

B2 ESL Reading & Vocabulary Worksheet

Topic: The Wright Brothers vs. Samuel Pierpont Langley — Driven by Purpose

Student Name: _____

Date: _____

Class / Level: B2 Upper-Intermediate

SECTION 1: Reading Passage (~200 Words)

Instructions: Read the following text adapted from Simon Sinek's analysis of innovation and human motivation, then complete the exercises below.

At the turn of the 20th century, the pursuit of powered human flight was a fierce global race. Samuel Pierpont Langley seemed to hold the ultimate *recipe for success*. Heavily funded with \$50,000 from the War Department, Langley was an esteemed scholar holding a seat at Harvard and working at the Smithsonian. He assembled the finest technical minds money could buy and enjoyed overwhelming **public acclaim**. Yet, despite his immense capital and prestige, his attempts ended **catastrophically** in public failure.

In stark contrast, Orville and Wilbur Wright had none of the traditional prerequisites for success. They possessed no government grants, no influential connections, and not a single college degree among their crew. Their operation was funded **solely** through the modest proceeds of their bicycle shop. However, the Wright brothers were driven by a profound cause: they genuinely believed that a flying machine would transform the world. This passionate vision inspired their team to work with relentless dedication, pouring their **blood, sweat, and tears** into every prototype.

On December 17, 1903, the Wright brothers successfully achieved human flight. Remarkably, Langley quit the field immediately upon hearing the news. His sudden departure proved that he was motivated primarily by fame and riches, whereas the Wright brothers succeeded because they were guided by purpose.

SECTION 2: Target Vocabulary & Key Expressions

Vocabulary / Idiom	Part of Speech / Structure	Definition & Context
Recipe for success	Idiomatic Noun Phrase	The perfect combination of ingredients, resources, or conditions needed to achieve a positive outcome.
Public acclaim	Noun Phrase (Uncountable)	Enthusiastic praise, approval, and media recognition from the general public.
Catastrophically	Adverb	In a manner that causes sudden, complete failure, disaster, or ruin.
Solely	Adverb	Exclusively; only; without involving any other people, sources, or factors.
Blood, sweat, and tears	Idiomatic Expression	Extreme effort, hard work, personal sacrifice, and suffering dedicated to a goal.

Exercise A: Contextual Gap-Fill

Complete the sentences below using the target expressions from the table above. Change word forms if necessary.

1. Developing a groundbreaking technology requires years of _____ and sacrifice.

2. Although the team had talent and funding, their product launch failed _____ due to software bugs.
3. The startup was funded _____ through the founder's personal savings, with no outside investors.
4. Passion, relentless practice, and good mentorship are often considered the ultimate _____.
5. The author received widespread _____ after publishing her bestselling historical biography.

SECTION 3: Reading Comprehension (Multiple Choice)

Select the correct answer (A, B, C, or D) for each question.

1. What advantage did Samuel Pierpont Langley possess over the Wright brothers?

- A) He had a dedicated team willing to work without financial compensation.
- B) He had extensive financial backing from the War Department and high prestige.
- C) He held the first commercial patent for airplane engines.
- D) He had spent decades manufacturing bicycles.

2. How were the Wright brothers able to finance their aviation research?

- A) Through federal research grants provided by Harvard University.
- B) By securing investments from wealthy venture capitalists.
- C) Exclusively using the income generated by their bicycle business.
- D) By selling shares of their aviation corporation to the public.

3. According to the text, what was the primary driver of the Wright brothers' success?

- A) Their superior academic background and engineering degrees.
- B) Their deep conviction and belief in a higher purpose for human flight.
- C) The extensive media coverage they received from national newspapers.
- D) Langley's decision to hire them as chief engineers.

4. Why did Samuel Pierpont Langley quit his research immediately after December 17, 1903?

- A) He ran out of government funding and went bankrupt.
- B) He realized his engine design was scientifically impossible.
- C) He was motivated by being first and winning acclaim rather than the cause itself.
- D) He was offered a prestigious presidency at Harvard.

5. What can be inferred about the team that worked with the Wright brothers?

- A) They worked primarily for high financial bonuses and prestige.
- B) They were deeply inspired by a shared belief in the brothers' mission.
- C) They had superior technical equipment compared to Langley's team.
- D) They resigned shortly before the successful flight on December 17.