Unit 6.2

A Sharp Idea from King Gillette

A salesman named King Camp Gillette invented a disposable razor blade. His invention became a household name. It changed the way people shave all over the world to this day.

King Camp Gillette was born in a small town in the state of Wisconsin in the USA. When he was young, his family moved to Chicago. The family worked hard. His father worked at various inventions. Gillette always liked the idea of inventing something, too. At 18, he left school and worked as a salesman.

By age 40, Gillette was still a salesman. Both his parents were more successful than he was. His mother published the famous White House Cookbook, and his father had a few inventions. The younger Gillette worked hard and also wanted to be an inventor. The president of the company he worked for encouraged him. He told him to invent something people could use and throw away. Gillette often thought about this.







LIVEWORKSHEETS

One day when Gillette was ready to shave, his razor blade was too dull. It didn't cut. He thought, "I just spend so much time sharpening this blade. Then when I sharpen it, it's too sharp and I cut myself." He decided ,"I'll make a razor with a safe, removable blade. When the blade is dull, you can throw it away and buy another blade."

Gillette started to work on this idea. Another inventor named William Emery Nickerson helped him. They became partners. Five years later, they started a company called the American Safety Razor Company. A year later, Gillette renamed the company the Gillette Safety Razor Company. In 1903, the company sold 51 razors and 168 blades. The next year it sold 90,884 razors and 123,648 blades. This was because Gillette had a good product and a good idea. He knew how to advertise. He gave away razors for free to sell more blades. Other companies tried to copy Gillette's product, but the Gillette Safety Razor Company became the most popular company.



LIVEWORKSHEETS

By age 55, Gillette was a millionaire. He was famous, too, because his picture was on every package of razors. People all over the world asked for razors with the picture of a man on them. Gillette once said, "In my travels, I have found it in the most northern town in Norway and in the heart of the Sahara Desert." Sadly, in 1929, the U.S. Stock Market crashed,' and Gillette lost his money. He died a few years later.

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

A Complete these sentences with the words in the box.

blade dull household name product
disposable encouraged invention sharpen

1. By the early 1900s, everybody knew the name Gillette. It was a(n)_____.
2. When a knife or razor doesn't cut, it is_____.
3. The part of a knife or razor that cuts is the_____.
4. Gillette's _____changed the way people shave.
5. The president of the company Gillette first worked for _____him to invent.
6. Gillette invented a(n) _____razor blade, or a razor blade you can throw away.
7. Gillette's new _____did not sell well the first year.
8. With the old razors, you had to _____the blade when it didn't cut anymore.

LIVEWORKSHEETS