

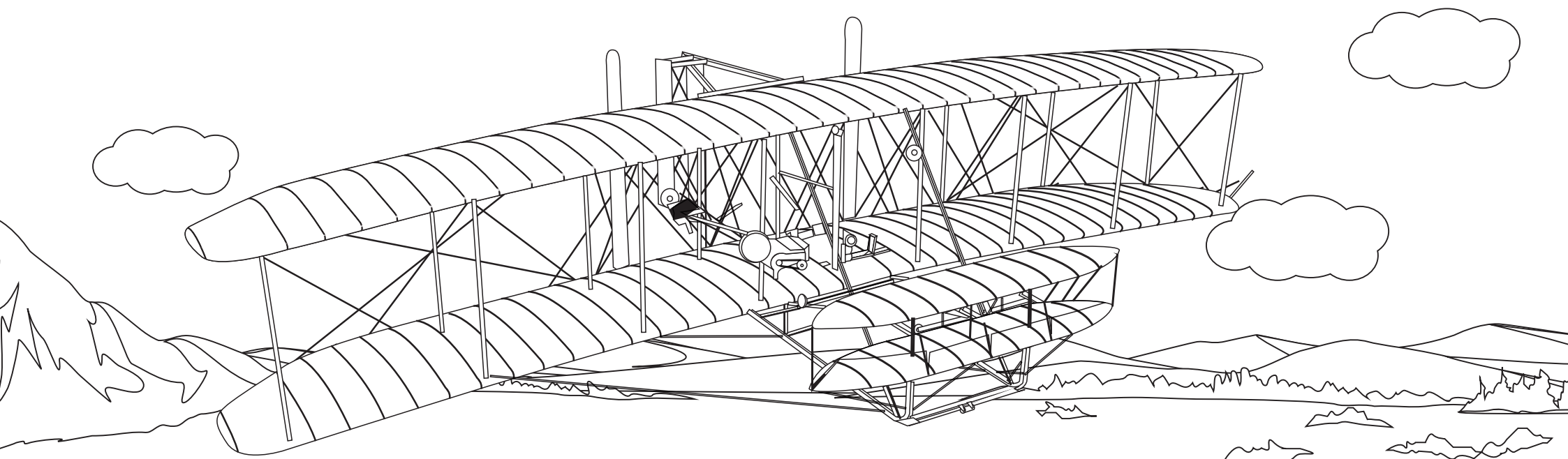
Flying high

People have been fascinated by the concept of flight for centuries. Many different, and at times strange, flying contraptions have been designed and tested over the years. However, the concept of the aeroplane as we know it, has only been around for two centuries. Previously, people were trying to fly using designs that were based on the way birds fly. People built wings that were strapped to their arms and machines with flapping wings called ornithopters. Sadly, these designs did not work and people were forced to think of different ways to achieve flight.

Famous Italian artist, Leonardo da Vinci is credited as drawing some of the first plans for flying machines. As long ago as the 1500s, da Vinci was envisioning machines with wings that flap. Many aviation pioneers followed in his footsteps and planned, built and tested flying machines throughout the years. In 1783, two noblemen piloted the first hot-air balloon. Today we know that it is the heat that makes the balloon rise, but at the time, they mistakenly thought that it was the smoke from the burners that made the balloon take flight.

In 1903 Orville and Wilbur Wright, most famously known as the Wright Brothers, are credited as building the first powered aeroplane to take-off. The Wright Brothers managed to get their plane, the Wright Flyer, airborne for 12 seconds. After this accomplishment, aviation advancements were frequent. In 1909, French aviator Louis Bleriot flew across the English Channel and shortly afterwards, in 1919 John Alcock and Arthur Whitten Brown made the first nonstop transatlantic flight, which is a flight across the Atlantic Ocean.

It was not until 1939 that the first jet-engine aeroplane, similar to the ones we fly in today, made its first successful flight. Today, it is not uncommon to see and hear planes in the sky at all different times of the day. Just under 50,000 flights take off daily and carry passengers all over the world. The largest passenger plane in the skies is the Airbus A-380. It can carry up to 840 people on each flight. What would Leonardo da Vinci or the Wright Brothers think if they could see air travel today?



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Questions – Answer using full sentences.

1. What is an ornithopter?

2. Which country was Leonardo da Vinci from?

3. What is it that makes a hot-air balloon rise?

4. What is a flight across the Atlantic Ocean called?

5. What do you think ‘aviation advancements’ in the third paragraph means?

6. At the beginning of aviation, what types of designs were people focusing on?

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7. Make a timeline of the important dates and events provided in aviation history.

_____ = _____

_____ = _____

_____ = _____

_____ = _____

_____ = _____

_____ = _____

Today = _____

8. If you could ask the Wright Brothers one question, what would it be?

