COMMONLIT

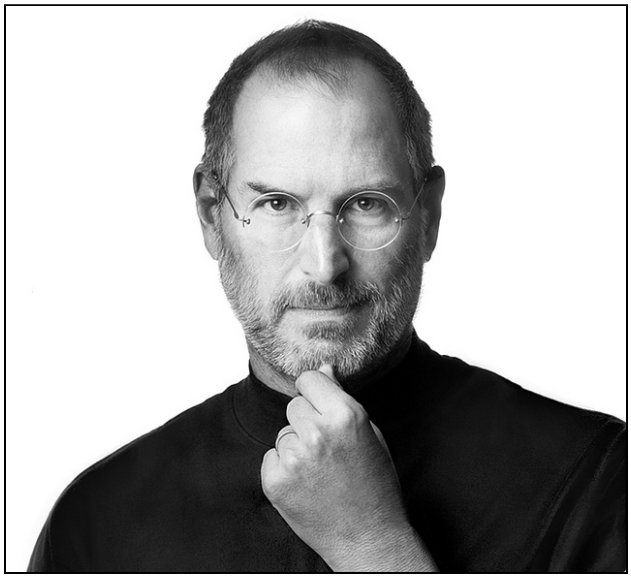
Name: _____ Class: _____

Steve Jobs' Stanford University Commencement Speech

By Steve Jobs
2005

Steve Jobs (1955-2011) was the co-founder, chairman and CEO of Apple Inc., and is well known as a very successful and charismatic entrepreneur. In addition, Jobs was a pioneer of the personal computer revolution and co-founder and chief executive of Pixar Animated Studios. In his 2005 commencement address at Stanford University, Jobs offers students insight into how to lead a successful life. As you read, take notes on the central ideas of Jobs' stories, and the rhetorical devices that make his points effective.

[1] I am honored to be with you today at your commencement from one of the finest universities in the world. I never graduated from college. Truth be told, this is the closest I've ever gotten to a college graduation. Today I want to tell you three stories from my life. That's it. No big deal. Just three stories.



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The first story is about connecting the dots.

I dropped out of Reed College after the first 6 months, but then stayed around as a drop-in for another 18 months or so before I really quit. So why did I drop out?

It started before I was born. My biological mother was a young, unwed college graduate student, and she decided to put me up for adoption. She felt very strongly that I should be adopted by college graduates, so everything was all set for me to be adopted at birth by a lawyer and his wife. Except that when I popped out they decided at the last minute that they really wanted a girl. So my parents, who were on a waiting list, got a call in the middle of the night asking: "We have an unexpected baby boy; do you want him?" They said: "Of course." My biological mother later found out that my mother had never graduated from college and that my father had never graduated from high school. She refused to sign the final adoption papers. She only relented a few months later when my parents promised that I would someday go to college.

[5] And 17 years later I did go to college. But I naively chose a college that was almost as expensive as Stanford, and all of my working-class parents' savings were being spent on my college tuition. After six months, I couldn't see the value in it. I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life and no idea how college was going to help me figure it out. And here I was spending all of the money my parents had saved their entire life. So I decided to drop out and trust that it would all work out OK. It was pretty scary at the time, but looking back it was one of the best decisions I ever made. The minute I dropped out I could stop taking the required classes that didn't interest me, and begin dropping in on the ones that looked interesting.

It wasn't all romantic. I didn't have a dorm room, so I slept on the floor in friends' rooms, I returned coke bottles for the 5¢ deposits to buy food with, and I would walk the 7 miles across town every Sunday night to get one good meal a week at the Hare Krishna temple. I loved it. And much of what I stumbled into by following my curiosity and intuition turned out to be priceless later on. Let me give you one example:

Reed College at that time offered perhaps the best calligraphy instruction in the country. Throughout the campus every poster, every label on every drawer, was beautifully hand calligraphed. Because I had dropped out and didn't have to take the normal classes, I decided to take a calligraphy class to learn how to do this. I learned about serif and san serif typefaces, about varying the amount of space between different letter combinations, about what makes great typography great. It was beautiful, historical, artistically subtle in a way that science can't capture, and I found it fascinating.

None of this had even a hope of any practical application in my life. But ten years later, when we were designing the first Macintosh computer, it all came back to me. And we designed it all into the Mac. It was the first computer with beautiful typography. If I had never dropped in on that single course in college, the Mac would have never had multiple typefaces or proportionally spaced fonts. And since Windows just copied the Mac, it's likely that no personal computer would have them. If I had never dropped out, I would have never dropped in on this calligraphy class, and personal computers might not have the wonderful typography that they do. Of course it was impossible to connect the dots looking forward when I was in college. But it was very, very clear looking backwards ten years later.

Again, you can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something — your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever. This approach has never let me down, and it has made all the difference in my life.

[10] My second story is about love and loss.

I was lucky — I found what I loved to do early in life. Woz and I started Apple in my parents' garage when I was 20. We worked hard, and in 10 years Apple had grown from just the two of us in a garage into a $2 billion company with over 4000 employees. We had just released our finest creation — the Macintosh — a year earlier, and I had just turned 30. And then I got fired. How can you get fired from a company you started? Well, as Apple grew we hired someone who I thought was very talented to run the company with me, and for the first year or so things went well. But then our visions of the future began to diverge and eventually we had a falling out. When we did, our Board of Directors sided with him. So at 30 I was out. And very publicly out. What had been the focus of my entire adult life was gone, and it was devastating.

I really didn't know what to do for a few months. I felt that I had let the previous generation of entrepreneurs down — that I had dropped the baton as it was being passed to me. I met with David Packard and Bob Noyce and tried to apologize for screwing up so badly. I was a very public failure, and I even thought about running away from the valley. But something slowly began to dawn on me — I still loved what I did. The turn of events at Apple had not changed that one bit. I had been rejected, but I was still in love. And so I decided to start over .

I didn't see it then, but it turned out that getting fired from Apple was the best thing that could have ever happened to me. The heaviness of being successful was replaced by the lightness of being a beginner again, less sure about everything. It freed me to enter one of the most creative periods of my life.

During the next five years, I started a company named NeXT, another company named Pixar, and fell in love with an amazing woman who would become my wife. Pixar went on to create the world's first computer animated feature film, *Toy Story,* and is now the most successful animation studio in the world. In a remarkable turn of events, Apple bought NeXT, I returned to Apple, and the technology we developed at NeXT is at the heart of Apple's current renaissance. And Laurene and I have a wonderful family together.

[15] I'm pretty sure none of this would have happened if I hadn't been fired from Apple. It was awful tasting medicine, but I guess the patient needed it. Sometimes life hits you in the head with a brick. Don't lose faith. I'm convinced that the only thing that kept me going was that I loved what I did. You've got to find what you love. And that is as true for your work as it is for your lovers. Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So keep looking until you find it. Don't settle.

My third story is about death.

When I was 17, I read a quote that went something like: "If you live each day as if it was your last, someday you'll most certainly be right." It made an impression on me, and since then, for the past 33 years, I have looked in the mirror every morning and asked myself: "If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?" And whenever the answer has been "No" for too many days in a row, I know I need to change something.

Remembering that I'll be dead soon is the most important tool I've ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life. Because almost everything — all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure — these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important. Remembering that you are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose. You are already naked. There is no reason not to follow your heart.

About a year ago I was diagnosed with cancer. I had a scan at 7:30 in the morning, and it clearly showed a tumor on my pancreas. I didn't even know what a pancreas was. The doctors told me this was almost certainly a type of cancer that is incurable, and that I should expect to live no longer than three to six months. My doctor advised me to go home and get my affairs in order, which is doctor's code for prepare to die. It means to try to tell your kids everything you thought you'd have the next 10 years to tell them in just a few months. It means to make sure everything is buttoned up so that it will be as easy as possible for your family. It means to say your goodbyes.

[20] I lived with that diagnosis all day. Later that evening I had a biopsy, where they stuck an endoscope down my throat, through my stomach and into my intestines, put a needle into my pancreas and got a few cells from the tumor. I was sedated, but my wife, who was there, told me that when they viewed the cells under a microscope the doctors started crying because it turned out to be a very rare form of pancreatic cancer that is curable with surgery. I had the surgery and I'm fine now.

This was the closest I've been to facing death, and I hope it's the closest I get for a few more decades. Having lived through it, I can now say this to you with a bit more certainty than when death was a useful but purely intellectual concept:

No one wants to die. Even people who want to go to heaven don't want to die to get there. And yet death is the destination we all share. No one has ever escaped it. And that is as it should be, because Death is very likely the single best invention of Life. It is Life's change agent. It clears out the old to make way for the new. Right now the new is you, but someday not too long from now, you will gradually become the old and be cleared away. Sorry to be so dramatic, but it is quite true.

Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma — which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.

When I was young, there was an amazing publication called *The Whole Earth Catalog*, which was one of the bibles of my generation. It was created by a fellow named Stewart Brand not far from here in Menlo Park, and he brought it to life with his poetic touch. This was in the late 1960s, before personal computers and desktop publishing, so it was all made with typewriters, scissors, and polaroid cameras. It was sort of like Google in paperback form, 35 years before Google came along: it was idealistic, and overflowing with neat tools and great notions.

[25] Stewart and his team put out several issues of *The Whole Earth Catalog*, and then when it had run its course, they put out a final issue. It was the mid-1970s, and I was your age. On the back cover of their final issue was a photograph of an early morning country road, the kind you might find yourself hitchhiking on if you were so adventurous. Beneath it were the words: "Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish." It was their farewell message as they signed off. Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish. And I have always wished that for myself. And now, as you graduate to begin anew, I wish that for you.

Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish.

Thank you all very much.

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following best explains the meaning of the following quotation?: [RI.4] "[Y]ou can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards." (Paragraph 9)
    A. Don't concern yourself by looking back on the past; focus on your drive for the future.
    B. It's impossible to know how to get where you want to go, but as long as you're working hard, you'll get there.
    C. While you cannot predict the future, looking back you can often see how you got to where you are.
    D. It is okay to not have an expressed purpose in life; you'll find success once you find what you love.

2. PART B: Which statement from the text best supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]
    A. "...it's likely that no personal computer would have them." (Paragraph 8)
    B. "...it was very, very clear looking backwards ten years later." (Paragraph 8)
    C. "...destiny, life, karma, whatever." (Paragraph 9)
    D. "This approach has never let me down..." (Paragraph 9)

3. How did Jobs' interest in calligraphy in college benefit him professionally later on? [RI.3]

4. PART A: Which of the following best explains the meaning of the following quote?: "It was awful tasting medicine, but I guess the patient needed it." (Paragraph 15) [RI.4]
    A. The cancer treatments Jobs had to endure were difficult physically and emotionally
    B. The experience was extremely difficult, but in hindsight, it was valuable
    C. Sometimes, you need to be able to swallow difficult information or experiences
    D. You have to suffer in order to grow

5. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]

   A. "...it turned out that getting fired from Apple was the best thing that could have ever happened to me." (Paragraph 13)
   B. "Sometimes life hits you in the head with a brick." (Paragraph 15)
   C. "Remembering that you are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose." (Paragraph 18)
   D. "...they stuck an endoscope down my throat, through my stomach and into my intestines, put a needle into my pancreas..." (Paragraph 20)

6. In paragraph 16, Jobs says, "My third story is about death." What is the central idea of that story? [RI.2]

   A. Everyone dies eventually—don't take yourself more seriously or consider yourself more important than anyone else.
   B. The loss of a beloved person or position can be a catalyst for great life changes—embrace them.
   C. Your time on Earth is limited—don't spend it trying to please anyone but yourself.
   D. Don't waste your life working; instead focus only on what is fun and enjoyable.

Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. Steve Jobs has faced many challenges; does he think about these changes positively or negatively? Explain your answer.

2. According to Jobs, what does it mean to be grown up? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other art or literature in your answer.

COMMONLIT

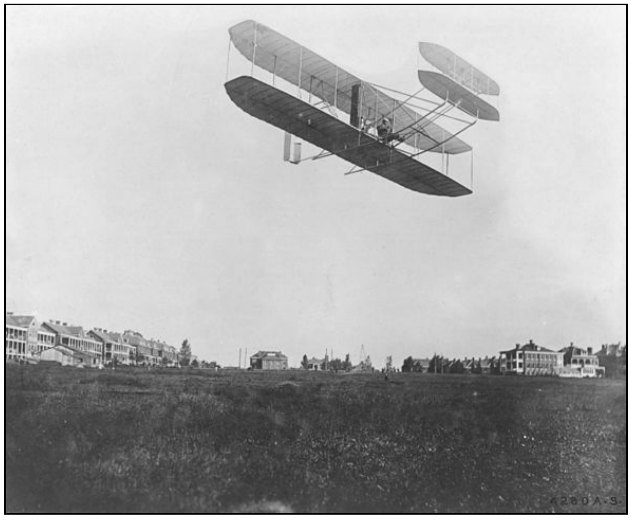
Name: _____ Class: _____

The Wright Brothers: Air Pioneers

By David White
2014

Orville Wright (1871-1948) and Wilbur Wright (1867-1912) were American inventors. They were aviation experts who are credited with building the world's first successful airplane. As you read, identify the challenges the brothers faced when engineering the first airplane.

Part 1: A Childhood of Curiosity



"The Wright Brothers: Air Pioneers" by C.H. Claudy is in the public domain.

[1] Orville and Wilbur Wright were born four years apart, in different cities. They shared a curiosity about the world and a love of tinkering[1] that would make history.

Wilbur was born in 1867 on a small farm near Millville, Indiana. Orville was born in 1871 in a house in Dayton, Ohio. Their father was a Bishop in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ. (The Wrights had five children in all: Reuchlin, Lorin, and Katharine were the names of the other children.)

Life in the Wright house was strict but loving. Both parents encouraged their children to enjoy school and learn as much as they could. A large library of books about all kinds of subjects helped the Wright children quench[2] their thirst for knowledge from a very early age.

Orville and Wilbur's fascination with flight began with a present their father gave them — a flying toy. It had a paper body and other parts made of cork and bamboo. Rubber bands provided the power. The young boys (7 and 11) were thrilled to make the little toy fly across the room, so much so that they broke it. They remembered how it looked, though, and promised each other that someday they would fly in the air, just like the little toy.

[5] The boys continued to be interested in mechanical things and flight. Orville sold kites at school to make money. Wilbur started reading all he could about how birds flew and machines worked.

1. **Tinker** ***(verb):*** to try to repair or make adjustments to something
2. to satisfy a thirst or desire for something

Though the boys were good students, neither graduated from high school. (Not many did in those days, actually.) Wilbur was hit in the face with a baseball bat when he was a teenager and suffered from irregular heartbeats the rest of his life. He stayed at home for a while, during which time their mother developed tuberculosis (which, at that time, was a devastating disease with no known cure). Wilbur recovered himself and then stayed at home to care for his mother. Orville left high school on his own, to start a printing business. He and Wilbur designed a printing press that worked very well. The two later sold the printing business and opened a bicycle shop. They were both very good mechanics and could fix just about anything anyone asked them to fix. (They inherited this skill and desire from their mother, who was the family mechanic.)

It was in the bicycle shop that the idea of the airplane was born. One day, Wilbur squeezed an empty bicycle tube box flat. He noticed how it looked when he twisted in his hands. (The flattened box is the exact shape of the two-winged glider that the Wrights would produce just a couple years later.) They also used a bicycle chain as a propeller on their plane. (It should be pointed out here that the Wrights had to invent the propeller as a means of propulsion.)[3] The double-triangle design of the plane also looks a lot like a bicycle.

And one day in 1902, Orville and Wilbur took turns pedaling one of their own bicycles down a city street as fast as they could go — with a third wheel attached in front. The wheel was mounted flat on the handlebars. It spun freely, with two metal plates on top of it. One plate was flat, and the other was curved. This setup allowed the Wrights to measure air resistance,[4] another key to building an airplane that would work.

The Wrights had also made kites, very large ones, in fact. By 1900, they were making ones so large that people could fly in them, sort of. These were called gliders, and Orville and Wilbur actually built one or two that were large enough for a person to ride in. They flew on nothing but air current, and the person could get a ride of about 10 seconds before the glider came down to the ground.

Part 2: Persistence to Success

[10] The Wrights wanted more, of course, and built a better glider that had a rudder, to steer with. One of their gliders stayed aloft[5] a time, flying more than 600 feet. But they still came down, no matter what the person aboard did. The Wrights wanted to make a machine such that the pilot could control when the machine would land.

They had thought of engines, of course, like the ones in factories. But these engines were much too big. Orville and Wilbur finally decided to make an engine that would be small enough and light enough to power one of their gliders. With their mother's love of tinkering and their own curiosity driving them, they made an engine that would fit the bill and installed it on their newest glider.

The Wrights had chosen Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, as a place to test their plane. This spot had lots of wind, and it had a large sand dune that would hopefully catch the plane if something went wrong. They had been coming to Kitty Hawk for a few years, testing gliders and other ideas. They had built more complicated machines all the time.

3. Propulsion refers to the force or action of pushing something forward.
4. Air resistance is a type of friction that acts in opposition to a moving object, slowing down the direction of the object.
5. in the air

So it was on December 14, 1903, that Wilbur Wright made the first experiment with the new man-powered airplane flight. The flight didn't last long and ended in a crash, which took the Wrights a few days to repair. And it is worth noting that the plane got up its momentum[6] on this attempt by gliding down a monorail from the top of a hill. (The plane had wheels, remember, and so it rolled down the rail, just like a bicycle.)

Wilbur was the pilot that day. The brothers had flipped a coin to see who would go first.

[15] After repairing the plane, Orville and Wilbur decided to put the track on flat ground. This would allow Wilbur to run alongside the plane as it was gaining speed and keep the right wing steady. (Because the plane had been going downhill on the first attempt, Orville couldn't keep up and so Wilbur had had to try to steer the plane himself. Not being familiar with how to do such a thing, Wilbur steered too much and the plane quickly hit the ground.)

With the coin flip results intact (meaning that it was Orville's turn to fly), the little plane was launched on December 17. Wilbur pushed, Orville pedaled, and the plane rose in the air. It was only aloft for 12 seconds and went 120 feet, but it was official: The Wright brothers had a machine that could fly.

Part 3: A Legacy in the Air

They flew the machine three times that day, mainly because each time they managed to land without crashing. Each flight was a bit longer, and the final flight of the day carried Wilbur 852 feet. He was in the air for a full 59 seconds.

The Wright plane wasn't a hit overnight, however. No one else knew about the flight. The brothers returned to their bicycle business in Dayton and also continued to refine their airplane invention. Not long after that, they had built a plane that could fly 25 miles and go 40 miles an hour. They even had a model that could fly circles in the air — and not go off-balance and crash to the ground!

In 1908, Wilbur flew one of their planes in front of royalty in Europe. In the same year, the rest of America discovered the airplane when a newspaper reporter witnessed a flight and wrote about it. The story was soon in newspapers all over the country. The Wrights were suddenly famous.

[20] The very next year, they opened a business to make airplanes, the Wright Company. They found great fame and success making airplanes. Unfortunately, Wilbur died in 1912 of typhoid fever. Orville lived on, however, eventually selling his business and watching his and his brother's dream become a reality in the modern industrial age.

6. Momentum is the strength or force an object gains through motion or a series of events.

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following best describes the central idea of the text?
    A. The Wright brothers inspired generations of pilots and engineers after them to create better flying methods.
    B. The Wright brothers achieved their dreams because they were naturally talented engineers who needed little training.
    C. The Wright brothers dedicated their entire lives to flight, which paid off when they instantly became famous after the first successful flight.
    D. The Wright brothers were the first to successfully create and fly an airplane because of their brilliance and determination.

2. PART B: Which of the following quotes best supports the answer to Part A?
    A. "Orville and Wilbur's fascination with flight began with a present their father gave them — a flying toy." (Paragraph 4)
    B. "They were both very good mechanics and could fix just about anything… (They inherited this skill and desire from their mother, who was the family mechanic.)" (Paragraph 6)
    C. "The brothers… continued to refine their airplane invention. Not long after that, they had built a plane that could fly 25 miles and go 40 miles an hour." (Paragraph 18)
    D. "Orville lived on, however, eventually selling his business and watching his and his brother's dream become a reality in the modern industrial age." (Paragraph 20)

3. How do paragraphs 3-5 contribute to the author's explanation of the Wright brothers?
    A. This section provides background information on the brothers' love of learning and mechanical things, as well as what sparked their interest in flight.
    B. This section shows the brothers' creativity as they looked to other sources, such as toys and birds, for inspiration on how to create a flying machine.
    C. This section provides insight into the Wrights' household and helps the reader imagine what it must have been like for Orville and Wilbur growing up.
    D. This section shows how one incident can inspire lifelong dreams, like the paper toy inspired the Wright brothers' obsession with mechanical engineering.

4. How does the relationship between gliders and airplanes help the reader understand how the Wright brothers achieved flight?
    A. Both the glider and plane relied on propulsion in order to get up and stay up in the air.
    B. The two inventions shared many similarities, such as design and using air currents, but the brothers wanted more control and power with the airplane.
    C. The two inventions shared many similarities, such as using propellers, but the brothers designed for more speed and momentum with the airplane.
    D. The glider was much more quickly popular than the airplane because fewer people were able to operate the airplane.

5. What connections does the author draw between the Wrights' experiences as bicycle shop owners and how they designed the airplane?

Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. In paragraph 7 the author notes: “It should be pointed out here that the Wrights had to invent the propeller as a means of propulsion.” Do you think it is possible to invent something from nothing? Is that what the Wright brothers did? Explain your answer.

2. The Wright brothers were by no means successful at first; in fact, we learned from the text that they had a lot of struggles along their way to success. Do you think that those struggles are essential to success? Can you be successful if you are not resilient? Explain your answer.

3. In the context of this text, what qualities are essential for success? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.