

Reading Comprehension 16- Passage
Grade 5

The Invention of the Telephone

Alexander Graham Bell was born in Scotland in 1847. As a young boy, he was curious about sounds and how people communicated. His mother was deaf, which inspired his interest in helping people with hearing problems. Even as a child, Bell was fascinated by the idea of sending voice signals through wires.

In 1871, Bell moved to Boston, United States, where he taught deaf students. During this time, he continued to experiment with ways to transmit sound. Many inventors were trying to improve the telegraph, which could only send dots and dashes (Morse code). Bell had a more ambitious goal – he wanted to send the human voice through wires.

Bell worked with a skilled assistant named Thomas Watson. Together, they spent long hours in their workshop, trying different methods to transmit sound. Their experiments were difficult, and they faced many failures. However, Bell was determined to succeed.

On March 10, 1876, an exciting moment changed history forever. Bell was in one room, while Watson was in another. Bell spilled acid on his clothes and called out, "Mr. Watson, come here. I want you!" To Bell's amazement, Watson heard his words through their device and came running. The first telephone had successfully transmitted human speech!

Bell quickly obtained a patent for his invention. A patent is a legal document that gives an inventor the right to be the only person who can make, use, or sell their invention for a certain period of time. Just a few hours after Bell filed his patent, another inventor named Elisha Gray submitted a similar design. Bell's timing was perfect – if he had waited even one more day, the history of the telephone might have been very different.

At first, many people thought the telephone was just a toy. They couldn't imagine how it would be useful in everyday life. Bell demonstrated his invention at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. When the Emperor of Brazil tried the telephone, he was so surprised to hear Bell's voice that he exclaimed, "It talks!"

In 1877, Bell formed the Bell Telephone Company. The first telephone lines connected nearby buildings, but soon, telephone exchanges allowed people to call anyone with a telephone. By 1900, there were over one million telephones in the United States.

Bell's invention changed the world. For the first time in history, people could have real-time conversations across great distances. Bell himself didn't fully appreciate how important his invention would become. He saw the telephone as a distraction from his other work and later focused on other inventions and teaching the deaf.

Alexander Graham Bell died in 1922, but his legacy lives on. Today, billions of people around the world use telephones and mobile phones every day. The invention that began with a simple call for help has connected humanity in ways Bell could never have imagined.

Comprehension Questions

1. Where was Alexander Graham Bell born, and what inspired his interest in communication?
2. What was Bell's goal compared to other inventors working with the telegraph?
3. What were the exact words Bell spoke during the first successful telephone call?
4. Why was the timing of Bell's patent application important?
5. How did people initially react to Bell's invention?
6. What happened at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition?
7. How many telephones were in the United States by 1900?
8. How did Bell feel about his invention later in life?

Vocabulary Questions

9. Find a word in paragraph 2 that means "moved with energy and determination toward a goal."
10. What does the word "transmitted" mean as used in paragraph 3?
11. In paragraph 4, what does "amazement" mean?
12. Find a synonym for "important" in the last paragraph.
13. What does "legacy" mean in the last paragraph?

Grammar Questions

14. Identify the verb in this sentence: "Bell spilled acid on his clothes."
15. Rewrite this sentence in the present tense: "Bell worked with a skilled assistant named Thomas Watson."
16. Identify a proper noun in the first paragraph.
17. In the sentence "Bell demonstrated his invention at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia," identify the prepositions.
18. Change this sentence to passive voice: "Bell formed the Bell Telephone Company."

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Answer Key

Comprehension Answers

1. He was born in Scotland. His mother being deaf inspired his interest.
2. Other inventors were trying to improve the telegraph (dots and dashes), but Bell wanted to transmit the human voice through wires.
3. "Mr. Watson, come here. I want you!"
4. It was important because another inventor, Elisha Gray, submitted a similar design just hours later.
5. Many people thought it was just a toy and couldn't imagine how it would be useful.
6. Bell demonstrated his invention, and the Emperor of Brazil exclaimed, "It talks!" after hearing Bell's voice.
7. Over one million telephones
8. He saw it as a distraction from his other work and focused on other inventions and teaching the deaf.

Vocabulary Answers

9. "Ambitious"
10. "Transmitted" means sent or conveyed from one place to another.
11. "Amazement" means great surprise or wonder.
12. "Significant" or "important"
13. "Legacy" means something handed down from the past, like achievements or contributions that continue to exist.

Grammar Answers

14. "Spilled" is the verb.
15. "Bell works with a skilled assistant named Thomas Watson."
16. Proper nouns include: Alexander Graham Bell, Scotland, Boston, United States, Thomas Watson, Mr. Watson.
17. Prepositions: "at," "in"

18."The Bell Telephone Company was formed by Bell."

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