



# L. M. Elliott

## About the Author

Laura Malone Elliott's historical novel, *Under a War-Torn Sky*, tells the story of a B-24 bomber pilot who is shot down behind enemy lines and is saved by the French Resistance. Winner of Border's 2001 Original Voices Award for Young Adult Literature, *Under a War-Torn Sky* is a National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) 2002 Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People.

Her next young adult novel, *Flying South*, will be published in May 2003. A first-person narrative told by an 11-year-old girl, *Flying South* is about developing friendships and growing up in 1968, a turbulent year marked by the assassinations of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy, the Vietnam protests, and the civil rights riots.

Elliott is also the author of *Hunter's Best Friend at School*, a picture book which addresses friendship and peer pressure. This is the first in a series of books best friends Hunter and Stripe.

A senior writer with the *Washingtonian* magazine for 18 years, Elliott wrote often on teenagers, children, and families and issues important to them. She recently reduced her work at the magazine, becoming a contributing editor, to concentrate on her fiction writing.

Elliott's husband is a high school English teacher in Fairfax County, and they and their two children live in Northern Virginia.



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## Suggested Activities

1. Choose one of the characters in the book. Write an in-depth study of the character, describing his or her physical appearance, behavior, purpose, and relationship with other characters. Describe the conflicts your character faced in the book and how these conflicts were resolved.
2. When Henry parachuted into unknown territory “all he knew was that west was the way home.” Trace Henry’s journeys through the book. How many miles or kilometers did Henry travel?
3. Interview a veteran of any war or conflict. Compare his or her experiences with those of the characters in the book.
4. Make a list of the decisions Henry had to make in the book. Do you agree with his choices? What would you have done?
5. Write a letter to a friend, telling your friend why he or she should read this book. Try to word your letter in such a way that your friend will want to rush right out and get the book. Use specific details from the book to arouse your friend’s interest. Of course, you will not want to give away the ending.
6. Use a map of the world and mark the cities, villages, and countries that are mentioned in the book.
7. We don’t know what happened to many of the people who helped Henry in Europe. Select one of the characters and write what might have happened.
8. Henry and many characters in the book were teenagers. Interview family members or friends who were in their teens during World War II. Ask them what life was like for them at that time.
9. Use the author’s descriptions to create a drawing of a Nissen hut or the B-24 bomber. Use the library, the Internet, or another resource to compare your drawing with a photo of the hut or the bomber.
10. Imagine that you are far from home and things are not going well. Write a letter to a family member or friend telling him or her how you are doing, what you miss most at home, and what you are looking forward to when you return home.

## Research Questions

1. What countries were members of the Allied powers; what countries were members of the Axis powers? Which countries were neutral? Who were the leaders of these countries? Select one country from each group and answer the following questions.
  - a. Why did each country become involved or not become involved in the war?
  - b. How did the war’s outcome affect each country?
2. How would the world be different today if the Axis powers had won?
3. Of the countries that fought in the war:  
Which country was at war longest?  
Which country had the most casualties?
4. How did American citizens react to World War II? Compare citizens’ reactions then to citizens’ reactions during the Vietnam War.
5. How did World War II change the role of women? Compare the role of women in the armed forces in the 1940s with the role of women in the armed forces today.
6. During World War II, the United States established the Office of Price Administration. One of this office’s duties was to ration scarce products. What products were rationed? What did Americans use as substitutes for the products that were in short supply?
7. Compare the B-24 bombers and crews used in World War II with today’s B-2 bombers.



8. Compare the treatment of African American enlisted personnel during World War II, for example the Tuskegee Airmen, to the treatment of African American enlisted personnel in military life today.
9. Many World War II songs are still well known today. Many of the songs fall into three categories: songs about patriotism, songs about the soldiers and the war, and songs about longing for home. What ideals did the songs promote? What role did the songs play during wartime?
10. What connection did the following have with World War II:  
The French Resistance                      Charles de Gaulle  
Vichy    Marshal Philippe Pétain  
Maquis    La Malice

### Discussion Questions

1. Think about the words and images that made strong impressions on you as you read the book. Which part of the novel made the strongest impression? Why? What words or phrases did the author use to create those impressions?
2. What did you learn about personal risk in the story?
3. What did you learn about World War II in the story?
4. Did you have a favorite French expression in the book? What was it and what does it mean?
5. Many young people participated in the French Resistance at great personal peril. Could you ever imagine yourself fighting for a cause that could have such deadly consequences? Why or why not?
6. If the author writes a sequel to *Under a War-Torn Sky*, what would you want to know?
7. What would you ask the author if you had a chance to meet her?
8. The poem called "High Flight" is quoted early in the book. The last few lines read, "... while with silent, lifting mind I've trod/The high untrespassed sanctity of space,/Put out my hand, and touched the face of God." What do you think the poem means to Henry, and why do you think the author included it in the book?
9. There are two very interesting dogs in the story, Henry's pet Skippy and the Gestapo's Doberman. What do these creatures represent in the story?

### Books by Laura Malone Elliott

*Flying South*. HarperCollins Children's Book Group. 2003 (May). ISBN: 0-06-001214-5.

*Hunter's Best Friend at School*. HarperCollins Children's Book Group. 2002. ISBN: 0-060-002301.

*Under a War-Torn Sky*. Hyperion Books for Children. 2001. ISBN: 0-7868-0755-5.