

Up in the Air

Daniel Scheffler



Kurt closed the door of his mother's car with great excitement. Today was the day he was finally going to be on a plane. For the first time in his life, he was going to actually soar through the skies and see the clouds from all the angles he had imagined since he was little.

"Are you excited my boy?" said Kurt's mother, Val, from the front of the car.

"I can't believe today's the day!" said Kurt.

"Believe it!" responded Kurt's older brother Joachim as he lifted his head from his mobile phone for just a second to speak to Kurt.

The car ride felt like forever, but that's because Kurt could not wait to get to the airport and see this adventure through. It felt like they were stuck in traffic for hours and all the cars were moving slowly just to drive Kurt crazy. But actually they arrived at the airport in just a few minutes.

Val parked their car in the underground parking lot and found a steel trolley to load the suitcases and the hatbox she always took with her on a journey. Joachim never helped with anything, so Kurt knew he was the best man for the job. He helped his mother load the trolley neatly and pushed it towards the terminal building proudly.

It was bigger than Kurt thought it would be. It was a massive building filled with hundreds of people looking around and rushing to get to wherever they were going. He immediately felt the rush of energy as he walked towards the check-in desk.

He watched as Val took out their passports and gave them to the friendly lady on the other side of the desk. His mother asked Joachim to help lift the bags onto the scale so that they could get weighed and checked in. But he wasn't listening. Kurt gloated as he lifted the bags and put them on the designated scale. The check-in lady was overly friendly and appreciative of his help. He loved the feeling.

Val was handed some tickets and off they went to security. After what felt like a long wait in line, the security officer asked Kurt to empty his pockets and put his bag through the big X-ray scanner. Kurt had never done this before and felt a little nervous. It was such a big and scary machine that started beeping loudly as the elderly woman in front of him walked through.

Kurt started to feel more confident now as he walked through the machine. Not a beep. He waited for his family to come through security as he grabbed his bag. Suddenly, he saw the plane through the massive glass windows. It was huge! And it looked much bigger than what it looked like in his dreams.

Kurt ran down the ramp towards the gate. After a few minutes, the plane was ready for boarding. Everyone lined up and showed their tickets. Walking on a ramp down towards the plane, Kurt nearly tripped from all the excitement. And then he arrived, he was one foot away from the plane and finally feeling like a grown up who would fly all over the globe.

The air steward took his ticket and showed him down the aisle to his seat. Kurt ran ahead of his mother and brother and immediately sat down in his seat, buckling his seat belt. With his eyes firmly on the wing of the plane, he was waiting for everyone to sit down so that he could feel that weightlessness that everyone talks about at school when a plane takes off.

The plane started to move, and reversed slightly. Moving like a giant metal bird, the plane taxied towards the runway. Kurt clenched his mother's hand. The plane started to speed up, faster than Kurt has ever gone in his life in any car or boat. And then, as if by magic, the plane lifted off the ground. And Kurt knew this would be the first of many adventures that started this way.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What is Kurt doing for the first time in his life?
 - A traveling
 - B driving
 - C going on a trip with his mom and brother
 - D flying on a plane

2. What critical event happens at the end of the story?
 - A Kurt walks on a ramp towards the plane and nearly trips from all the excitement.
 - B Kurt goes through security at the airport for the first time.
 - C The plane lifts off the ground and Kurt experiences flying in a plane for the first time.
 - D Kurt, Val, and Joachim drive to the airport.

3. What evidence from the text suggests that Kurt may have been looking forward to being on a plane for a while?
 - A Kurt had dreams about planes.
 - B Kurt clenches his mother's hand when the plane taxis toward the runway.
 - C Kurt ran ahead of his mother and brother towards the plane.
 - D Kurt helped to lift the bags on the designated scale at the check-in desk.

4. Which statement best describes Kurt and Joachim?
 - A Neither Kurt nor Joachim are excited and eager about the trip.
 - B Kurt is very eager and respectful. Joachim is distant and not interested.
 - C Both Kurt and Joachim are very excited about the trip.
 - D Kurt is not eager and respectful. Joachim is helpful and excited.

5. What is this story mainly about?
 - A what airports are like
 - B Kurt's relationship with Joachim
 - C Kurt's experience on his first plane trip
 - D how large airplanes are

6. Read the following sentence: "The car ride felt like forever, but that's because Kurt could not wait to get to the airport and **see this adventure through.**"

What does the phrase "**see this adventure through**" most nearly mean?

- A look at the adventure from a distance
- B complete the adventure
- C look at the adventure through a window
- D cancel the adventure

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

_____ the plane taxied towards the runway, Kurt clenched his mother's hand.

- A Therefore
- B However
- C So
- D As

8. Describe Kurt's experience and how he felt as he went through security.

9. Explain how Kurt reacted when the plane started to move and then lift off the ground.

10. Explain which experience or experiences from the story most likely had the biggest impact on Kurt and his desire to go on more adventures.

Teacher Guide & Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 900

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8. Describe Kurt's experience and how he felt as he went through security.

Suggested answer: Kurt emptied his pockets and put his bag through the big x-ray scanner. Kurt had never done this before and felt a little nervous. Kurt started to feel more confident when he walked through the machine.

9. Explain how Kurt reacted when the plane started to move and then lift off the ground.

Suggested answer: When the plane taxied towards the runway, Kurt clenched his mother's hand. The plane started to speed up faster than Kurt has ever gone in his life in any car or boat. Kurt knew this would be the first of many adventures that started this way when the plane lifted off the ground.

10. Explain which experience or experiences from the story most likely had the biggest impact on Kurt and his desire to go on more adventures.

Suggested answer: Answers may vary and could include: Students may argue that the experience which most likely had the biggest impact on Kurt and his desire to go on more adventures was being in the airplane and the plane taking off. While the plane is speeding up, Kurt is experiencing something he has never experienced before. He clenches his mother's hand as the plane goes faster than Kurt has ever gone in his life. The plane lifts, "as if by magic" at which point Kurt knew that this would be the first of many adventures. This experience affirmed his desire to have more adventures like the one he experienced for the first time.

Students may also argue that the entire experience of being at the airport and being on the plane affirmed his desire to have more adventures like the one he experienced for the first time. Going through security, boarding the plane, and experiencing the plane lifting off were all new things for Kurt and they all formed this unique adventure for him.