

Who are the Wright brothers?

Wilbur and Orville Wright were brothers and American inventors who are now known as pioneers of aviation. Wilbur was born on April 16th 1867 in Indiana, US. Orville was born a few years later in 1871. They grew up in Dayton, Ohio. Their father, Milton Wright, travelled as a preacher and often brought back toys for his children. One day in 1878, he brought back a small model helicopter. Based on a design by Alphonse Pénau, a French aeronautical pioneer-it was made of bamboo, cork and paper and had a rubber band to power its blades. This helicopter model sparked the Wright brothers' love for aeronautics and flying! When he was older, Orville said that he and his brother grew up in a home where 'there was always much encouragement to children to pursue intellectual interests; to investigate whatever aroused curiosity'. No doubt, this is what helped the Wright brothers to pursue their dream and goal of invention.

What did the Wright brothers invent?

The Wright brothers invented and built the world's first-ever successful heavier-than-air aeroplane. On December 17th, 1903, and with this aeroplane, they made the first controlled, powered and sustained human flight. They are also known for designing the first steering controls for an aeroplane.

Designing the Aeroplane

The brothers were always working on different mechanical projects and had been experimenting with gliders for years before they made their first flight. They closely followed the research of a German aviator named Otto Lilienthal and were inspired to begin their own experiments after Lilienthal died in a glider crash. They believed the crash had been caused because the pilot couldn't control the aircraft, which is why they invented new aeroplane controls, such as a rudder that would work in the air. They also built wings that could be twisted and moved up and down in order to control the flight. In 1900, the pair headed to Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, because it was famous for its strong winds. Here, they tested gliders, made model aeroplanes to test, and observed how birds flew. They looked at how birds angled their wings for balance and control and tried to mimic this in aircraft design, coming up with a concept called 'wing warping'. In 1903, they combined this concept with a moveable rudder, propellers and a small engine to create an aeroplane called The Wright Flyer, which became the first powered aeroplane that was controlled by people. Orville piloted the plane for 12 seconds and covered 120 feet!

Fame and Success

Despite their success, many people refused to believe in their research. Wilbur left for Europe in 1908, where he hoped to have more success in selling aeroplanes and encouraging the public to believe in their invention. Orville and their younger sister Katherine joined Wilbur in Europe in 1909. Here, the Wright brothers were recognised for their work and became huge celebrities. They would be featured in the press and even spent time with the royals and heads of state! They became wealthy businessmen by selling their aeroplanes and returned to the

United States in the same year. All throughout their success, the brother took shared credit and responsibility for their work and had a strong and close relationship.