



Airplanes are supposed to fly right side up, correct? If you’ve ever seen the rare 1918 “Inverted Jenny” United States stamp, you may think otherwise, or, at the very least, may be confused. These rare stamps show a plane that appears to be flying upside down!

In 1918, the United States produced a 24-cent postage stamp honoring the Curtiss JN-4 airplane, known at the time as a “Jenny”. It was one of the first examples of an air mail stamp. Air mail, which was transported via airplane, could arrive at its destination much faster than by ground mail. At 24 cents, air mail stamps were far more expensive than the typical three cent postage stamps of the time. The Jenny stamp itself has vivid red framing with a white background. The airplane is blue. The stamps were printed in sheets of 100 and the red and blue colors within the stamp required two trips through the printing press. It could have been that a sheet of printed frames was put into the press upside down or the printing plate used to stamp the plane itself was upside down. Whatever the case, it is thought that only a single sheet of Inverted Jenny stamps ever made it past the printing press. The vast majority of these stamps were printed correctly.

That said, word of the erroneous sheet of stamps spread quickly and collectors rushed to their local post offices. One lucky collector named William Robey was astonished to find the treasure at his local post office. He quickly purchased it for \$24 and promptly sold the sheet to a prominent stamp collector for \$15,000 - an enormous sum of money at the time. It was sold again to a collector who thought the stamps would be worth more individually and thus, detached many of the stamps from the original sheet and sold them to other collectors. Many of the buyers, however, hinged the soon-to-be-priceless stamps. Hinging was a common practice at the time that collectors used to display stamps in their stamp albums. Hinging stamps damages the original gum on the back of the stamp that would be licked to adhere to a letter or package. A hinged stamp cannot be in mint condition. Only six of the original stamps are unhinged.

Over time, many of the original stamps have been damaged, hinged, or destroyed, leaving few in mint condition. Furthermore, many counterfeit versions are thought to exist. Others have been stolen or disappeared entirely. As the prices of the stamps rose, collectors tried to document each of the original stamps. In 2018, one of the long lost Inverted Jennies was found again. It was unhinged! On November 15th, 2018, it was sold at auction for just under \$1.6 million dollars!

- 1. Why does the author claim that the 1918 inverted Jenny stamp may be confusing?**
 - A. Because airplanes are supposed to fly right-side-up
 - B. Because airplanes are supposed to fly upside down
 - C. Because the inverted Jenny stamp is incredibly rare
 - D. Because 1918 was more than one hundred years ago

- 2. Why was the inverted Jenny stamp much more expensive than a typical stamp of the day?**
 - A. It was colorful unlike most stamps
 - B. It was twenty-four cents
 - C. It was very rare
 - D. It was carried by airplane

- 3. What is NOT true about the inverted Jenny stamp?**
 - A. There were two possible reasons why some of the stamps were printed with errors
 - B. It was one of America's first air mail stamps
 - C. It was printed in sheets of 100
 - D. The majority of these stamps were printed incorrectly

- 4. Hinging stamps...**
 - A. makes them more valuable.
 - B. protects them over time.
 - C. make collectors want them more.
 - D. makes them less valuable.

- 5. Which of the following best describes why the latest inverted Jenny stamp sold for \$1.6 million dollars?**
 - A. Because many inverted Jenny's are counterfeited
 - B. Because many inverted Jenny's have disappeared over the years
 - C. Because few inverted Jenny's are unhinged
 - D. Because more and more of these stamps are now documented

- 6. What word could replace "astonished" as used in the sentence below?**

One lucky collector named William Robey was astonished to find the treasure at his local post office.

- A. surprised
- B. furious
- C. curious
- D. devoted

7. What question is answered in the final paragraph?

- A. How many counterfeit versions of inverted Jenny stamps exist?
- B. Why are inverted Jenny stamps in mint condition so valuable?
- C. Have all of the inverted Jenny stamps been documented?
- D. How many inverted Jenny stamps are in mint condition?