

TOEFL Junior : Reading Comprehension Test 9

Read the passage . 60 - 100 minutes

Great Invention

Many great inventions are initially greeted with ridicule and disbelief. The invention of the airplane was no exception. Although many people who heard about the first powered flight on December 17, 1903 were excited and impressed, others reacted with peals of laughter. The idea of flying an aircraft was repulsive to some people. Such people called Wilbur and Orville Wright, the inventors of the first flying machine, impulsive fools. Negative reactions, however, did not stop the Wrights. Impelled by their desire to succeed, they continued their experiments in aviation.

Orville and Wilbur Wright had always had a compelling interest in aeronautics and mechanics. As young boys they earned money by making and selling kites and mechanical toys. Later, they designed a newspaper-folding machine, built a printing press, and operated a bicycle-repair shop. In 1896, when they read about the death of Otto Lilienthal, the brothers' interest in flight grew into a compulsion.

Lilienthal, a pioneer in hang-gliding, had controlled his gliders by shifting his body in the desired direction. This idea was repellent to the Wright brothers, however, and they searched for more efficient methods to control the balance of airborne vehicles. In 1900 and 1901, the Wrights tested numerous gliders and developed control techniques. The brothers' inability to obtain enough lift power for the gliders almost led them to abandon their efforts.

After further study, the Wright brothers concluded that the published tables of air pressure on curved surfaces must be wrong. They set up a wind tunnel and began a series of experiments with model wings. Because of their efforts, the old tables were repealed in time and replaced by the first reliable figures for air pressure on curved surfaces. This work, in turn, made it possible for the brothers to design a machine that would fly. In 1903 the Wrights built their first airplane, which cost less than \$1,000. They even designed and built their own source of propulsion—a lightweight gasoline engine. When they started the engine on December 17, the airplane pulsated wildly before taking off. The plane managed to stay aloft for 12 seconds, however, and it flew 120 feet.

By 1905, the Wrights had perfected the first airplane that could turn, circle, and remain airborne for half an hour at a time. Others had flown in balloons and hang gliders, but the Wright brothers were the first to build a full-size machine that could fly under its own power. As the contributors of one of the most outstanding engineering achievements in history, the Wright brothers are accurately called the fathers of aviation

INSTRUCTION:

Read the questions carefully and refer to the text above then choose the best answer:

1. The idea of flying an aircraft was _____ to some people.

- A. boring
- B. distasteful
- C. exciting
- D. needless
- E. Answer not available

2. People thought that the Wright brothers had _____.

- A. acted without thinking
- B. been negatively influenced
- C. been too cautious
- D. been mistaken
- E. acted in a negative way

3. The Wrights' interest in flight grew into a _____.

- A. financial empire
- B. plan
- C. need to act
- D. foolish thought
- E. Answer not available

4. Lilienthal's idea about controlling airborne vehicles was _____ the Wrights.

- A. proven wrong by
- B. opposite to the ideas of
- C. disliked by
- D. accepted by
- E. improved by

5. The old tables were _____ and replaced by the first reliable figures for air pressure on curved surfaces.

- A. destroyed
- B. invalidated
- C. multiplied
- D. approved
- E. not used

6. The Wrights designed and built their own source of _____.

- A. force for moving forward
- B. force for turning around
- C. turning
- D. force for going backward
- E. None of the above

Answers and Explanations

- 1. B:** "Repulsive" means distasteful. It does not mean boring (A), exciting (C), or needless (D).
- 2. A:** "Impulsive" means acting on impulse, i.e. acting without thinking. People thinking the Wrights "impulsive fools" does not mean they thought the Wrights had been negatively influenced (B), too cautious (C), mistaken (D), or had acted in a negative way (E).
- 3. C:** A "compulsion" is a need or an urge to act. It is not a financial empire (A), a plan (B), or a foolish thought (D).
- 4. C:** "Repellent" means offensive or hateful; in other words, Lilienthal's idea was disliked by the Wrights. It does not mean his idea was opposite to the idea of (B) the Wrights. It means the opposite of its being accepted by (D) the Wrights. They found his idea unpleasant rather than improving (E) on it.
- 5. B:** "Repealed" means invalidated, i.e. disproven or overturned. It does not mean destroyed (A); multiplied (C), i.e. increased/approved (D), an antonym; or unused (E).
- 6. A:** "Propulsion" is force for propelling or moving forward. It does not mean force for turning around (B), turning (C) (oscillation perhaps), or force for going backward (D) (like repulsion).