

Floating

Humans have always had a desire to fly. Before planes were a reality, people invented other ways to take to the skies. One method was colorful, fun, and sometimes dangerous. It was hot air ballooning.

Hot air balloons work because hot air rises. If the air inside the balloon is warmer than the air outside the balloon, it will float. The first hot air balloonists would heat the air in the balloon while the balloon was tied to the ground. Then they would cut the ropes and take flight. When the air in the balloon cooled off, the balloon would float back down to the ground.

The first hot air balloon flight took place in 1783. The passengers were a sheep, a duck, and a rooster. The balloon stayed aloft for only 15 minutes before crashing. A few months later, the first balloon flight with humans aboard was a success. This balloon flew for 20 minutes before landing safely.

Two years later, hot air balloon technology improved. A French balloonist became the first to fly across the English Channel. There were also setbacks, however. This same year, another French balloonist was killed when his balloon exploded due to an experimental design involving hydrogen.

In 1793, George Washington watched as the first hot air balloon was launched in North America. In the years that followed, hot air ballooning

became an interest at state fairs across the country. It was also featured in the book and movie, *The Wizard of Oz*.

Despite the fascination with hot air ballooning, gas balloons eventually took over. Closed on the bottom to prevent the escape of the gas, they float because gas is lighter than air. Hot air ballooning was mostly forgotten for over 100 years. But in the late 1950s, an American named Ed Yost revived the method of air travel.

Ed designed a balloon that could carry its own fuel. By using lightweight burners powered by bottled propane tanks, the balloonists could re-heat the air inside their balloons in mid-flight. This innovation allowed the balloon to travel for longer distances. It also made balloons easier to steer.

The modern improvements to hot air balloons led to a new era of adventuring in the skies. In 1987, a team of two balloonists became the first to cross the Atlantic Ocean. They paired up again in 1991 to cross the Pacific Ocean, traveling at speeds of up to 245 miles per hour.

Despite the invention of planes and other advances in flight, there is still an interest in hot air ballooning today. Albuquerque, New Mexico hosts an annual Balloon Fiesta, where people gather from all over the world. They display their balloons, race, and even light up their balloons at night. They also learn about new innovations in the field of ballooning.



Humans are adventurers at heart. They have always longed to conquer the skies. Hot air ballooning is a beautiful way to carry out this dream.



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NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. Why do hot air balloons work?
 - a. Because cool air floats
 - b. Because hot air rises
 - c. Because you cut the ropes tying them to the ground
 - d. Because gas is lighter than air

2. Who watched the first hot air balloon launch in North America?
 - a. George Washington
 - b. Ed Yost
 - c. A French balloonist
 - d. The Wizard of Oz

3. Why do you think the passengers on the first balloon flight were a sheep, a duck, and a rooster?
 - a. Because the rooster could crow if something went wrong
 - b. Because animals are lighter than humans
 - c. Because it was too risky to send humans
 - d. Because animals are cooler than humans

4. Which of the following is NOT a reason that hot air ballooning is still popular?
 - a. Balloon travel has become easier and safer
 - b. Balloons are colorful and fun
 - c. Balloons provide adventure
 - d. Balloons are faster than planes

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

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