**The Wright Brothers  
by David McCullough**

**About the Book**

On a winter day in 1903, in the Outer Banks of North Carolina, two brothers—bicycle mechanics from Dayton, Ohio—changed history. But it would take the world some time to believe that the age of flight had begun, with the first powered machine carrying a pilot.

In this “enjoyable, fast-paced tale” (The Economist), master historian David McCullough “shows as never before how two Ohio boys from a remarkable family taught the world to fly” (The Washington Post) and “captures the marvel of what the Wrights accomplished” (The Wall Street Journal). He draws on the extensive Wright family papers to profile not only the brothers but their sister, Katharine, without whom things might well have gone differently for them. Essential reading, this is “a story of timeless importance, told with uncommon empathy and fluency…about what might be the most astonishing feat mankind has ever accomplished…The Wright Brothers soars” (The New York Times Book Review).

**About the Author**

David McCullough has twice received the Pulitzer Prize, for Truman and John Adams, and twice received the National Book Award, for The Path Between the Seas and Mornings on Horseback; His other widely praised books are 1776, Brave Companions, The Great Bridge, and The Johnstown Flood. He has been honored with the National Book Foundation Distinguished Contribution to American Letters Award, the National Humanities Medal, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

**If you enjoyed *The Wright Brothers:***

* *The Boys on the Boat* by Daniel James Brown
* *Unbroken* by Lauren Hildebrand
* *The Aviators by* Winston Groom
* *Falling Upwards: How We Took to the Air* by Richard Holmes
* *The Men Who United The States* by Simon Winchester

**Discussion Questions**

1. What influence did the Wright family circle – especially sister Katharine and Bishop Milton Wright – have on Orville and Wilbur? To what extent are we shaped by our family environment?
2. How were Orville and Wilbur similar? How were they different?
3. In this book, the author reveals that when Wilbur Wright was in France, he spent a fair amount of time at the Louvre and that we was deeply moved by the Gothic works he saw. What importance does the author subscribe to this interest? What does it suggest about the importance of the liberal arts to the fields of science and technology?
4. Why were the Wright brothers dismissed in the United States, but taken seriously in France? What was the difference in culture and/or politics that generated interest on the part of the French but not the Americans?
5. Why was the story of the Wright brothers’ achievements so unlikely? Talk about the hardships, knowledge deficits, and other obstacles they had to overcome in order to succeed.
6. What struck you most about the story of the Wright brothers? What surprised you? How much did you know about their story before you read the book, and what did you come away having learned?
7. In 1908, when the Wrights finally showed their plane to the press, one reporter wrote: “this spectacle of men flying was so startling, so bewildering to the senses… that we all stood like so many marble men.” Imagine yourself in this situation: how might you have reacted? Can you think of a future technological advancement that might astonish you the same way?