

A Dream Come True

The young professor was working in his workshop in a narrow street in Boston, not far from Scollay Square. It was a very hot afternoon in June, but the man did not notice. He was totally **absorbed** in his strange machine which he had been working on for about three years. Suddenly he heard an almost inaudible sound, the first sound ever **transmitted** through a wire. The machine was the very first telephone and the young man was Alexander Graham Bell.

Although he was only 28 years old at the time, Alexander had been working in the fields of speech, **anatomy**, electricity and **telegraphy** for over 11 years. **1** In fact, his whole family had been involved in the study of speech and sounds. Alexander's father had also written several books on how to speak correctly as well as **creating** a form of sign language called 'visible speech'.

At the age of 16 Alexander started to help teach young deaf mutes; children who could not hear or speak. He used his father's system of 'visible speech' and **achieved** amazing results. A few years later, while working in London, Alexander met two men who would play an important role in his life. **2**

Unfortunately, it was around this time that the **fatal** disease called the **white plague**, spread through Britain and both Alexander's brothers died. **3** Alexander was teaching a tribe of Mohawk Indians in a small Canadian town called Brantford, when the Boston Board of Education asked him to come and work in the USA at a new school for deaf mutes.

Alexander was very happy to move to Boston and continue the work he had started in Britain. He became so successful that he soon opened his own school called "The School of Vocal Physiology". However, he was so busy there that he did not have the time to work on his inventions.

Then, two years later, he agreed to give private lessons to a young boy whose family **allowed** him to use their **basement** as a workshop. This gave Alexander the opportunity to **resume** his

experiments with sound transmitters. He used to spend all his free time, and most of his money, on his inventions. **4**

She was a young girl who had lost her **hearing** and the ability to speak because of a childhood illness. Her name was Mabel Hubbard, and four years later they got married. Although many people thought that the plan to invent a human voice transmitter was a **waste** of time, Alexander refused to **give up** his dream. He continued his experiments with sound **vibrations**. He even copied the design of the human ear using **iron rods** and **electrical wires** to produce the same effect.

Alexander was spending so much time and energy on his inventions he did less and less work with his students and soon **ran out of** money. He **was about to** give up when he met Professor John Henry, an expert on the **telegraph** and electricity. **5**

In order to **survive financially** Bell had to work on the musical telegraph, but he also continued working on his **mechanical voice transmitter**. **6** Almost a year later, in March 1876, the first words were heard coming through the phone.

On his 29th birthday Alexander Graham Bell **registered** his invention with the **patent office** and, because they had never seen anything like it before, they registered his invention as 'an improvement in telegraphy'. The name 'telephone' came later.

Tip

Read the text through. Think of what information might be missing. Read the list of missing sentences. Cross out the one used in the example. Remember there is one extra sentence. Start fitting the sentences into the gaps. Match the topic of the missing sentence with the topic of the sentence before and after each gap. Look for clues such as reference words (he, there, it etc) or linking words before or after each gap. Check that the sentence you choose fits grammatically and makes sense. Read the completed text to see if it makes sense.

Reading

4 a. What do you know about Alexander Graham Bell? What did he invent? When? Did he come from a big family? Read the article and find out.

b. Read the article again. Choose from the sentences (A-G) the one that best fits each gap (1-6) to complete the text. There is one extra sentence you do not need to use.

- A Professor Henry realised immediately that Alexander had made an amazing discovery and encouraged him to continue with his experiments.
- B At that time he had another student who greatly **influenced** his life.
- C His grandfather had invented a system to help people with speech problems.
- D Mr Alexander Ellis, a professor of philology, and Sir Charles Wheatstone, an expert in telegraphy, started him thinking about sending sounds through a machine.
- E As a result Alexander and his parents left the country and moved to Canada.

F On that summer afternoon in 1875, when Alexander heard the first sound transmitted over his machine, he realised that he had finally achieved his **goal**.

G He never thought that the invention would catch up.

c. Read the article again and explain the words in bold. Give synonyms for the highlighted words.

d. **THINK!** Which of the following words best describe Alexander Graham Bell? Give reasons.

- persistent • sensitive • daydreamer • stubborn
- hardworking • patient • indifferent

e. **THINK!** What type of text is it: *narrative*, *argumentative* or *instructional*?

Follow-up

5 Read the article again and make notes about Alexander Graham Bell's life. Then, talk about his life.

THINK! How has **TELEPHONE** changed over time?

