

B' Ομάδα Θεμάτων

Writing Activity One: The History of Aviation, Part III

Lead-in

Answer the following questions.

- What is an aviation pioneer?
- Can you name some of the aviation pioneers of the 19th and early 20th centuries?
- Who were the Wright brothers?

Focused Reading

Read the text below about aeronautical pioneers of the 19th and early 20th centuries and answer the following questions.

1. Who influenced the Wright brothers' work?
2. What was Langley's and Manley's accomplishment?
3. When and by whom did the first controlled powered heavier-than-air flight occur?
4. Who was the first pilot to cross the English channel, and when?

AERONAUTICAL PIONEERS OF THE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURIES

During the 19th century, men sought to master the principles of flight. A few names may be mentioned here. The German aeronautical engineer Otto Lilienthal (1848-96) built many gliders; he was killed while flying one of them. Octave Chanute (1832-1910) born in France went to the United States as a boy of six and made a great reputation as a civil engineer. A keen student, he worked out and published many



aerodynamic tables and eventually designed a two-wing glider, which was exceptionally stable in flight. The Wright brothers (1871-1948 [Orville] / 1867-1912 [Wilbur]) freely acknowledged his influence on their work.

Samuel P. Langley (1834-1906) risked his scientific reputation to make important contributions to the science of aerodynamics. A self-taught scientist, he became a renowned astronomer, physicist and secretary of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. He was particularly interested in the possibilities of flight in powered planes and he obtained grants from the United States Congress in order to carry on his experiments. On May 6, 1896, his nine-pound, steam-driven model Aerodrome No. 5, launched from a houseboat on the Potomac river, soared into the air, flew half a mile and landed without mishap. This was the first successful flight of a powered motor airplane. Langley next constructed a full-size plane, for which his assistant, C. M. Manly, built a five-cylinder gasoline motor. On December 8, 1903, the new craft was hoisted to the roof of a houseboat on the Potomac; Langley and Manly got into it and Manly took the controls. The plane was then catapulted from the houseboat and plunged into the chilled waters of the river.

Nine days later, on December 17, the successful flight of the Wright brothers took place. The Wrights made the first controlled powered heavier-than-air flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. The first flight by Orville Wright lasted only 12 seconds and the plane traveled just about 120 feet in. In the fourth flight of the same day, Wilbur Wright flew 852 feet in 59 seconds. The flights were witnessed by 4 lifesavers and a boy from the village, making them arguably the first public flight and certainly the first well documented one. This epoch-making flights climaxed centuries of dreaming, hoping and striving. People refused at first to take the Wrights seriously; in fact, many believed that the Kitty Hawk flight was an elaborate hoax. It was not until the Wright brothers made a number of successful flights in England that the public at large began to take notice. By 1908, the Wrights' planes could fly a distance of 100 miles at a speed of 40 miles an hour.

Other air-age pioneers built planes of their own. Some of these were biplanes, like those of the Wright brothers; others were triplanes, with three wings; still others were monoplanes, with only one wing.

On July 25, 1909, the French aviator Louis Blériot startled the world by crossing the English channel in a small monoplane that he had designed and build; he covered the 21 miles in thirty seven minutes. Forward-looking military men began to sense the potential importance of the plane. One government after another began to subsidize aerodynamic research and airplane manufacture. Actually, it was not until the course of World War I that the airplane came of age.

Express your opinion

Write extensive answers to the following questions.

1. What are the qualities that someone needs to be a pioneer in his field of expertise?

2. Do you think flying has got better or worse over the years?
3. Would you risk your reputation as a professional to fulfill your dreams? Why or why not?