

The Wright Brothers—Men with a Vision

Before

You Read

1. Do you like to travel by airplane? Why or why not?
2. What are the names of some famous inventors?



CD 2, TR 01

Read the following textbook article. Pay special attention to simple-past-tense verbs.

Did You Know?

The Wright brothers never married. Their only love was aviation.



Wilbur Wright, 1867–1912;
Orville Wright, 1871–1948

Over 100 years ago, people only dreamed about flying. The Wright brothers, Wilbur and Orville, were dreamers who changed the world.

Wilbur Wright was born in 1867 and Orville was born in 1871. In 1878, they received a paper flying toy from their father. They played with kites and started to think about the possibility of flight.

When they were older, they started a bicycle business. They used the bicycle shop to design their airplanes. They studied three aspects of flying: lift, control, and power. In 1899, they constructed their first flying machine—a kite made of wood, wire, and cloth. It had no pilot. Because of wind, it was difficult to control. They continued to study aerodynamics.¹ Finally Wilbur designed a small machine with a gasoline engine. Wilbur tried to fly the machine, but it crashed. They fixed it and flew it for the first time on December 17, 1903, with Orville as the pilot. The airplane remained in the air for twelve seconds. It traveled a distance of 120 feet. This historic flight changed the world. However, only four newspapers in the U.S. reported this historic moment.

The Wright brothers offered their invention to the U.S. government, but the government rejected² their offer at first. The government didn't believe that these men invented a flying machine. Finally, President Theodore Roosevelt investigated their claims and offered the inventors a contract to build airplanes for the U.S. Army.

December 17, 2003, marked 100 years of flight. There was a six-day celebration at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, the location of the first flight. A crowd of 35,000 people gathered to see a replica³ of the first plane fly. The cost to re-create the plane was \$1.2 million. However, it rained hard that day and the plane failed to get off the ground.

You can now see the Wright brothers' original airplane in the Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C.