



1 At the top of the poll, the obvious choice: the Wright Flyer of 1903, shown here on its first flight of 120 feet on the sand dunes of Kill Devil Hill at Kittyhawk, N.C. Orville Wright is piloting while brother Wilbur looks on. Air & Space Museum archives

# 100 years 100 aircraft

*Compiled by Paul Boyer*

Readers rank  
the 100 most  
significant aircraft  
of the first  
century of aviation

Back in the May 2003 *FineScale Modeler*, we presented nominations for the “100 most significant aircraft” and invited our readers to rank them by voting on our website. Well, the votes are in, and now that the polls are closed in California, we can report the results.

First, let me thank once again our panel of experts who helped me compile the list: aviation authors and historians Dana Bell, Walter Boyne, Bert Kinzey,

Bob Mikesh, Jay Miller, Wayne Mutza, Warren Thompson, and Brig. Gen. Chuck Yeager (ret.).

And now thank you, readers – 1,501 of you – each of whom voted for 20 of the nominees. Not surprisingly, better than 70 percent of you voted for the Wright Flyer as the most significant aircraft of the first century of manned flight. The rest of the list has some surprises, as you’ll see on the following pages.



**2** The Douglas DC-3/C-47 made air travel profitable ... and comfortable. The military versions included the C-47, shown here in U.S. Army Golden Knights regalia. U.S. Army photo via Wayne Mutza



**3** Messerschmitt's revolutionary Me 262 was the first jet fighter to see action. This captured two-seater was photographed at Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio, in March 1946. Jim Hawkins photo via Len Lundh



**4** The classic lines of the North American P-51 Mustang puts shape to the term "World War II fighter." This magnificently restored P-51C of the Tuskegee Airmen was photographed at AirVenture 2002 by Len Lundh

Rank	Aircraft	Votes
1	Wright Flyer	1,064
2	Douglas DC-3/C-47	942
3	Messerschmitt Me 262	914
4	North American P-51 Mustang	894
5	Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress	728
6	Boeing B-52 Stratofortress	716
7	Lockheed SR-71/A-12/ YF-12 Blackbird	688
8	Supermarine Spitfire	627
9	Lockheed C-130 Hercules	583
10	Lockheed F-117A Nighthawk	575
11	McDonnell Douglas F-4 Phantom	572
12	Boeing 747	543
13	Bell X-1	538
14	Messerschmitt Bf 109	517
15	Rockwell space shuttle	503
16	BAe/Aérospatiale Concorde	495
tie	BAe/McDonnell Douglas Harrier	495
18	North American X-15	490
19	Boeing 707/KC-135/Dash 80	463
20	Bell UH-1 Iroquois (Huey)	433
21	Mikoyan Gurevich MiG-15	426
22	Boeing B-29 Superfortress	411
23	Grumman F-14 Tomcat	405
24	North American F-86 Sabre	401
25	Mitsubishi A6M5 Zero (Zeke)	364
26	Vought F4U Corsair	341
27	McDonnell Douglas F-15 Eagle	331
28	Focke Wulf Fw 190	324
29	Lockheed U-2	322
30	Lockheed P-38 Lightning	300
31	Mikoyan Gurevich MiG-21	293
32	Fokker D.VII	290
33	Piper Cub/Super Cub	286
34	Fokker E.I	278

Rank	Aircraft	Votes
35	Cessna 150/152	275
36	Junkers Ju 87 Stuka	271
37	North American B-25 Mitchell	263
38	Hawker Hurricane	255
39	Ryan NYP "Spirit of St. Louis"	252
40	De Havilland Mosquito	249
tie	Ilyushin Il-2 Stormovik	249
42	Bell 47	248
43	Curtiss Jenny	247
44	Rutan Voyager	246
45	Grumman F6F Hellcat	237
46	Northrop B-2 Spirit	235
tie	Republic P-47 Thunderbolt	235
48	De Havilland Comet	222
49	Boeing 737	220
50	Consolidated PBV Catalina	215
51	Gen. Dynamics/Lockheed F-16 Fighting Falcon	214
52	Avro Lancaster	210
53	Lockheed C-5 Galaxy	208
54	Consolidated B-24 Liberator	202
55	North American AT-6/SNJ	199
56	Heinkel He 178	195
57	Douglas AD/A-1 Skyraider	192
58	Gates Learjet	175
59	Lockheed Constellation	160
60	Boeing B-47 Stratojet	156
tie	Sukhoi Su-27/35 Flanker	156
62	Convair B-58 Hustler	155
63	Sikorsky VS-300	150
64	Douglas A-4 Skyhawk	144
65	Curtiss P-40	143
66	Sikorsky S-61/H-3 Sea King/Jolly Green Giant	138
67	Curtiss Flying Boat of 1912	136



5 If the Mustang defined "fighter," then the Boeing B-17 screamed "bomber." USAF photo via Wayne Mutza



6 Still going strong more than 50 years after its first flight, Boeing's B-52 Stratofortress is possibly the most famous jet bomber in history. These F models carried Hound Dog cruise missiles. USAF photo via Wayne Mutza



7 The famous "Blackbird" – Lockheed's SR-71A. Nearly 40 years after its first flight, it is still unmatched in performance. Mach 3 at 80,000 made it untouchable. USAF photo via Jim Goodall





**8** Arguably the most beautiful military aircraft of all time, the Supermarine Spitfire served Britain and the Allies all the way through World War II. This classic photo of a Mk.V is from the Air & Space archives via Dana Bell.



**9** Mighty Hercules, the ubiquitous military transport, is nearly 50 years old. This HC-130H in rescue markings was photographed by Wayne Mutza.



**10** Modern warplane designs include at least some degree of stealth, but Lockheed's incredible F-117A was the first purely stealthy jet. USAF photo **FSM**

Rank	Aircraft	Votes
68	Royal Aircraft Factory S.E.5a	135
69	Convair B-36 Peacemaker	134
70	Lockheed F-104 Starfighter	133
tie	North American F-100 Super Sabre	133
72	De Havilland DHC-2/L-20/U-6 Beaver	131
73	Beech Bonanza	130
74	Bleriot XI	104
tie	Curtiss Pusher	104
76	Junkers J-1	103
tie	Northrop P-61 Black Widow	103
78	Boeing 727	98
79	Republic F-105 Thunderchief	90
80	Dassault Mirage III	89
81	Lockheed F-80/T-33 Shooting Star	88
82	Vought F-8 Crusader	82
83	Boeing 247	80
tie	Yakovlev Yak-1/3/9 series	80
85	Lockheed Vega	74
86	Tupolev Tu-95 Bear	73
87	Antonov An-124	71
88	Bell Jet Ranger	70
tie	Boeing 314 Clipper	70
90	Douglas World Cruiser	67
91	Northrop T-38 Talon	64
92	McDonnell Douglas/Boeing DC-9/MD-80/717	53
tie	Morane-Saulnier G	53
94	Navy/Curtiss NC flying boat	47
95	Sikorsky Il'ya Muromets	46
96	Boeing 307	43
97	Polikarpov Po-2	41
98	Rutan Varieze	37
99	Cessna T-37 Tweet	27
100	Deperdussin racer of 1912	21