

Hobbycraft's "Flying Tigers" P-40 by Dick Smith



Probably no other aircraft from World War II is as easily recognized as the shark-mouthed P-40's of the Flying Tigers. Colonel Claire Chennault, commander of the famed American Volunteer Group, received his P-40's from stocks that had originally been assigned to the British. They called them "Tomahawks."

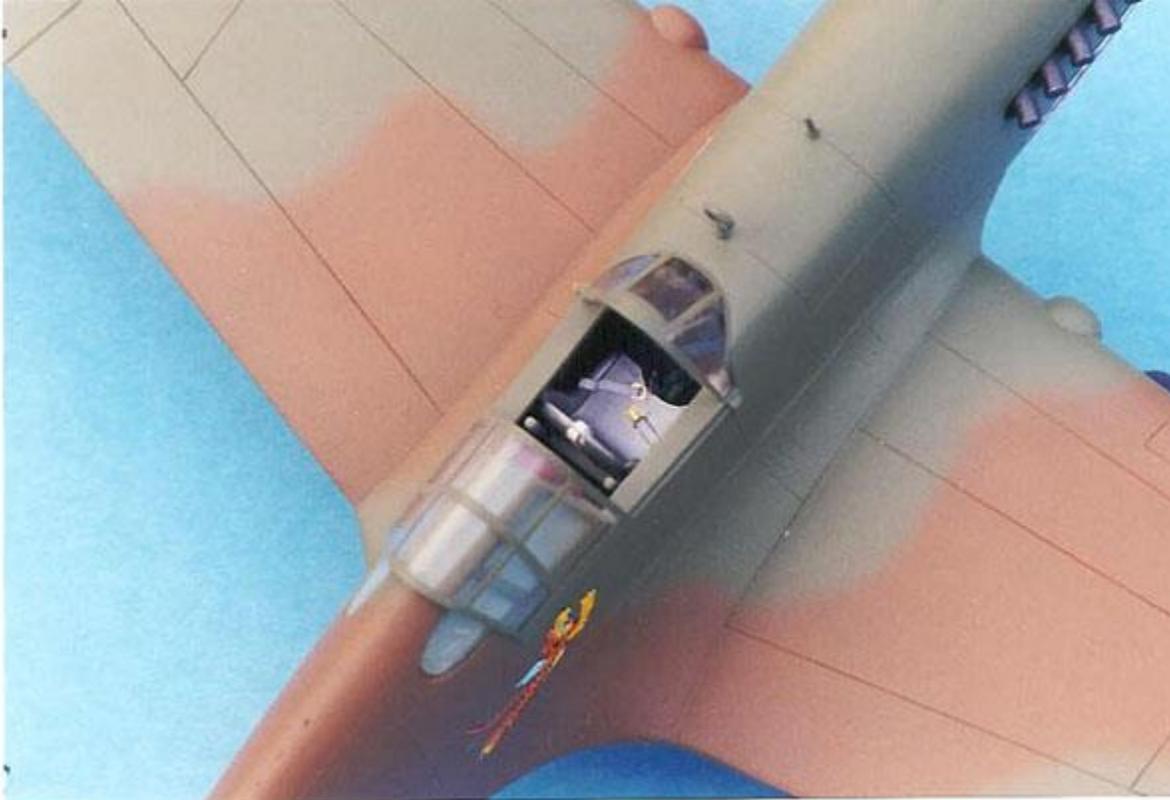
Reportedly, Colonel Chennault got the inspiration for the "shark mouth" on the nose from a magazine story about the Royal Air Force's No. 112 Squadron serving in North Africa. While the AVG never had more than three squadrons of eighteen aircraft each, their exploits against the Japanese were legend and the shark mouth became famous the world over.

Model manufacturers have produced the Flying Tiger P-40 in all of the popular scales. Hobbycraft produces a 1/48th scale kit which is excellent for the beginning modeler. At the same time, old timers will find it a good base for super detailing.

Since the AVG aircraft were taken from RAF stocks, the cockpit tub and fuselage sidewalls are painted with Model Master's "British Interior Green." The instrument panel is flat black. The actual instruments are raised and "pop out" with a drybrushing of light gray. Put a drop of five-minute epoxy on each dial face to simulate the glass cover. Paint the seat flat aluminum and make seat belts from paper strips.

Join the fuselage parts together. From the underside, glue the instrument panel and cockpit into place. This is tricky so follow the instructions carefully or your cockpit will be off-centered in the fuselage.

Assemble the wings. Attach the horizontal stabilizers. Make sure the stabilizers are perpendicular to the vertical tail. Attach the wings and be sure they maintain the proper dihedral. Carefully attach the nose machine guns. When you have completed the basic construction of the kit, spray or brush a thin coat of a light color to highlight any flaws or seams. If assembled correctly, this kit will require very little sanding and filling.



An airbrush is recommended to give your model a professional look, but painting with a quality brush is acceptable. Cut thin strips of drafting tape and mask the cockpit clear parts. Attach the windscreen and the clear parts behind the hood with white glue. If you are using an airbrush, stuff a bit of wet tissue into the cockpit opening to keep out overspray.

The Flying Tiger's aircraft were painted in British camouflage colors of dark tan and dark green on the topside. I used Model Master "Dark Tan ANA 617" and Gunze Sangyo "Dark Green H-320." The underside is a bit of a problem. The British used "Sky" for the underside of their aircraft in 1940 and 1941. Some color photos and paintings show the underside of the Flying Tiger's in light gray. I decided to go with the gray and used Gunze Sangyo's "Aircraft Gray H-308". You could also use Tamiya's "sky gray."

The exact color used on an aircraft is a hotly debated topic among modelers.

I've always taken the position, "if it looks right, it probably is right." You be the judge. When painting is complete, apply a coat of Future Floor Wax or Testor's Glosscoat to provide a glossy surface for the decals.

The kit decals provide markings for two "Tigers." I used the markings of Captain R. T. Smith from the Hell's Angels in Burma in 1941. The decals are quite good especially the "sharkmouth" that fits beautifully around the forward portion of the fuselage. Since the AVG were "officially" Chinese pilots, the aircraft carried the Nationalist's blue and white "sun" insignia on the wings.

The landing gear legs are painted flat aluminum. I used Gunze Sangyo's "Tire Black" for the tires. A decal is provided for the wheel hubs. Paint the wing guns with Model Master "gunmetal" and attach them with white glue. Finish construction by gluing the tail wheel into place along with all of the landing gear doors and the pitot tube.



The Flying Tigers operated under horrible climate and supply conditions. As a final touch, "weather" your model by drybrushing light gray over the panel lines to simulate wear. Another weathering technique is to spray a very thin mixture of black between the panel lines to simulate an accumulation of dirt and grime. As with all weathering techniques, go lightly. Spray a final coat of Testor's Dullcoat to seal the decals and the painted finish. Remove all of the masking from the clear parts and your model is complete.

There are a few flaws with this kit but for a price of less than \$15. it is good value for the money.