

The Wright Brothers

In this lesson, you will read about the famous brothers who built and flew the first powered flying machines. You'll also discuss your own experience with flying and talk about modern inventions. Let's find out what you already know.



Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. Do you like flying?
2. Did you like to fly kites when you were a child?
Do you still enjoy flying kites?
3. What is a glider?
Have you ever tried gliding?
4. Do you know when and where the first powered flight took place?
5. If you invent something, how can you protect your rights to that invention?

B. Vocabulary Preview

Match the words on the left with the correct meanings on the right.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| _____ 1. invent | a) to make better |
| _____ 2. talent | b) natural ability |
| _____ 3. repair | c) a legal agreement |
| _____ 4. set up | d) to study |
| _____ 5. experiment | e) to create something that didn't exist before |
| _____ 6. tunnel | f) to open a business |
| _____ 7. propeller | g) part of an engine |
| _____ 8. cylinder | h) to fix |
| _____ 9. patent | i) to teach |
| _____ 10. contract | j) to test |
| _____ 11. improve | k) the legal rights that protect a new invention |
| _____ 12. train | l) flying in aircraft |
| _____ 13. research | m) a passageway, usually underground |
| _____ 14. aviation | n) a device with turning blades that makes something move |

Reading

1. Orville and Wilbur Wright **invented** and flew the world's first powered aircraft.
2. Wilbur was born near Millville, Indiana, in 1867. His brother Orville was born in Dayton, Ohio, in 1871. The Wright brothers showed a **talent** for building and **repairing** machines when they were very young. In 1892, they **set up** a bicycle shop in Dayton. Before long, they built their own bikes to sell in their shop.
3. In 1896, they became interested in flying machines after reading about gliders. By 1899, they had built their own glider. They took it to Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. The sand hills and ocean winds at Kitty Hawk made it a great place to try out their glider.
4. They returned to Dayton and from 1899 to 1903 learned all they could about flying. They **experimented** with gliders and kites and began to build their own airplane. They built the first wind **tunnel** to help them. They also built a **propeller** and a four-**cylinder** engine for their airplane.
5. In September 1903, they took their new aircraft to Kitty Hawk to test it out. The weather was finally right on December 17. That day, Orville kept their plane in the air for 12 seconds. It went 120 feet. Later that day, Wilbur flew it for 59 seconds and went 852 feet. It was the first powered flight.
6. Orville and Wilbur returned home and built two more planes. It took them two years. In 1906, they got a US **patent** for a powered aircraft. They sold their planes to Britain and France.
7. In 1908, they got a **contract** to build aircraft for the US War Department and they set up the American Wright Company in 1909. They **improved** their designs and built planes for the army. They also **trained** pilots to fly them.
8. Wilbur Wright died in 1912. In 1915, Orville left their manufacturing business to do **research**. He continued to be involved with **aviation** in the United States for many years. Orville died in 1948.

"If we all worked on the assumption that what is accepted as true is really true, there would be little hope of advance."

—Orville Wright

Comprehension

A. True or False?

Read the statements below about the Wright brothers.

If the statement is true, write T beside the sentence.

If it is false, write F and correct the information.

- _____ 1. Orville Wright was the older brother.
- _____ 2. The Wright brothers were good at fixing machines when they were young.
- _____ 3. They set up a shop that sold gliders.
- _____ 4. The first powered flight took place in 1906.
- _____ 5. The Wright brothers taught pilots how to fly.

B. Ask and Answer

Practice asking and answering the following questions with your partner.

Then write your answers in complete sentences in your notebook.

- 1. What kind of business did the Wright brothers start in 1892?
- 2. How did they first become interested in flying machines?
- 3. Where did they test out their first glider?
- 4. Why did they choose this spot?
- 5. What did they do to prepare for their first powered flight?
- 6. How did they protect their rights to their invention?
- 7. How did they help in the war effort during the first World War?
- 8. What did Orville do after he left the American Wright Company?

Vocabulary Review

Complete the sentences using vocabulary from page 1.

You may need to change the word forms.

1. His new car is not as powerful as his old one.
It only has a four-_____ engine.
2. If you want to _____ your English quickly,
you should practice speaking with native speakers every day.
3. Scientists around the world are doing _____ to try to find a cure for cancer.
4. She speaks English, German, and Spanish fluently.
She has a real _____ for learning languages.
5. The British and French governments built an underwater
_____ to connect the two countries.
6. The written _____ between a renter and a landlord is called a lease.

Discussion

1. What is the longest flight you've ever taken?
How about the most enjoyable? The worst?
2. Have you ever flown in a two-seater airplane?
(e.g., a helicopter, a float plane, the Concorde)
3. What other modern inventions resulted in tremendous
changes in the last few centuries? Who were the inventors?
How have these inventions changed our lives?