

**MEET THE**



*Eric*

**Age:** 12

**Personality:** quiet and kind of a loner

**Family:** just his dad and him

**Favorite Meal:** rare roast beef with garlic mashed potatoes and buttered green beans

**Best Quality:** determination

# CHARACTERS



## LEO

**Age:** mid-90s

**Army Air Forces Nickname:** Eagle Eye

**Family:** married for 56 years, no kids

**Occupation:** grocery store manager  
for 52 years

**Best Quality:** bravery

# 1 HAWK

There is a hawk outside the classroom window. It floats in the sky. Rises in a circle. Up. Out. Away. Weightless. Free.

Flying.

I want to know what that feels like.

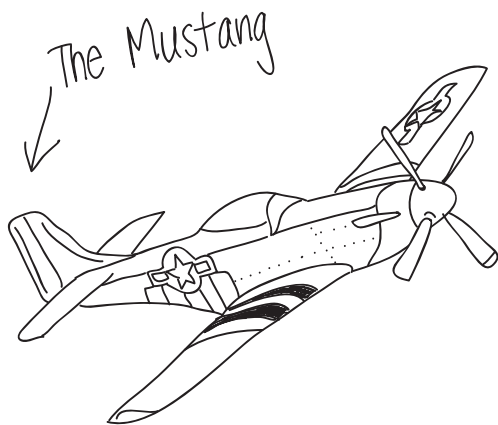
“Eric,” Mrs. Lund says. “Focus, please.”

*Head in the clouds...*



I sigh. Look back at my history book. There are so many words on the page. Boring. I like the pictures, though. Soldiers in helmets. They're on small boats. They're running onto a beach. The chapter is about World War II. My great-grandfather fought in that war. I didn't know him. He died before I was born.

Mrs. Lund asks a question. The smart kids raise their hands. Not me. I turn to the next page. Look for more pictures. Planes. Oh, wow. Fighters! My heart speeds up. They're so cool. I read a caption: *P-51 Mustang*.



“A five-page report,” Mrs. Lund is saying. “Due in three weeks. Any topic from the two world wars or Korea.”

I hate writing reports. But not this time.

“Fighter planes,” I tell my friend Todd after school. We’re walking to the baseball field. “What are you going to write about?”

“U-Boats,” he says.

We’ve reached the field. Dad is already there. He’s unloading bats, balls, and helmets from the van. “Hi, Todd,” he says with a smile. “Big game today. Ready?”

