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Analyze Ideas and Events

To show connections between ideas, authors structure a text so that each sentence and paragraph supports and develops a central idea. In recounting a historical event, authors usually provide readers with details and support for the central idea such as:

- a factual account of the event
- background information
- quotations and anecdotes, or personal stories, from eyewitnesses.

Read the following historical excerpt and answer the questions.

The Wright Brothers' First Flight

On December 17, 1903, near Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, Orville and Wilbur Wright achieved what many thought impossible: the first sustained, controlled flight of a powered aircraft. While others had created flying machines that briefly left the ground, the Wright brothers were the first to design an aircraft that could be controlled while in flight.

The day was cold and windy, with gusts reaching 27 miles per hour. Despite the challenging conditions, the brothers decided to attempt their flights. They flipped a coin to determine who would pilot first, and Orville won. At 10:35 a.m., the Flyer lifted off the ground with Orville at the controls. The flight lasted only 12 seconds and covered just

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120 feet, but it changed the course of history.

Three more flights were made that day, with Wilbur piloting the final and longest one—covering 852 feet in 59 seconds. A gust of wind then caught the Flyer, damaging it beyond immediate repair, but the milestone had already been achieved.

What made the Wright brothers' achievement remarkable wasn't just that they flew, but how they approached the problem of flight. Unlike many contemporaries who focused on building powerful engines, the brothers first solved the challenge of controlling an aircraft in three dimensions. They conducted systematic tests using homemade wind tunnels and developed theories of lift and control surfaces. Perhaps most significant was their perseverance. After three years of setbacks and failed attempts, they continued refining their designs. They worked in relative obscurity, with few people witnessing their early flights. News of their success spread slowly, with many newspapers initially refusing to cover the story, believing it to be exaggerated. By 1908, however, public demonstrations in Europe and America finally convinced the world that human flight was a reality.

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1. What event does this passage describe as the Wright brothers' key achievement?

2. What factors made the Wright brothers' approach to flight different from their contemporaries?

3. How did the world initially respond to the Wright brothers' achievement?

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Analyze Ideas and Events-**Answer Key**

1. What event does this passage describe as the Wright brothers' key achievement?

The first sustained, controlled flight of a powered aircraft on December 17, 1903, near Kitty Hawk, North Carolina.

2. What factors made the Wright brothers' approach to flight different from their contemporaries?

They focused on solving aircraft control in three dimensions rather than just building powerful engines, and used systematic testing with wind tunnels.

3. How did the world initially respond to the Wright brothers' achievement?

With skepticism—many newspapers refused to cover the story, and their success was only widely acknowledged after public demonstrations five years later.