of World War II – why was a young man from a small East Texas town flying in bombers over Romania, Germany, Austria, and Italy? How did the United States get involved? What was the strategy for using bombers in Europe?
- Why did the Allies choose to bomb the places mentioned in the flight log? Where were they? Why were they strategically important? (Research Note: Although not always reliable and never to be completely trusted, even rudimentary Google searches will give students information on many of the cities mentioned.)
- How were these types of bombing missions different from the types of battles in the previous wars studied?
- What was happening at home while these young men were away fighting?

Analyzing the document and student responses:

- Why did he keep this flight log? There are probably several reasons – for posterity, so he could remember where he was and what he did, and probably most importantly, to keep track of his missions so he would know when he was eligible to come off of combat duty.
- Why is this flight log preserved now?
- What would it be like to be away from home for so long and fighting in a war?
- Why would a young man from East Texas volunteer to fly in airplanes as a gunner in a war so far from home?
- How do you think he felt during his flights? When he was wounded? When his combat duty was complete?
- What do you think his family thought of his job as a gunner in a bomber?
- Do you know anyone who fought in World War II? What were their experiences?