

Barrington Irving sits in the small plane he flew around the world. He named the plane *Inspiration*.

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### Vocabulary

**instinct:** behavior that is natural and automatic rather than learned  
**accent:** a way of speaking shared by people from a certain area  
**scholarships:** money given to students to pay for education  
**aviation:** the building and flying of aircraft  
**inexperienced:** having little practice in doing something

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# Flying Solo

Barrington Irving made a risky trip—right into history.

The fuel tank in Barrington Irving's plane was almost empty. He was flying over the Atlantic Ocean, and he couldn't see land. He also didn't know how to swim. Would he make it?

Irving was on a trip around the world, all by himself. "It was just me up there, alone, flying on gut **instinct**," Irving recalls.

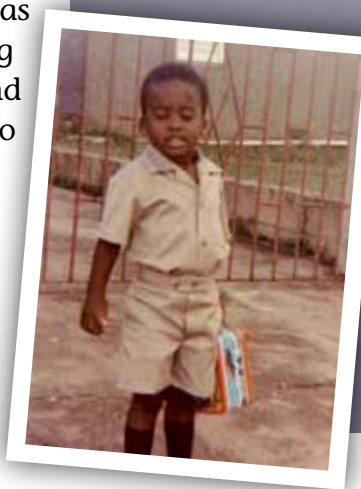
Finally, he spotted land. Irving completed this part of his journey safely.

He knew he would face many more challenges on his trip. But he wasn't going to let fear stop him. He was finally living his dream.

### Hard Times

Growing up, Irving never planned to become a pilot. He and his family moved from Jamaica to Miami, Florida, when he was 6 years old. Drugs, violence, and crime were common in their new neighborhood.

In school, bullies made fun of Irving's Jamaican **accent**. They teased him because he didn't wear expensive clothes.



Left: As a child, Irving never thought he'd be a pilot. Above: His plane, *Inspiration*, in flight.



Many of his classmates dropped out of high school or ended up in jail. Irving had little hope for the future. "I never thought I would make it past my 25th birthday," he says.

### A Big Change

The one thing that gave Irving hope was football. He was one of the top players

Irving with  
Captain Gary  
Robinson



on his high school team. He was sure that football was the key to his future.

But when he was 15, Irving met Captain Gary Robinson, a pilot. "I had never seen a black pilot before," Irving says.

Robinson asked Irving if he ever thought about becoming a pilot. "I told him I didn't think I was smart enough," says Irving. But he changed his mind after touring Robinson's jet. From that moment on, Irving knew he wanted to be a pilot too.

He was so sure about it that he turned down college football **scholarships**. His



During his trip, Irving visited 13 countries, including (from left to right) Egypt, China, and Greece.

family and friends thought he was crazy.

But Irving proved them wrong. He won a scholarship to study **aviation**. He was going to learn to fly.

### Making History

After graduation, Irving made another big plan. He decided to fly around the world—solo.

He had to raise \$1,000,000 for the trip. That took a year. Many companies gave him money or equipment.

Irving mapped out a route that would take him to 26 cities around the world. He would travel 30,000 miles.

On March 23, 2007, he took off from Miami in his new plane. “People thought I was too young and **inexperienced**,” Irving says. “I like to do things people say I can’t do.”

During his trip, Irving flew through dangerous storms. He became lonely,

homesick, and tired. The trip took 97 days.

On June 27, Irving landed back in Miami. Fans gathered to meet him. He was the first African-American to fly solo around the world. At 23 years old, he was also the youngest person at the time to do so.

### Building Dreams

After his trip, Irving started an organization called

Experience Aviation. It runs programs that teach kids about flying. Irving wanted to inspire others the way Captain Robinson inspired him when he was younger.

Irving is now 29. He has a message for students: “Believe in yourself. Believe that you are talented, powerful, and important and can make a difference in the world.”

—Nicole Tocco



In 2008, teens working with the group Experience Aviation built a plane. This photo shows Irving just after he flew the plane for the first time.

COURTESY OF JUAN RIVERA (TOP LEFT, MIDDLE, RIGHT); JON ROSS PHOTOGRAPHY (BOTTOM)

## READING A MAP

# He Circled the Globe

The blue line shows the route Barrington Irving took when he flew around the Earth. Each dot shows a place where he stopped. Look at the map key for more information about some of his stops. Then answer the questions.



### Map Key

Places where Barrington Irving stopped during his trip\*

- A. Miami, Florida, USA
- B. St. John’s, Canada
- C. Athens, Greece
- D. Cairo, Egypt
- E. Mumbai, India
- F. Hong Kong, China
- G. Asahikawa, Japan
- H. Anchorage, Alaska, USA

\*Some stops are not listed.

1. In which country did Irving begin his trip?  
 Ⓐ India                      Ⓒ Miami  
 Ⓑ United States        Ⓓ Japan
  
2. The blue arrows on the map show \_\_\_\_\_.  
 Ⓐ the direction Irving traveled  
 Ⓑ the direction the wind was blowing  
 Ⓒ cities where Irving stopped  
 Ⓓ oceans that Irving crossed
  
3. Irving did *not* visit the continent of \_\_\_\_\_.  
 Ⓐ Asia                        Ⓒ Africa  
 Ⓑ Australia                Ⓓ North America

Answers are in the Teaching Guide.



WHAT DOES IRVING HAVE IN COMMON WITH THIS WOMAN?  
 TURN THE PAGE FOR A PAIRED TEXT!