



GENEROSITY FROM ABOVE AND ABROAD

INTRODUCTION

This story portrays one of the earliest confrontations of the Cold War, demonstrating how far America was willing to go to keep West Berlin free from Soviet tyranny. Because of America’s dedication (and Great Britain’s), the citizens of West Berlin preserved their freedoms and eventually thrived, though completely surrounded by the socialism of East Berlin and East Germany. Prosperous West Berlin and impoverished East Berlin provide a stark contrast between free enterprise capitalism and Marxist communism. This is captured most dramatically in the story: “Although the children had been on meager rations, they were more concerned with freedom than flour. They wanted what Hal had always had -- the opportunity to pursue their dreams.”

American exceptionalism is also on display in the character of bomber pilot Hal Halvorsen. Acting solely on his own initiative and generosity, he organized the “candy bombing” which helped win the hearts and minds of our former WWII adversaries. From inside a military hierarchy, Halvorsen created a “voluntary association” of fellow pilots and airmen that was so successful top brass made it official policy.

Appropriately, the story is set during Christmastime, emphasizing the charitable theme and connecting us to America’s devout religious heritage (*Christmas From Heaven*). Americans are the most generous people on Earth in terms of giving and this story does a marvelous job of demonstrating that generosity as Halvorsen’s initial efforts sparked candy donations by individuals and corporations across America.

BOOK

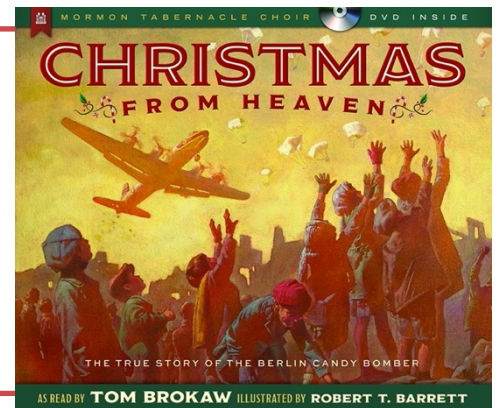
Title: *Christmas From Heaven: The True Story of the Berlin Candy Bomber*

Author: David T. Warner

Illustrator: Robert T. Barrett

Year published: 2013

Length: 32 pages



ACTIVITY	TIME	FREQUENCY	PREPARATION
Songbook: <i>God Bless America</i>	5-10 minutes	Daily	Minimal
Political Geography: East vs. West	20 minutes	Once	Minimal
Crafts: Candy Wrapper Stories	15 minutes	Once	Shopping for candy
Science: Paper Airplanes	30 minutes	Once	Minimal
Science: Parachutes	30 minutes	Once	Minimal
Re-enactment: Candy Bombing	30 minutes	Once	Minimal
Supplemental Reading: Performance	15 minutes	Once	Minimal
Supplemental Reading: <i>Mercedes and the Chocolate Bomber</i>	15 minutes	Once	Minimal
Free Enterprise: Rationing	During a day	Once	20 minutes
Civic Culture: Generosity	5-10 minutes	Daily	Minimal





Civic Culture: Christmas	10 minutes	Once	Minimal
Language Arts: Vocabulary	10 minutes	Once	Minimal

Below is one suggestion for your week with *Christmas From Heaven*. Note that we did not include all of the activities above in the agenda below (only 10 of 12). Please experiment with what works for your family!

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Songbook: <i>God Bless America</i>	Political Geography: East vs. West Germany	L.A.: Vocabulary (before reading)	Science: Parachutes	<i>Mercedes and the Chocolate Bomber</i>
Generosity: Memorize Scripture	Free Enterprise: Rationing	Science: Paper Airplanes	Re-enactment: Candy Bombing	Civic Culture: Christmas
Supplies: <i>Bible</i>	Supplies: N/A	Supplies: Paper	Supplies: Tissue paper, string, tape, candy	Supplies: N/A

AMERICAN HERITAGE SONGBOOK: GOD BLESS AMERICA

*God bless America, land that I love
Stand beside her and guide her
Through the night with the light from above*

Irving Berlin, one of America's greatest songwriters, wrote *God Bless America* and [Kate Smith](#) made it famous in 1938 when tensions were mounting between Axis and Allied countries, shortly before World War II. Berlin wrote it initially as a prayer to God to guide America to peace through the turbulent times.

God Bless America was the official campaign song for both Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his Republican opponent Wendell Willkie in 1940. In the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, members of Congress sang it on the steps of the Capitol. Both [Celine Dion](#) and [LeAnn Rimes](#) released versions of it in October of 2001 that charted more than 60 years after its debut (Dion's reached #14 on Adult Contemporary, Rimes #50 on Country). This 2013 version by [Sandi Patty](#) includes the original introduction with its allusion to the beginnings of World War II ("while the storm clouds gather, far across the sea") and makes the prayer explicit ("as we lift our voices in this solemn prayer").

To keep it fresh for your child(ren), try playing a different version each day before (or after) the reading.





POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY: EAST VS. WEST GERMANY

When World War II had ended three years earlier, Germany and its capital city were divided between the Western allies and the Soviet Union.

There is a map of East and West Germany in the front of the book. Explain how Germany was divided into four sectors after losing World War II, with different allies (Americans, British, French, Russians) controlling different sectors. In particular, point out how Berlin, the capital of Germany, was located deep in East Germany and the city was also divided into four sectors controlled by different allies. Conclude the discussion by [watching a video](#) of the [fall of the Berlin Wall](#) which marked the end of the Cold War and the beginning of [the reunification of Germany](#), 40 years after the Berlin Airlift.

ARTS & CRAFTS: CANDY WRAPPER STORY

Without a word, the four children tore the gum wrappers into strips and passed them to the others. One by one, each small nose was pressed to the paper, breathing in the minty smell.


Make a list of the candy names available locally (or order what you need). Then write a story inserting the candy names. Use cardboard and a sharpie to write up the story and tape the candy bar in place for the word. This can be a fun gift. Here is an example story:

Once upon a time there was a fun family who went on a journey through the **Milky Way**. The family was full of **Smarties** and **Nerds**. They built a rocket powered by **Atomic Fireballs** and hoped it wouldn't be a **Milkdud**. They went into **Orbit** and saw an **Eclipse**, a **Starburst**, **Mars**, and a planet with **Peach Rings**. The trip brought the **Kinder Joy**. The rocket **Dove** back to earth and thankfully they didn't need any **Lifesavers**. The **Junior [mints]** thought the trip was worth **100 Grand**. The End.

SCIENCE: PAPER AIRPLANES

When they asked how to recognize his plane, he remembered flying over the family farm back home. "I'll wiggle my wings," he announced, spreading his long arms up and down.

At its simplest, this is just a fun activity of turning a piece of paper into an airplane. [This website](#) outlines dozens of different designs ranging from the traditional, easy "Dart" to "medium," "hard," and "expert" paper airplanes like the "King Bee" and "Fast Hawk." You and your child(ren) can experiment with different designs to see which ones fly farthest or stay aloft the longest. To help connect them to the



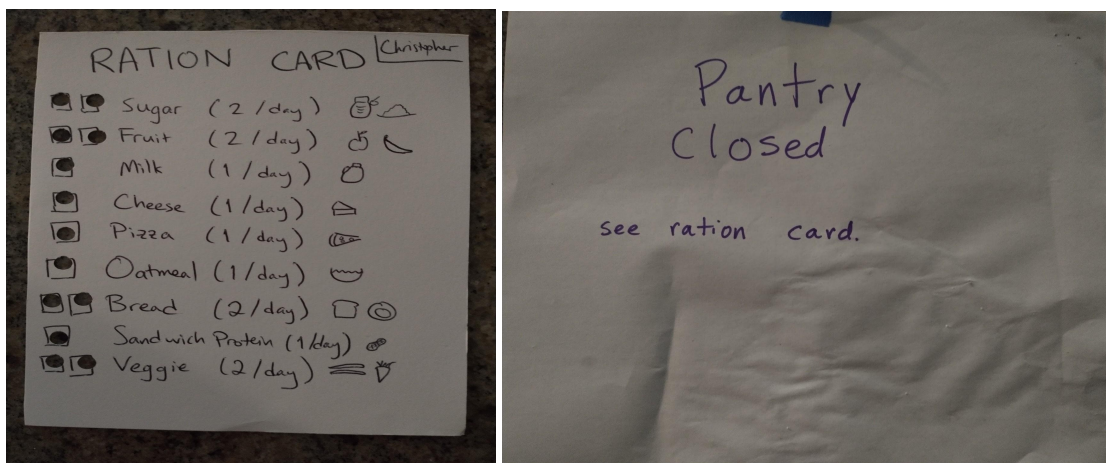
story, you might want to decorate them by drawing small American flags on them to represent the transport planes delivering food and supplies to West Berlin.

If you want to take your young scientist a little deeper into the aerodynamics of flight there are websites that discuss the [science behind paper airplanes](#) and [what makes paper airplanes fly](#), all at grade appropriate levels.

FREE ENTERPRISE: RATIONING


These children had little to eat, and no candy at all, yet they were grateful for what the airlift had given them and asked for nothing. Their gratitude melted Hal's heart.

Identify some of your kids' favorite foods and prepare ration cards or coupons that they can use to claim them throughout the day. To drive home the idea of rationing, make sure that the coupons don't allow them to claim as much as they want or usually eat. We did this as a family. Everyone was a West Berliner for the day with ration cards. At mealtimes, we punched everyone's card to indicate they had had their ration for the day (note: rations were in units of servings). Our five-year-old looked at his ration card and then planned what he was going to eat for each meal of the day. (To soften this exercise, it might be good to schedule the candy bombing reenactment for the evening, signaling an end to rationing and the arrival of the Americans).



SCIENCE: MAKE YOUR OWN CANDY BOMB PARACHUTE

By the next day, Hal had secretly enlisted his crew to donate their rations and make parachutes from handkerchiefs.





The book has excellent directions in the back for making your own candy bomb parachutes. Our kids really enjoyed making these. The colorful tissue paper for the canopies was a big hit (our three-year-old wanted to make all the pink ones): “Not only do they work, they’re beautiful!” And of course, who doesn’t love a craft where candy is involved?

For science, we did a couple demonstrations of falling objects. Using a small candy and a big candy (without parachutes) we showed how they both fell at approximately the same rate. Then we dropped a candy at the same time as we dropped one with a parachute and discussed [how air resistance slows a falling object](#).

RE-ENACTMENT: CANDY BOMBING

With the precision of bombardiers, the airmen pushed the candy out the flare chute, and white canopies floated to earth. The children ran with open arms to catch the treasures.

This re-enactment can be the culmination of previous activities: rationing, make your own parachute, paper airplanes. Start by opening a pack of gum and giving your kids some gum wrappers to smell. Then, you will need a high place to launch your paper airplane bombers and candy parachutes. We planned to launch our “candy bombs” from our second-floor patio deck but rain forced us to do an indoor launch from the top of the stairs. But you can pretty much count on happy kids any time you parachute candy to them :-)



Smelling gum wrappers.





We candy bombed inside because of rain

SUPPLEMENTAL READING: CHRISTMAS FROM HEAVEN PERFORMANCE

His father was right: "From little things come big things." This is the real spirit of Christmas – to give whatever we have, no matter how small the gift.

Tom Brokaw reads the story while the Mormon Tabernacle Choir provides background music. Video from the time period is shown. The grand finale (spoiler alert!) was the introduction of the Candy Bomber himself, Gail Halvorsen, who was 92 years old at the time (he is 101 now). You can watch this on the DVD that comes with the book or [on YouTube](#).


SUPPLEMENTAL READING: MERCEDES AND THE CHOCOLATE PILOT

Mercedes fed each chicken a worm and tried not to cry. She loved her four feathered pets, but Mama would not be happy. Eggs were more precious than gold in West Berlin during the Russian blockade.

Introduce your child(ren) to the literary concept of "point-of-view." In *Christmas From Heaven* the story is told from the point-of-view of the Candy Bomber. All the action revolves around his actions and how he sees things. Read *Mercedes and the Chocolate Pilot* to your child(ren) and then ask them who does all the action revolve around? Who is the main character? Through whose eyes do we see the story?

CIVIC CULTURE: GENEROSITY

Hal and his buddies were as excited as the children. The thrill of giving was irresistible. Soon they were dropping parachutes every day – hundreds of them.

An illustration of a hand holding a parachute, with a yellow and orange flame-like shape above it.



The concept that there are children now in our world without enough food, let alone candy, was an astonishing one to our five- and three-year-old grandchildren. I asked them how Hal felt when he gave his candy parachutes to the children. “Joyful” was their response.

Share with your child(ren) this scripture from Acts 20:35: “In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” Ask them to memorize the last line by practicing it each day.

[Operation Christmas Child](#) is an annual charity sponsored by Samaritan’s Purse at Christmastime. It is a group activity at our church where we fill shoeboxes with toys, gifts, candy, and hygiene products for children. It is often the only Christmas gift the recipient gets -- again quite an eye-opener to our youngsters. This charitable activity provides a good connection to the story.

CIVIC CULTURE: CHRISTMAS AND SCRIPTURE

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son,
that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)*


Why do we give gifts at Christmas? Where did this tradition come from? Share the story of the three wise men bringing gifts to Jesus at his birth and read them the following scripture: “They [the Magi] opened their treasures and presented him [the Christ] with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh” (Matthew 2:11). At Christmas we now give gifts blessing each other as the Magi blessed the Christ.

Jesus himself is a gift of joy and hope to the world from God, the Father. “**For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son**, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16 (NIV) We celebrate this gift throughout the year, but especially at Christmas when we remember Jesus coming to earth as a human baby.

LANGUAGE ARTS: VOCABULARY

Hal wrapped his hands around the yoke of his C-54 cargo plane, packed with 20,000 pounds of flour.

The author uses a number of words associated with airplanes that your child(ren) may not be familiar with: yoke, cockpit, runway, canopy, parachute. In addition, there are some words out of the ordinary that they may not have encountered: bombardier, rations, squabble. Try introducing a couple of new words each day. Before you start reading, introduce the words you’ve selected for the day, define them, and then point them out during the reading.





- **Yoke:** an airplane control that changes flight direction
- **Cockpit:** a small compartment for steering a plane or boat
- **Runway:** a paved strip of ground for landing and takeoff of aircraft
- **Canopy:** transparent covering over an airplane cockpit; fabric part of a parachute that catches the air
- **Parachute:** a device for slowing the descent of a person or object through the air that consists of a fabric canopy beneath which the person or object is suspended
- **Bombardier:** a crew member of a bomber aircraft who releases the bombs
- **Rations:** controlled distribution of scarce resources, in this case, food
- **Squabble:** an argument over something unimportant

