

The Wright Brothers: Wilbur and Orville. When considering the origins of airplanes, their names are bound to come to mind. I plan to attend university and major in electrical engineering, and though that field doesn't completely relate to their aeronautical feats, their story is inspiring to anyone working or wanting to work in the STEM field. Most people know who they were and have a general idea of their achievements, but little know how they got there. From simple newspaper printers and bicycle mechanics, Wilbur and Orville broke barriers to flight, introducing the world to aviation, which would become vital to society.

My research began the same way the Wright Brothers began theirs: with the Smithsonian Institution. Rather than requesting information through letters though, I read their website articles. I also found some images of original documents like letters and photos from the Smithsonian, but most came from the Special Collections and Archives section of the Wright State University website. I accessed more articles and images published on other government and third-party websites, visited my local library for biographies of the famous duo, and consulted my US History textbook.

For this year's National History Day project I created a website. It was difficult adapting to the new NHD Web Central website builder, but I eventually mastered it and was able to use its features to my advantage. Although they are two completely different things, I believed a website could effectively reflect the design and technological aspects of the Wright Brothers' achievements. I wanted to be able to present many pictures and video clips of their accomplishments, so I felt making a website was the best course of action. For the website background, I decided to use an actual photo of the sky to fit in with my flight theme. I also used blue and white colors in the navigation buttons and headings to mimic the clouds and sky and used orange colors for quotes to mimic the sun. I creatively titled some webpages to connect to flight like "grounded" and "tailwind." I used the Times New Roman font because I thought it looked the most similar to a typewriter's style, and I wanted to pay homage to the brothers' beginnings as newspaper printers.

When Wilbur and Orville opened the world to aviation, aviation opened the world to more opportunities. The creation of the first powered, heavier-than-air airplane broke the barrier to sustained human flight, communication barriers, transportation barriers, and warfare barriers. It allowed messages and packages to be sent faster. It improved access to the rest of the world. It allowed people to experience other cultures and make more connections. It revolutionized the way war was waged, introducing aerial combat and reconnaissance. And it prompted new scientific discoveries, exploration, and experimentation, going beyond Earth and to the stars. As science writer Arthur C. Clarke once said, "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic." The Wright Brothers' achievements seemed like magic back then and that magic continues to persist today.