

Create a Detailed Storyboard for a Documentary on Aviation History

Warming Up

With a small group or partner, list and discuss documentaries you have seen and enjoyed. Then, go through that list to identify features within these documentaries that you think were particularly effective or interesting. Use the following questions to stimulate conversation among the group:

- Was it the presentation?
- Was it the cinematography?
- Was it the biting sarcasm, brilliant insight, or something different entirely?

Make a list of people, events, or other things you believe would make for a great documentary. Use the following questions to stimulate conversation among the group:

- What might these proposed documentaries look like?
- Would they include interviews, file footage, or audio narration?

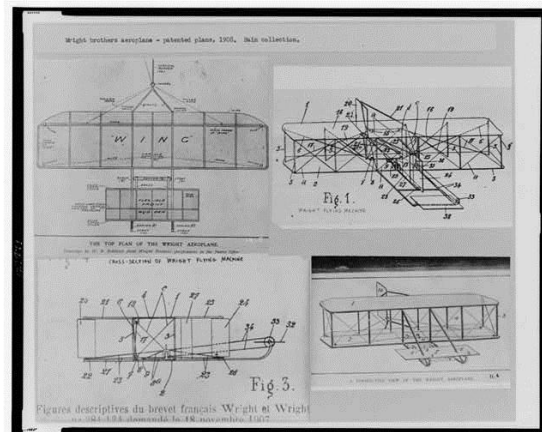
Regroup as a class to share some ideas from each group.

Getting Started

By the year 1908, the Wright brothers had become something of a household name, especially among those interested in the opportunities made possible by further development in aviation. By this time, there were also a number of people interested in replicating the Wright brothers' accomplishment in flight. Everyone, it seemed, was looking to the sky and imagining the coming age of flight.

One of the issues that continued to trouble aviation pioneers around the world was the problem of turning in the air. The Wright brothers had experimented with a few designs while developing and testing their aircraft models. They ultimately determined that the most efficient way of turning an airplane in the air was by using a banked turn. A banked turn is a type of turn where the vehicle doing the turning inclines toward the inside of the turn. NASCAR tracks, with their steep walls on each turn, use banked turning to maintain speed while turning. Airplanes, the Wright brothers surmised, could do the same thing in the air.

In the year 1908, the world got to see the advantage of banked turning. In January of that year, French aviation pioneer Henri Farman flew his aircraft in a complete circle using only the rudder. The audience was impressed, even though the turns were wide and level. Later that same year, the Wright brothers demonstrated the utility of banked turning in France, completing a series of banked turns smoothly and effortlessly. The response from the French public and from Farman's colleagues was amazement.



Wright brothers aeroplane - patented plans, 1908, LOC Prints and Photographs Division; <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2001695572/>

The development of the banked turn was an important but largely unappreciated part of the history of aeronautics. In short, it is an excellent idea for a short documentary on aviation history. As a trained documentary filmmaker, you have been looking for just this type of development to focus in on and explore in a documentary. Unfortunately, you have just discovered that a competitor of yours is working on this very project, so you will need to find another focus. It is time to get to work looking through the archives and history books to find your own important but underappreciated aspect of aviation history.

Real-World Topics

- History can be presented in a number of different ways, including books, websites, documentaries, and more.
- The most effective presentation methods are those that encourage further exploration and critical thinking on a particular historical subject.

Readings

The following list of readings and sources should be used to complete the activity. Use the [Research Note Taker](#) to record bibliographical information about each source and important notes from each reading.

Books:

- Quentin Reynolds, *The Wright Brothers: Pioneers of American Aviation* (New York: Random House, 1950).
- Russell Freedman, *The Wright Brothers: How They Invented the Airplane* (New York: Holiday House, 1991).

Archival Sources:

The [Wilbur and Orville Wright Papers collection](#) at the Library of Congress includes some 10,121 text items and nearly 5,000 digital images. Here are a few selections that may prove useful for this activity:

- [Scrapbooks, 1902-1914](#)
- [Diaries and Notebooks 1900-1919](#)
- [General Correspondence, 1899-1949](#)

Building Background

View this short PBS documentary to gain some inspiration as you prepare to develop your own documentary:

[Inventing Flight](#)

Activity: Create a Detailed Storyboard for a Documentary on Aviation History

Imagine that you are a filmmaker. You are looking to make a big splash with a short film. You have found your focus: aviation history. Now it is time to get to work.

Making a documentary requires a number of steps:

Content Research: The first step in preparing to make a historical documentary is to review the relevant history and surrounding details for your topic. You should familiarize yourself with the important historical actors and events. For this project, you should review the sources identified in the Readings section above.

Determine Your Focus: As you research, pay close attention to the chronology and events you discover. You will want to identify a small but significant event, interaction, or technological development that you can elaborate on in a documentary. Select an event that is rich enough to justify a short documentary but focused enough to be adequately covered in 5 minutes.

Note: As you complete these steps, be sure to keep careful notes of what you find on your copy of the [Research Note Taker](#).

Image Research: When determining your focus, you will want to think about the types of images to show in your documentary. Be sure to select a focus that will allow you to use a great number of interesting images.

Storyboarding and Scriptwriting: Once you have completed your research and identified your focus, you will need to sketch out the film itself. This is the storyboarding process. For this step, you will use [ThePlot](#), online storyboarding software. The software will help you transform your research into an engaging story ready to be filmed as a documentary.

Finding Images:

Any good and entertaining documentary will include a great number of historical images and video if available. Showing these images and video while voicing over a recorded script is a common documentary method. To find good images and video, use general Internet image searches and online historical image databases such as:

- [The Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Online Catalog](#)
- [Wikimedia Commons](#)
- [Internet Archive](#)

Building Your Storyboard

Watch the short [Plot Tutorial Video](#) available at the Plot site. Additionally, you should consider reviewing these [Sample Storyboards](#) to better understand the use and utility of storyboarding.

Reflect

Consider the following reflection prompts, and submit your answers in the form of a short essay or through class discussion:

How did creating the documentary storyboard help you better understand the history of aviation and aeronautics? In what ways were the primary documents helpful in exploring the intricate details of the history of aviation and aeronautics? In what ways do you believe the documentary proved to be a more effective presentation method than other methods, like print publishing or creating a website? In what ways was it less effective?