

Thomas Edison



Differentiated
Reading
Passages
&
Comprehension
Questions

How to Use

My reading passages were created in an effort to bridge the gap between reading and social studies. Too often, social studies topics are covered at a surface level due to lack of time to teach. Using reading passages about social studies topics allows you to create in-depth learning experiences for your students!

These reading passages can be used in a variety of ways. Students can work on them independently, as part of a center activity, with a partner or group, or could even be utilized as an assessment. Each passage has a set of comprehension questions that require students to look back in the text to answer the questions, and make inferences by answering a variety of questions. Also, you'll notice with the last page of the second passage, I have provided two different page options; one utilizing the blank space, and one that does not.

However you choose to utilize the reading passage(s), I hope it is something both you and your students enjoy!

Thomas Edison

Thomas Alva Edison was born on February 11, 1847 in Milan, Ohio. The youngest of seven children, Thomas had scarlet fever as a child, which left him with hearing trouble. Thomas was also homeschooled as a child. This helped him learn how to teach himself, a skill that would be necessary for an inventor.

At the age of 12, Thomas created and sold his own newspaper at the local train station. While at the train station one day, Thomas helped to save a small child from an oncoming train. This heroic act provided Thomas an opportunity to learn how to operate a telegraph, his reward for saving the child. By the age of 15, Thomas had learned enough to become a telegraph operator. Over the course of the next few years, Thomas worked as a telegraph operator while traveling the Midwest.

However, the technology for the telegraph became too advanced for Thomas with his hearing loss. Because of this, he returned home. This was short-lived. Not long after returning home, Thomas found work in another city and moved.

In 1869, Thomas created his first invention, a stock ticker, called the Universal Stock Printer. Thomas sold the rights to his invention for \$40,000 to the Gold and Stock Telegraph Company. After selling this invention, Thomas became an inventor full-time.

Thomas set up a laboratory in New Jersey. It was here that he created a phonograph. A phonograph records sound. This invention made him famous world-wide. Thomas also developed the light bulb. With this invention, Thomas also founded the Edison Illuminating Company. He wanted to bring electricity to people across the globe.

Thomas had many other inventions including: the alkaline battery, the motion picture camera, and he was the first person to project a movie! Thomas Edison invented many things, most of which are still used today!

Comprehension Questions

1. How did having scarlet fever affect Thomas Edison?

2. What resource could be used to learn more about scarlet fever? _____
3. How did homeschooling help Thomas?

4. How did Thomas learn the skills needed to operate a telegraph?

5. Why was Thomas at a disadvantage in working with a telegraph? _____
6. What happened in 1869 that proved to be a turning point in Thomas' life?

7. Name some of Thomas' inventions.

8. In your opinion, which invention was most important? Why?

Answer Key

1. How did having scarlet fever affect Thomas Edison? He had hearing problems as a result of having scarlet fever.
2. What resource could be used to learn more about scarlet fever? Answers may vary. (Internet, Encyclopedia, etc.)
3. How did homeschooling help Thomas? He learned how to teach himself.
4. How did Thomas learn the skills needed to operate a telegraph? He saved a young boy from an oncoming train, and his reward was to learn to operate a telegraph.
5. Why was Thomas at a disadvantage in working with a telegraph? His hearing problems prevented him from using a telegraph with the newly developed technology.
6. What happened in 1869 that proved to be a turning point in Thomas' life? He sold his first invention for \$40,000, allowing him to quit his job as a telegrapher and work full-time as an inventor.
7. Name some of Thomas' inventions.
Alkaline battery, motion picture, phonograph.
8. In your opinion, which invention was most important? Why? Answers will vary.

Thomas Edison

Thomas Alva Edison was born on February 11, 1847 in Milan, Ohio. The youngest of seven children, Thomas had scarlet fever as a child, which left him with hearing difficulties. In 1854, his family moved from Ohio to Michigan.

Once in Michigan, Thomas attended public school for a total of 12 weeks! His teacher said Thomas was too difficult, but Thomas was simply an active child who was easily distracted. His mother, a former teacher, decided to homeschool Thomas instead, where his appetite for learning quickly grew. As a homeschooled student, Thomas learned to teach himself, a skill that would be necessary for an inventor.

At the age of 12, Thomas began publishing his own newspaper to sell at the local train station. Spending a significant amount of time at the train station allowed Thomas to get up-to-date information to publish in his newspaper. The train passengers loved having access to current news!

While working at the railroad, Thomas helped save a small child from an oncoming train. This heroic act ultimately provided Thomas an opportunity to learn to operate a telegraph, his reward for saving the boy. By the age of 15, Thomas had learned

enough to become a telegraph operator. He spent the next five years traveling the Midwest and working as a telegraph operator where needed. When he wasn't working, Thomas spent his free time reading and experimenting.

As the telegraph technology expanded, Thomas was at a disadvantage because of his hearing loss. Unable to find work, Thomas returned home in 1868. Finding his family in a terrible living situation, Thomas knew he wanted a better life for himself, and moved to Boston where he found a job at the Western Union Company.

In 1869, Thomas moved to New York City, where he created his first invention, a stock ticker called the Universal Stock Printer, which kept track of stock ticker transactions. The Gold and Stock Telegraph Company was impressed with Thomas' invention, and paid him \$40,000 for the rights to his creation. At 22 years old, Thomas' first invention was a huge success! This allowed him to leave his job as a telegrapher and begin inventing full-time.

Thomas used the money he earned to set up a laboratory in New Jersey. Thomas employed several people in his laboratory and would create products to be used by whichever company paid the most money for them.

In 1871, Thomas married Mary Stilwell, and in their thirteen years of marriage, Thomas and Mary had three children.

Thomas gained a reputation for being a top-notch inventor during the 1870s. His success allowed him to move his laboratory to a bigger location in Menlo Park, New Jersey. It was in this laboratory, in December of 1877, that Thomas Edison created a method for recording sound, through his invention – the phonograph. This invention made him famous across the globe!

Thomas' inventions did not stop with the phonograph. In the 1880s, Thomas received a patent for having developed the light bulb, and founded the Edison Illuminating Company, seeking to bring electricity to people across the world. This company would grow to become General Electric Corporation.

Thomas also invented the motion picture camera and the alkaline battery, and became the first person to project a motion picture, or movie. Thomas even helped to grow the automobile industry, by designing a battery for Henry Ford's Model T. The government also saw the value in Thomas' inventions, and asked him to work with the military in creating defense weapons.

Over the course of his life, Thomas Edison applied for 1,093 U.S. patents. He spent his later years in Fort Myers, Florida, though he continued to work on several projects as hobbies.

On October 18, 1931, Thomas Edison died as a result of having diabetes. Today, Thomas Edison is remembered for his contributions in helping build the United States economy, and for developing many products that are still presently used.

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Using the space below, construct a timeline of the key events of Thomas Edison's life.

Comprehension Questions

1. How did having scarlet fever affect Thomas Edison?

2. What resource could be used to learn more about scarlet fever? _____
3. Why did Thomas attend public school for only 12 weeks?

4. Describe Thomas' business venture at the railroad station. Why was he successful?

5. How did Thomas learn the skills needed to operate a telegraph?

6. Why was Thomas at a disadvantage in working with a telegraph? _____
7. What happened in 1869 that proved to be a turning point in Thomas' life? _____

Answer Key

1. How did having scarlet fever affect Thomas Edison? **He had hearing problems as a result of having scarlet fever.**
2. What resource could be used to learn more about scarlet fever? **Answers may vary.**
3. Why did Thomas attend public school for only 12 weeks? **Thomas' teacher thought he was difficult, so his mom pulled him from public school and homeschooled him.**
4. Describe Thomas' business venture at the railroad station. Why was he successful? **He published his own newspaper, using the information he learned at the railroad station to write his articles. Passengers loved his newspaper!**
5. How did Thomas learn the skills needed to operate a telegraph? **He saved a young boy from an oncoming train, and his reward was to learn to operate a telegraph.**
6. Why was Thomas at a disadvantage in working with a telegraph? **His hearing problems prevented him from using a telegraph with the newly developed technology.**
7. What happened in 1869 that proved to be a turning point in Thomas' life? **He sold his first invention for \$40,000, allowing him to quit his job as a telegrapher and work full-time as an inventor.**
8. Who did Thomas marry? **Mary Stilwell**
9. What invention made Thomas famous across the globe? **The phonograph.**
10. What did Thomas hope to accomplish with the Edison Illuminating Company? **To bring electricity to everyone!**
11. Name some of Thomas' other inventions.
Alkaline battery, motion picture, battery for Model T.
12. In your opinion, how did Thomas Edison impact the United States? **Answers will vary.**

Thank you for your purchase!

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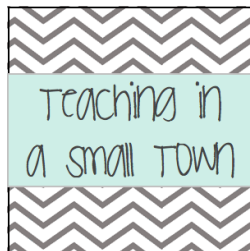
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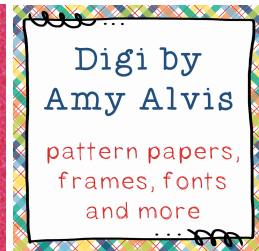
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