

Sky Pioneers

When they were young, Orville and Wilbur Wright liked bicycles. They designed and built their own bicycles. They also repaired their friends' bicycles. After they grew up, Orville and Wilbur opened a bicycle shop. In this shop they built the first airplane.

In 1896, Orville got very sick. His brother stayed home to take care of him. This gave Wilbur a lot of spare-time. He read a story about gliders. Gliders do not have engines. Gliders fly on wind currents. People wanted gliders with engines so they could go faster and farther. No one knew how to build one, but many people were trying. It was like a race to see who could build the first one.

The glider story excited the brothers about flying. They decided to build an engine-powered glider. Wilbur wrote to a museum for information about flying machines. He read everything he could find about them.

Wilbur studied hard. He solved one important problem. Changing winds made early flying machines crash. Wilbur designed a glider with moveable wings. When the wind changed, Wilbur's new glider could tilt its wings the right way. This would keep it in the air.

The next year, the brothers built their first glider. Then, they built a wind tunnel. This sped up their work. In the tunnel, they tested the glider in different winds. When the glider had trouble moving in the wind, they rebuilt it to work better.

The brothers built two more gliders. They tested them both in the wind tunnel. They also tested them outside. Then they built an engine-powered glider. This was the world's first airplane. On December 17, 1903, the brothers flipped a coin. The winner of the toss would fly the plane. Orville won. That day he made the world's first engine-powered flight. The flight lasted 12 seconds. The airplane traveled 120 feet. This short flight changed the world forever.



Orville Wright



Wilbur Wright

Sky Pioneers *(cont.)*

Reading Comprehension Questions

After reading the story, answer the questions. Circle the correct answer.

1. Why did Orville fly the plane first?
 - a. Wilbur was afraid that the changing winds could make the plane crash.
 - b. Orville won a coin toss.
 - c. Orville had just recovered from his sickness.
 - d. Orville was a better pilot.
2. What important problem did Wilbur solve?
 - a. He designed a glider that would hold two people.
 - b. He designed a glider that could fly in the dark.
 - c. He designed a glider that could tilt its wings when the wind changed.
 - d. He designed a glider that could fly in the rain.
3. What type of relationship did the brothers probably have?
 - a. They probably enjoyed eating meals together.
 - b. They probably did not understand each other.
 - c. They probably did not see each other very much.
 - d. They probably enjoyed working together.
4. Why does the story end by saying, "This short flight changed the world forever"?
 - a. People thought that flying was dangerous.
 - b. This first engine-powered flight led to the development of modern airplanes.
 - c. People no longer cared about bicycles.
 - d. The world would now know who the Wright brothers were.
5. This passage was written to—
 - a. explain that Orville got very sick in 1896.
 - b. tell the story of the Wright brothers and the first engine-powered plane.
 - c. tell the story of how Orville and Wilbur designed and built bicycles.
 - d. explain that it is important that brothers work together.