

World War II Web Quest

World War II B-17s

The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner

By Randall Jarrell

From my mothers' sleep I feel into the State,
And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze.
Six miles from earth, loosed from its dream of life,
I woke to black flak and the nightmare fighters.
When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose.

About the poet. Use information on Randall Jarrell from Poets.org to find your answers.

1. In which American city did Jarrell grow up and go to college?
2. Did Jarrell actually serve on the crew of a B-17 Flying Fortress? What was his job in the Army Air Corps?

About the B-17. Ten men had roles on each bombing run in a B-17. The [Arizona Wing of the Commemorative Air Force](#) has a great web site detailing the B-17.

3. Besides the Ball Turret Gunner, identify three of the crew positions and describe the tasks they performed on each flight.
4. How did the Ball Turret Gunner rotate the turret 360 degrees below the plane?
5. Was the Ball Turret the most dangerous place on the plane? Why or why not?

About the [Memphis Belle](#). One of the first B-17s to complete her full number of missions, the plane toured the United States in the final two years of World War II to promote the Army Air Corps.

6. For whom was the Memphis Belle named by Captain Robert Morgan?
7. In which English city was the Memphis Belle based?
8. How many successful missions did the Memphis Belle complete?
9. What did the United States hope to sell Americans by using the Memphis Belle?
 - a. Toy planes
 - b. Air Force recruiting
 - c. Magazine subscriptions
 - d. War Bonds
10. Where is the Memphis Belle today?

BONUS (5 points): In three to five sentences, quote one line from the poem and connect it to the movie that we watched yesterday.