

HIGH FLIGHT

Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds - done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of - wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air.

Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace
Where never lark, nor even eagle flew -
And, while with silent lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space
Put out my hand and touched the face of God.

John G. Magee, Jr.

This poem was written by Pilot Officer John Gillespie Magee, Jr., who was 18 years old and studying in the United States when the Second World War began. Trained in Canada through the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, he was later sent to England. After being assigned to a high-altitude training flight in a Spitfire, he wrote this poem to his mother. He died during a training flight in 1941.

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