

# Independent reading response



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Dan Gutman's fictional novel, *Getting Air* is a great tale. The 240 page thriller narrates the story of three skateboarders Jimmy, David and Henry. They have baptized themselves Woodpushers and have embarked on a flight to California where they hope to land favor with some big sponsors. Their big plans are however dramatically detoured as four terrorists hijack the plane. All passengers come together in a rare show of unity to overpower the hijackers although the pilot and his deputy unfortunately do not make it. With no one else to steer the plane safely and the discovery that the jet has ran out of fuel, Henry's knowledge from flying lessons come in handy to help the group crash-land in some deep woods of a Canadian forest. The three skateboarders, Jimmy's sister Julia, a beautiful stewardess and an eighty year old knitter are the only survivors. *Getting Air* is surely a text of moving forward despite the obstacles that barricade one's path.

The title captures the struggles that the storyline embodies. Jimmy's big plans of getting to California have been thwarted by the terrorist who attempted to hijack the plane. In the end, they have to crash land in a kind of wilderness in a forest.. this presents the hurdle that conflicts with their earlier plans. At least skateboarding has to wait now as the survivors embark on the most immediate needs. While help from anywhere is anticipated, it is never seen to be coming and the survivors must strive to leave. Some basic necessities have to be met. They have to "breathe". Everything now is influenced by the can do attitude of the boys who are not held back from trying any means that can guarantee survival. They construct a fire with the helping skills from Julia's scouting.

The title can be interpreted to mean keeping up the struggle. As Farragut once said to the soldiers, they damn the torpedoes and march full speed ahead. Man has to live and it does not matter how. What is of most importance is staying the course. Doing the little that one can. Set at a time when the world is grappling with the problem of terrorism, the novel encourages young ones to take terrorists head on and never fear them. Whether it be in the air or on the land, nothing is impossible. Julia's antics to starting a fire and the boys' audacity to intervene against the terrorist (Gutman 14) as well as Henry's crash landing ideas that save them all are some of the events that attest to the title.

The conflict takes the shape of a melodrama with the boys being the noble one and the terrorists, the evil. No wonder, they all perish in the hands of very young boys who have sworn to continue breathing in the face of whichever difficulty. As per the moral of the story, continuous efforts in the face of difficult situations is always rewarded. Like the story of the little hummingbird that sought to put out a forest fire, all are encouraged to try and do anything they can in order to help. For instance if the boys sat back and watched then the terrorist could have killed everybody. Also, had Henry not intervened to crash-land the plane, then probably no one could have survived.