

NEWS BREAK

Article: **JetZero: A new kind of plane, bigger-than-Boeing dreams**

Section: **BUSINESS, C5**

Sunday's News Break selects an article from **Sunday, September 20, 2026**, of The Seattle Times print replica for an in-depth reading of the news. Read the selected article and answer the attached study questions.

Feel free to adapt this lesson for your students. For instance, some educators may assign this as a homework task, while others might facilitate the reading and discussion of questions within small groups or larger class discussions.

****Please take a moment to review all NIE content before classroom use to ensure it is suitable for your students.****

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1

- Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2

- Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

Learning Objectives:

After reading the article, students will analyze how JetZero's new blended-wing aircraft design could improve fuel efficiency and reduce emissions. Students will be able to explain how the blended-wing design differs from traditional airplanes and how new materials and technology have made this design more possible. Students will evaluate the challenges JetZero faces in developing, testing, and building its aircraft, including safety, cost, and passenger comfort, and explain how this new airplane design could affect the future of commercial air travel.

Pre-Reading Discussion:



- What do you think the article will be about, using these pictures?
- Are there any clues? What can you infer?

Vocabulary Building:

Read this sentence, what do you think the highlighted word means using context clues? A **context clue** is a word or words that are hints and refers to the sources of information outside of words that readers may use to predict the meaning of the word.

“Safety regulators allow aircraft manufacturers to essentially cut some corners when designing prototypes meant to prove that the plane will fly and will offer the promised **aerodynamic** efficiencies.”

Aerodynamic Guess:

Aerodynamic Definition:

Comprehension Questions:

1. As a commercial airliner, it would have two entrances, a wide cabin, an overhead bin for every seat — and no _____.

2. The concept has been in the works for decades, part of the industry's continuous push to make planes more _____ - _____ to reduce emissions and fuel costs.
3. Now, a startup based in California is ready to try. _____ aims to fly its prototype for the first time next year and to carry paying passengers in the 2030s.
4. A new type of aircraft Commercial planes flying today are often called "_____ - _____ - _____" aircraft, referring to the cylindrical fuselage sandwiched between two wings.
5. In that configuration, the wings provide _____ and counteract _____ from other parts of the plane, like the tail and sharp joints where parts of the aircraft are connected to one another. The fuselage doesn't help with that lift.
6. In a _____ - _____ aircraft, the entire body of the aircraft generates lift, making the plane more fuel-efficient.
7. _____ ultimately abandoned those plans, likely considering the idea too costly and too risky as it balanced launching a new airplane while continuing to produce its existing models.
8. _____ — lightweight, durable materials to replace heavier metals like aluminum — have made it possible to design new configurations without adding weight to the aircraft.
9. The startup has raised more than \$320 million in funding, according to a PitchBook estimate, including roughly \$100 million in debt financing at the end of August.
10. The _____ chose JetZero for a \$235 million contract in 2023 to accelerate development of the company's full-scale demonstrator, called Jet1.
11. On the military side, JetZero's blended-wing design could be considered for future _____.
12. On the commercial side, JetZero is partnering with _____ Air Lines and has secured investments from _____ and _____ Airlines, which signed up to receive the company's first commercial delivery.

Class Discussion Questions:

- What surprised (or stood out to) you in the article?
- At first, I thought _____, but now I think _____?

Deeper-Dive "Connect & Explain" Comprehension Questions for Small Groups, Entire Classes or Journal Entries and/or Essay Prompts for Extended Enrichment:

1. The article explains that JetZero is developing a blended-wing aircraft that is very different from the traditional tube-and-wing design. Why might changing the shape of an airplane help make it more fuel-efficient?

2. The article explains that the entire body of a blended-wing aircraft can generate lift. How is this different from the way traditional tube-and-wing airplanes generate lift, and why might this difference be important?
3. Aerospace companies have studied blended-wing aircraft for decades, but the design has not yet been used for commercial passengers. What technological and financial challenges have made this type of aircraft difficult to develop?
4. The article describes advances in composite materials as one reason the blended-wing concept has become more realistic. Why are lightweight and durable materials important when engineers are designing a new type of airplane?
5. JetZero must prove that its aircraft can meet the same safety standards as today's commercial airplanes. Why might creating and certifying a completely new type of aircraft be more difficult than improving an existing airplane design?
6. JetZero plans to build a manufacturing facility that could eventually cover 8 million square feet. Why would a company developing a new airplane need such a large manufacturing facility, and what does the size of the facility suggest about JetZero's long-term plans?
7. The article explains that JetZero's aircraft would have no windows but would provide an overhead bin for every seat. How might these design choices change the experience of passengers compared with flying on a traditional commercial airplane?
8. JetZero has received government funding and is working with airline companies such as Delta and Alaska. Why might partnerships with the government and established airlines be important for a startup developing an entirely new type of aircraft?
9. The article states that traditional tube-and-wing airplanes may be "reaching a ceiling" on improvements in fuel efficiency. How could this challenge create an opportunity for companies like JetZero to develop new aircraft designs?

Extended Essay Prompts

- The article describes JetZero's attempt to develop a blended-wing aircraft that could use less fuel than traditional airplanes. Examine how changes in aircraft design and technology could affect the future of air travel. In your essay, discuss the potential benefits of the blended-wing design as well as the challenges JetZero must overcome before the aircraft can carry passengers.
- The article explains that aerospace companies have considered blended-wing aircraft for decades but have not yet successfully introduced one for commercial passengers. Why can developing and introducing a completely new type of aircraft be difficult? In your essay, examine the roles of technology, safety testing, manufacturing, cost, government

- regulation, and passenger comfort in bringing a new airplane design to the commercial market.
- JetZero's aircraft could represent a major change from the traditional tube-and-wing airplanes used today. Examine how innovation can change an established industry. In your essay, discuss why companies such as JetZero might pursue risky new technologies, what challenges they face when competing in an established industry, and how successful innovation could affect airlines and passengers.

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