

Thomas Edison

Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. Do you know when the electric light bulb was invented?
2. How did people send long-distance messages before the invention of fax machines and email?
3. What is a phonograph?
4. If you invent something, how can you protect your invention so that other people cannot steal your idea?
5. Do you think most inventors become very rich?



B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.

Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| ___ 1. invent | a) an official protection of one's invention |
| ___ 2. former | b) rich |
| ___ 3. hire | c) a lot of |
| ___ 4. partner | d) to keep in good condition |
| ___ 5. improve | e) previous, from an earlier time |
| ___ 6. wealthy | f) to give, to join with others in helping |
| ___ 7. contribute | g) to create or make something new |
| ___ 8. patent | h) a person who owns a business with someone else |
| ___ 9. a great deal of | i) to employ, to give work to |
| ___ 10. preserve | j) to make better |

Reading

1. Thomas Edison **invented** the electric light bulb, the modern telephone, and motion pictures.
2. Edison was born in Milan, Ohio, on February 11, 1847. He was taught at home by his mother, a **former** teacher. At 15, he became a telegraph operator. In 1868, he moved to Boston to work for the Western Union Telegraph Company.
3. About 1864, Edison invented an automatic telegraph repeater, his first invention. His first patent was for an electric vote recorder. By 1869, he was a **partner** in a New York electrical firm. He used the money he made in that business to buy a factory in New Jersey. He then **hired** several scientists to invent or **improve** on many products, including the typewriter. This business was very successful and he became **wealthy**. He sold the factory in 1875.
4. Edison made many improvements to the telegraph, which he then applied to the telephone to make it more usable. In 1876, he set up another factory in New Jersey and hired scientists to work on new inventions under his direction.
5. From 1877 to 1931, Edison and his team of scientists made many discoveries. In 1877, Edison invented the phonograph, which made him **a great deal of** money. In 1878, he began working on an electric light bulb. The Edison Electric Light Company was soon mass-producing these lights. He also came up with ways to generate and distribute the electricity to power these light bulbs.
6. In 1895, Edison improved the motion picture projector, and the Edison Company eventually produced more than 1,700 motion pictures. During the First World War, he **contributed** 45 new inventions to the war effort, including an underwater searchlight and a ship-telephone system.
7. In his lifetime, Edison took out over 1,000 **patents** on his inventions. He slept only four hours a night and often worked for two or three days without stopping. He died on October 18, 1931, in West Orange, New Jersey. Edison's laboratory buildings and equipment have been **preserved**.

“Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration.”

—Thomas Edison

Comprehension

A. True or False?

Read the statements below. If the statement is true, write T beside the sentence. If it is false, write F and correct the information in your notebook.

- _____ 1. Thomas Edison owned Western Union Telegraph.
- _____ 2. Thomas Edison's mother was once a teacher.
- _____ 3. Thomas Edison's first invention was the electric light bulb.
- _____ 4. Thomas Edison was a great inventor.
- _____ 5. Thomas Edison was born in Italy.

B. Ask & Answer

Practice asking and answering the following questions with your partner. Then write your answers in complete sentences in your notebook.

- 1. What was Thomas Edison's first job?
- 2. What were two of Edison's earliest inventions?
- 3. Why did Edison hire several scientists when he bought his New Jersey factory?
- 4. How did Edison become a wealthy man?
- 5. After Edison invented the electric light bulb, what did his company start to do?
- 6. How did Edison contribute to the First World War effort?
- 7. List eight products that Edison either invented or improved.

Vocabulary Practice

A. Complete the Sentences

Complete the sentences using vocabulary from page 1. You may need to change the word forms.

- 1. If you take your medicine and get lots of rest, your health will _____ quickly.
- 2. Bill Clinton is a _____ president of the United States.
- 3. Most famous actors are very _____ and own very expensive homes.
- 4. He wants to close the business, but his _____ wants to try and keep it open.
- 5. The ABC Company is planning to _____ 20 new workers. You should apply.

Vocabulary Practice cont.

B. Choose the Correct Word

Choose the word or phrase with the closest meaning to the underlined word or phrase in the following sentences.

- Edison made improvements to the telephone to make it more usable.
 - smaller
 - easier to use
 - louder
- He set up another factory in New Jersey.
 - looked for
 - closed
 - started
- He came up with ways to generate and distribute electricity.
 - walked
 - created
 - bought
- He came up with ways to distribute the electricity to power these light bulbs.
 - buy
 - create
 - send out
- During the First World War, he contributed 45 new inventions to the war effort.
 - airplanes
 - telephone system
 - trying very hard to do something

Discussion

- What did people use for light before the invention of electric light bulbs?
- Have you ever spent any length of time without electricity? Describe your situation.
- What personal characteristics do you think many inventors share?
- What do you think has been the greatest invention in the last few centuries?
- How long do you think a patent should last?