

clipped wings



Even if your child has never been on an airplane, air travel is an important part of his life. In this writing activity, your child will create a comic about living in a world without flight.

Supplies

- >> writing and drawing supplies—paper, pencil, markers, ruler
- >> the comics section from your local newspaper, comic books or access to online comics
- >> tracing paper (optional)

Getting started

Talk with your child about all the ways air travel affects him. Have him make a list of what is possible thanks to aviation, such as fresh fruits flown from distant countries or visits to relatives who live long distances away. Ask him to think too about how flight has affected lifestyles and culture. For example, if humans never took to the skies, would George Lucas have made *Star Wars*? Would there be more travel by train or boat?

With that list in mind, have your child start a new list that will help him shape his comic. Suggest headings where he can organize his thoughts about characters, their problems, the actions they take, and the setting. To help him focus, you may want to help him narrow ideas or devise a specific prompt, such as a favorite professional sports team missing an important away game because they couldn't fly there and had to travel by much slower means.

When he's ready to draw his comic, have him first create a six-panel grid on his paper. This is easy to do without measuring if he first folds the paper lengthwise and then in thirds. Unfold it and he will have six boxes to draw and write in. He may need more than one sheet depending on the length of his story. Some tips for helping his comic flow:

- The first panel can be for the title of the comic.
- Remind him that comics often have captions, written details that help explain a comic panel, included in a frame at the bottom or top of a panel.
- Your child can ask for help! Comics involve a lot of repetitive drawing. Tracing is allowed and you or a friend or family member can help with the comic.
- If a character is speaking in a panel, write what he's saying first and then draw the speech bubble around it. If your child draws a speech or thought bubble first, he may get frustrated if his words don't fit in it.
- Sometimes the best way to tell any story is in graphic form. Comics don't have to be funny.

When your child is ready to start filling in his comic panels, have him take a look at other comics and compare them to the artwork in *The Adventures of Sparrowboy*. For those illustrations, Brian Pinkney used a scratchboard technique. Scratchboard starts with white board covered with black paint. The white lines of his drawing appear when the paint is scratched away with a sharp tool. Colored paint can then be added to the white areas. Scratchboard is not a typical technique for comics. Often comics are drawn in pencil and finished in pen and ink. This technique will make it easy to photocopy your child's comic and share it with others!