



# Garrett Morgan

## Garrett's Life

Garrett Morgan was born in 1877 in Kentucky, United States of America. He was seventh of 11 children and lived with them and his parents. His father was a former slave and his mother was the daughter of a minister. He went to primary school and in his mid-teens, moved to Ohio to look for work. He got a job as a handyman to a wealthy landowner. He then used the money to pay for private lessons to better his education.



Although he had a job, Garrett was interested in sewing-machine companies, so he learnt about them and how to fix them. He used this knowledge to patent an improved sewing machine and open his own repair business which was a success. He married a Bavarian woman named Mary Anne Hassek and they settled down in a town called Cleveland and had three sons. He had more succesful businesses after this and became the first black man to own a car in his town. In 1943, Morgan developed glaucoma and lost most of his sight as a result.

## Achievements



In 1909 Morgan was working on some fabric that had been burnt slightly by his sewing machine. He tried to use a chemical solution to fix it and discovered that the chemical straightened the fabric. He then tried the chemical on his neighbour's dog and found that it straightened the dog's fur too. Finally, he used it on

himself, and when that worked, he opened a hair company and sold the cream to people that wanted straight hair.

In 1914, Morgan made a breathing device. If you wore it, you would be protected from smoke, gas and other harmful substances in the air. This device became the prototype for the gas masks used in World War I, protecting soldiers from the toxic gasses used in war. This invention earned him the first prize at the Second International Exposition of Safety and Sanitation in New York City. In 1916, he and his brother used these masks to rescue people who had been trapped after an explosion in a tunnel in Cleveland.



In 1923, Morgan witnessed a carriage accident at a junction. This motivated him to make a traffic signal that had a warning light, alerting drivers that they would need to stop. This is what the modern-day traffic light is based on.

# Comprehension Questions

1. How many years ago was Garrett Morgan born?
2. Where was Garrett Morgan born?
3. How many younger siblings did Garrett have?
4. What does '*his father was a former slave*' mean?
5. Garrett Morgan stopped learning after primary school. Is this true or false? Explain your answer.
6. What does the word '*patent*' mean?
7. Garret Morgan didn't have a job when he made his first invention. True or false? Explain your answer.
8. Where was Garrett Morgan's wife from?
9. Summarise Garrett Morgan's life.
10. Summarise Garrett Morgan's achievements