The Wizard of Menlo Park

A Short Biography of The World's Greatest Inventor

Thomas Alva Edison

1847 – 1931

This is the story of Thomas Alva Edison, probably the world's greatest inventor. In his lifetime, he produced nearly 1400 patents. His inventions changed the way we see the world today and helped other inventors such as Marconi and Farnsworth to develop radio and television.

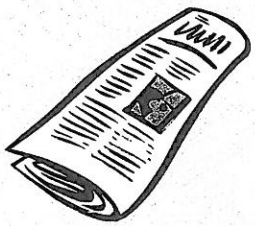
Edison spent every waking hour creating his own inventions and improving the inventions of others. He once famously said:

"Genius is one per cent inspiration and ninety nine per cent perspiration"

His words are a good description of his own life. When you read for yourself about the amazing life of this extraordinary inventor, I am sure you will understand why people believe that he was the greatest inventor the world has ever seen.

1847 – 1877

Thomas Alva Edison was born in Ohio, USA in 1847. He was an inquisitive child and he often asked questions that neither his mother nor his father could answer. By the age of ten, he had set up a chemical laboratory in the cellar of his home. By the age of twelve, he had got a part time job with the local railway company, selling newspapers to passengers on board the trains. He used the money he earned to buy more chemicals so he could continue his experiments.



Edison had a powerful imagination and a mind made for invention. By the time he was thirteen, he had set up his own newspaper called *The Weekly Herald* which he printed and published on the moving trains!

Turn the page ➡

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Three years later, whilst still working for the railway company, he saved the life of a young boy who was almost crushed by a moving train. The boy turned out to be the son of the station telegrapher and, to return the favour, the boy's father taught Edison telegraphy.

Edison worked as a telegrapher until he was twenty one. His understanding of the machinery lead him to make his first invention – an electrical vote recorder. The machine made him his first real money and inspired him to continue on his great journey of invention.

At twenty four, working with another inventor called Sholes, Edison invented the first typewriter. Then in 1877, Edison produced one of his most famous inventions, and his own personal favourite, the phonograph.

EDISON FACTS

A telegrapher's job was to send short written messages called telegrams. Telegrams were sent using electrical currents with a code a bit like Morse code. They took only a few minutes to arrive, which was incredibly quick compared to a letter.

Telegraphers were very important people in Edison's time, because they could send these speedy messages anywhere in the world using the complicated electrical equipment.

EDISON FACTS

The phonograph was the very first record player. Edison used it to record the sound of his own voice on to a wax disc. The phonograph was wound up and a small needle was placed onto the wax disc. As the disc went round, he could hear his recording. The first thing Edison ever recorded was himself reciting the nursery rhyme 'Mary had a Little Lamb'.

The biography starts over the page

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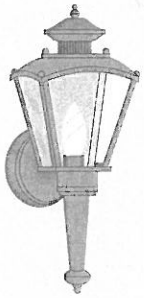
1877 – 1905

Edison was becoming well known as an inventor. He moved to Menlo Park in New Jersey in 1879. He was at his most productive and successful there. At Menlo Park he invented the electric light bulb, electric sockets, electric switches and electric street lights.

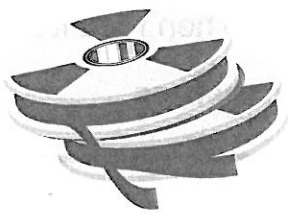


He became known as 'the wizard of Menlo Park' after lighting up the streets outside his factory. His most unusual invention that year was gummed paper for sticking down envelopes!

Three years later he created an electric shaver, but that same year, 1891, brought another invention that started an industry. Thomas Edison invented the first motion picture camera and the movies were born.

Edison was a very hardworking man. He said that he never had enough time to do everything that he wanted to do — quite an amazing statement for a man who achieved so much.

By 1905 he had started work on X-ray machines and invented the first battery.



EDISON FACTS

The first films ever shown were silent movies. Edison's invention sparked the beginning of the silent film industry. It wasn't until later in his life that he developed a way of adding sound to film.

1906 – 1931

The final years of Edison's life found him improving on lots of early inventions. He spent time perfecting the phonograph and by 1912 had added sound to silent movies.

During World War 1, Edison was asked to contribute by helping the army develop underwater search lights and ways of detecting aeroplanes.

At the time of his death on October 18th 1931, Edison was still working. His many inventions had changed the way people lived. His favourite invention was the phonograph. "It speaks for itself," he said.

Many of the things we now take for granted would not be around if it wasn't for the incredible mind of Thomas Alva Edison.

Open the flap for the start of the biography

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Unfold these pages before you start

AF2

Fact Retrieval Questions

If you've read the text really carefully, then FACT RETRIEVAL questions can be pretty simple — you just need to fish out the information that the questions ask for. Happy days.

1. What is this type of writing called?

Fiction	Autobiography	Biography	Diary

1 mark

Circle your answer.

2. In the first paragraph of the introduction, what does the writer describe Thomas Edison as?

.....

1 mark

3. What was Thomas Edison's favourite invention?

Phonograph	Telegraph	Light bulb	Street lights

1 mark

Circle your answer.

4. In the section '**1877 - 1905**', what did Edison say that he didn't have enough of?

.....

1 mark

5. At the end, the booklet tells us

that Edison was soon forgotten after his death	that Edison's inventions have not been used since	that Edison invented things we still use today	that Edison didn't like any of his inventions

1 mark

Circle your answer.

6. In what year did Edison move to Menlo Park?

.....

1 mark

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AF2

Fact Retrieval Questions

7. Why did he become known as **'the wizard of Menlo Park'**?

He wore a pointed hat.	**He lit up the streets outside his factory.**	**He chanted as he worked.**	**He told people to call him that.**

1 mark

Circle your answer.

8. How many patents had Edison produced when he died?

..... **1 mark**

9. Use the information about Edison to match up the ages and dates with what happened then. The first one has been done for you.

By the time he was 10	**Set up his own newspaper**
1891	**Built a chemical laboratory in his family cellar**
By the time he was 13	**Moved to Menlo Park**
1879	**Invented the motion picture camera**

2 marks

10. Which of Edison's inventions started the film industry?

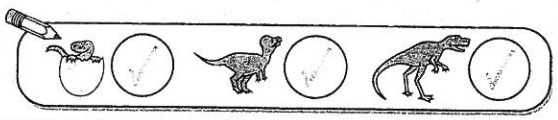
..... **1 mark**

11. Use the information about Edison to help you to fill in the spaces in this table.

	Tells us about the final years of Edison's life
Introduction	Builds up interest in the biography
1847 - 1877	
	Tells us about the busiest years of Edison's life

3 marks

Reading Raptors can find facts hidden in the middle of the biggest jungles. How did you get on?



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AF3

Inference Questions

INFERENCE is different from fact retrieval — it's about understanding the things that the writer doesn't say directly. Read the text again and then have a go at these questions.

1. Which of the following ideas can be found in the text? Tick **two** boxes.

- ☐ **Edison worked really hard from an early age.**
- ☐ **Edison invented the television.**
- ☐ **Edison only used other people's ideas.**
- ☐ **Edison worked very long hours to achieve his success.**
- ☐ **Edison created the first computer.**

2 marks

2. The writer says that Edison became known as **'the wizard of Menlo Park'**. What does this suggest about people's feelings towards Edison's inventions?

.....

.....

2 marks

3. **'His favourite invention was the phonograph. "It speaks for itself," he said.'** What do you think Edison meant by this phrase?

.....

.....

2 marks

4. The writer describes Edison as an **'extraordinary inventor'**. Using evidence from the text, show why the writer thinks that Edison is extraordinary.

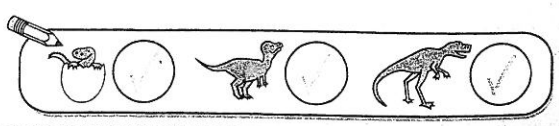
.....

.....

.....

2 marks

Reading Raptors can do Inference questions while standing on stilts and juggling. How did you get on?



The last few questions on <u>The Wizard of Menlo Park</u> are under here

Book 1

10. 1 mark
— The short sentence makes it seem like things are happening quickly.
AND 1 mark
— It emphasises how nervous Wesley is, which increases the tension.

Page 20 — Fact Retrieval Questions

1. **1 mark**
Kicking the TV
2. **1 mark**
Dust
3. **1 mark**
— The Gondrot inside was feeling queasy and had fainted.
4. **a) 1 mark**
Through the plug in the socket.
b) 1 mark
A government trained Gondrot doctor.
5. **1 mark**
Michael Faraday

Page 21 — Structure and Layout Questions

1. **1 mark for two or three correct**
2 marks for all correct
3. Faraday is frightened by his first sight of a Gondrot.
4. Faraday learns about Latchett and feels guilty.
1. The Morrisons' television breaks down.
5. Faraday speaks to Wesley.
2. The repair man mends the TV.
2. **1 mark**
— To build up excitement and make the secret of the Gondrots sound more impressive.

Page 21 — Context Questions

1. **1 mark**
The Prologue is set after chapter 1.
AND 1 mark
— The family have a wide-screen TV, which hadn't been invented in 1812.
2. **1 mark for each**
3 marks in total
— Fantasy creatures
— Unbelievable events — people not knowing about the creatures in their homes.
— TVs working differently to how they actually work in the real world.

The Wizard of Menlo Park

Pages 26/27 — Fact Retrieval Questions

1. **1 mark**
Biography
2. **1 mark**
'probably the world's greatest inventor.'
3. **1 mark**
Phonograph
4. **1 mark**
Time to do all he wanted to do.
5. **1 mark**
that Edison invented things we still use today
6. **1 mark**
1879
7. **1 mark**
He lit up the streets outside his factory.
8. **1 mark**
1400 patents
9. **1 mark for one correct answer**
2 marks for all three correct
1891 — Invented the motion picture camera
Aged 13 — Set up his own newspaper
1879 — Moved to Menlo Park
10. **1 mark**
The first motion picture camera.
11. **1 mark for each correct answer**
1906-1931 — Tells us about the final years of Edison's life
Introduction — Builds up interest in the biography
1847-1877 — Tell us about Edison as a child
1877-1905 — Tells us about the busiest years of Edison's life

Page 28 — Structure and Layout Questions

1. **1 mark**
— To separate them from the main story of Edison's life.
AND 1 mark
— They give the reader a more in-depth view of Edison's inventions and the impact they had.
2. **1 mark**
— The subheading says what the text is about.
OR 2 marks
— The subheading summarises what the text is about, and also explains who the wizard of Menlo Park was.
3. **1 mark**
— It does not need a glossary, as there are few difficult words in the text.
OR 2 marks
— It does not need a glossary as any difficult words like telegrapher or phonograph are explained. The 'Edison Facts' boxes explain things, so there's less need for a glossary.
4. **1 mark**
— It sums up the points made in the introduction.
AND 1 mark
— This emphasises the main point of the text, to show what a great inventor Edison was.
5. **1 mark**
— To make it easy to read.
AND 1 mark
— It divides the information into chunks, which makes it easier to remember.

Page 29 — Writer's Purpose Questions

1. **1 mark**
creates interest by describing Edison as the world's greatest inventor.
2. **1 mark**
— The writer thinks Edison was very intelligent.
AND 1 mark
— The writer thinks that our lives would be very different without Edison's useful inventions.
3. **1 mark**
— Because Edison worked hard his whole life.
OR 2 marks
— Edison had some inspiration, but he also worked very hard.

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Book 1

OR 3 marks
— Although Edison had natural talent, he also worked very hard to make the most of it. It also shows Edison was not a show off, because he says the most important thing is hard work.

4. **1 mark**
— It makes the reader realise that Edison was a real person.
AND 1 mark
— It helps the reader to understand what Edison was like.
AND 1 mark
— The quotes add accurate historical evidence to the text.

Page 30 — Inference Questions

1. **1 mark for each correct answer**
Edison worked really hard from an early age.
Edison worked very long hours to achieve his success.
2. **1 mark**
— They thought his inventions were like magic.
AND 1 mark
— They were amazed by what he had invented.
3. **1 mark**
— He means it is obvious how good it is.
AND 1 mark
— It can play back voices, so it "speaks".
4. **1 mark**
— Because he invented lots of useful items.
OR 2 marks
— He patented over 1400 new inventions. Some of these have had a big impact on the way we live today, e.g. the electric light bulb and the movie camera.

Page 31 — Language Questions

1. **1 mark for underlining all three**
amazing, extraordinary, greatest.
2. **a) 1 mark for ticking the correct box**
The author
b) 1 mark
— It makes the reader feel like the writer is talking directly to them, so it makes the reader feel more involved.
3. **1 mark**
— The exclamation mark shows the writer can hardly believe Edison could produce a newspaper on a moving train.
AND 1 mark
— The exclamation mark shows the writer thinks the things that Edison did were amazing.
4. **1 mark**
— It helps the reader to imagine just how much of his time Edison spent inventing.
AND 1 mark
— It helps the reader to understand how single-minded Edison was.

Winds of Change

Page 36 — Inference Questions

1. **1 mark**
not listening to what people have to say
2. **1 mark**
— He has lived in the village a long time and wants to keep the countryside looking the same.
3. **1 mark**
— Because it will make life better for people in the village.
4. **1 mark**
— Angry
AND 1 mark
— He is angry because he doesn't want them spoiling his view or frightening his animals.
5. **1 mark**
— I think he is mainly concerned about himself rather than the environment.
AND 1 mark
— He is worried that his view will be spoiled and says it is "a very worrying time for me."

Page 37 — Language Questions

1. **1 mark**
— "Sleepy" suggests a peaceful village where very little happens.
2. **1 mark**
— Yes, because it draws the reader's attention by making it sound like there was a fight.
AND 1 mark
— The word 'clashes' is very dramatic and shows how strong the different opinions are.
3. **a) 1 mark**
— That he doesn't know much about wind turbines.
OR 2 marks
— That he doesn't know much about wind turbines, so his opinion shouldn't be taken too seriously.
b) 1 mark
— It sounds like the wind turbines are so ugly they will hurt your eyes.
4. **1 mark**
— 'Winds of Change' is a good title as the article is about a wind farm.
OR 2 marks
— 'Winds of Change' is a good title because the article is about wind farms and how the countryside might change as a result of them.
OR 3 marks
— 'Winds of Change' is a phrase meaning that big changes are coming. It is a good title because the article is about the differences a wind farm could make to the countryside and environment — as well as being a pun on "wind".

Page 38 — Fact Retrieval Questions

1. **1 mark**
— He thinks they are an eyesore and will frighten animals.
2. **1 mark**
— It will make pollution-free energy.
3. **1 mark for each**
— They will provide pollution-free energy.
— They will result in cleaner air in the village.
— They will attract tourists and bring money to the village.
4. **1 mark**
1888
5. **1 mark**
— He thinks it will bring money to the village as a tourist attraction.
6. **1 mark**
Over thirty

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