



The Wright Brothers

David McCullough

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Two-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize David McCullough tells the dramatic story-behind-the-story about the courageous brothers who taught the world how to fly: Wilbur and Orville Wright.

On December 17, 1903 at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, Wilbur and Orville Wright's Wright Flyer became the first powered, heavier-than-air machine to achieve controlled, sustained flight with a pilot aboard. The Age of Flight had begun. How did they do it? And why? David McCullough tells the extraordinary and truly American story of the two brothers who changed the world.

Sons of an itinerant preacher and a mother who died young, Wilbur and Orville Wright grew up in a small side street in Dayton, Ohio, in a house that lacked indoor plumbing and electricity but was filled with books and a love of learning. The brothers ran a bicycle shop that allowed them to earn enough money to pursue their mission in life: flight. In the 1890s flying was beginning to advance beyond the glider stage, but there were major technical challenges that the Wrights were determined to solve. They traveled to North Carolina's remote Outer Banks to test their plane because there they found three indispensable conditions: constant winds, soft surfaces for landings, and privacy.

Flying was exceedingly dangerous; the Wrights risked their lives every time they flew in the years that followed. Orville nearly died in a crash in 1908, before he was nursed back to health by his sister, Katharine, an unsung and important part of the brothers' success and of McCullough's book. Despite their achievement, the Wrights could not convince the US government to take an interest in their plane until after they demonstrated its success in France, where the government instantly understood the importance of their achievement. Now, in this revelatory book, master historian David McCullough draws on nearly 1,000 letters of family correspondence—plus diaries, notebooks, and family scrapbooks in the Library of Congress—to tell the full story of the Wright brothers and their heroic achievement.

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