

Tomas Alva Edison

The American inventor Thomas Alva Edison was born on February 11th, 1847 in Milan, Ohio. He was the seventh and last child of Samuel Edison, Jr. and Nancy Elliot Edison. When Edison was 7 years old, his family moved to Port Huron, Michigan, where his father worked as a **carpenter** at the Fort Gratiot military post.

Edison entered school in Port Huron, but his teachers considered him to be a dull student. Because of hearing problems, Edison had difficulty following the lessons. That's why he often didn't **attend** school. Nevertheless, Edison became an enthusiastic reader, and at the age of 10 he set up a laboratory in his **basement**.

When his mother could no longer **stand** the smell of his chemistry lab, Edison took a job as a train boy on the Grand Trunk Railway and established a new lab in an empty **freight car**. He was 12 at that time. Edison also began printing a weekly newspaper, which he called *The Grand Trunk Herald*.

While Edison was working for the railroad, something happened that changed the course of his career. Edison saved the life of a station official's child, who had fallen onto the **tracks** of an oncoming train. For his bravery, the boy's father taught Edison how to use the telegraph.

From 1862 to 1868 Edison worked as a telegrapher in the Midwest, the South of Canada, and New England. During this time he began developing a telegraphic repeating instrument that made it possible to **transmit** messages automatically. By 1869 Edison's inventions were progressing so well, he left telegraphy and began a career of full-time inventing and **running business**.

Edison moved to New York City, and within a year he was able to open a workshop in Newark, New Jersey. He produced the Edison Universal Stock Printer, the automatic telegraph, as well as other printing telegraphs, while working out of Newark. During this same period Edison married Mary Stilwell.

By 1875 Edison began to experience financial difficulties. To **reduce** costs, Edison asked his father to help him build a new research laboratory and machine shop in Menlo Park, New Jersey. He moved into the new building in March, 1876. Edison achieved his greatest successes in this laboratory and he was **dubbed** the "Wizard of Menlo Park."

In 1877 Edison invented the transmitter that is still used in telephone speakers and microphones. In December of the same year he made a phonograph. In the late 1870s with the support of leading financiers including J.P. Morgan and the Vanderbilts, Edison established the Edison Electric Light Company. In 1879 he

publicly demonstrated his incandescent electric light bulb. He not only invented the first successful electric light bulb, but also set up the first electrical power distribution company. In 1882 he supervised the installation of the first commercial, central power system in lower Manhattan.

Edison was also a good businessman. He not only designed important new devices, he created companies worldwide for the manufacture and sale of his inventions. Along with other manufacturing pioneers of his era, Edison helped to make the United States a world industrial power. He and Henry Ford became friends after Edison had encouraged Ford to use the gasoline powered engine for the automobile.

In 1884 Edison's wife Mary died, leaving him with three young children. He married Mina Miller in 1886, and began the construction of a new laboratory in West Orange, New Jersey. The new lab employed about 60 workers and Edison tried to personally manage this large staff. The story goes that when a new employee once asked about rules, Edison answered, "There are no rules around here. We're trying to accomplish something."

During his time in West Orange Edison produced the commercial phonograph, the kinetoscope, the Edison storage battery, the electric pen, and some other inventions. In 1913 Edison introduced the first talking moving pictures. In 1915 he was appointed as president of the U.S. Navy Consulting Board. In all, Edison patented more than 1,000 discoveries. His inventions were often in response to demand for new or improved products. However, others also came by chance.

In his lifetime Thomas Alva Edison profoundly affected the technology of a modern society. He had a great faith in progress and industry, and valued long, hard work. Edison used to say, "Genius is 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration." He believed that inventing useful products offered everyone the opportunity for fame and fortune while benefiting a society.

The scientist died in West Orange, New Jersey on October 18th, 1931. After his death Edison became a folk hero of legendary status.

1. Match the words with their definitions.

Profoundly	to be responsible for something and make sure that everything is done correctly
To affect	to send an electronic signal, radio or television broadcast
An invention	giving out light when heated;
To transmit	to get an official right to be the only person to make, use or sell a product or invention
To establish	in a way that has a very great effect on somebody or something
To supervise	a thing or an idea that has been produced or designed and that has not existed before
Incandescent	to start or create an organization, a system, etc.
To patent	to produce a change on somebody or something

2. Choose the correct item to complete the sentences.

- When Edison was 7 years old, his family moved to Port Huron, Michigan, where his father worked as at the Fort Gratiot military post.
a) a teacher b) an officer c) a carpenter
- Because of, Edison had difficulty following the lessons.
a) the problems with teachers b) the hearing problems c) the bad behaviour
- From 1862 to 1868 Edison worked as in the Midwest, the South, of Canada, and New England.
a) a scientist b) a telegrapher c) a manager
- By 1875 Edison asked his father to help him build in Menlo Park, New Jersey.
a) a new house for his family
b) a building of electrical power distribution company
c) a new research laboratory and a machine shop
- In 1879 he publicly demonstrated his
a) new research laboratory b) phonograph c) incandescent electric light bulb

6. The new lab in West Orange, New Jersey, employed about 60 workers and Edison tried to

- a) encourage them in their work
- b) personally manage this large staff
- c) influence their research

7. In 1913 Edison introduced

- a) the electric pen
- b) the first talking moving pictures
- c) the kinetoscope

8. He had great faith in , and valued long, hard work.

- a) science and business
- b) progress and industry
- c) talent and luck

3. Read and say if the statements are true or false.

1. The American inventor Thomas Alva Edison was born on February 11th, 1847 in Milan, Ohio.

2. His teachers considered him to be a good student.

3. When his mother could not longer stand the smell of his chemistry lab, Edison took a job as a train boy on the Grand Trunk Railway and established a new lab in an empty freight car.

4. Edison moved to New York City, and within a year he was able to open the Edison Electric Light Company in Newark, New Jersey.

5. He not only invented the first successful electric light bulb, but also set up the first electrical power distribution company.

6. During his time in West Orange Edison produced the commercial phonograph, the kinetoscope, the Edison storage battery, the electric pen, and some other inventions.

7. In 1915 he was appointed as president of the U.S. Academy of Science.

8. Thomas Alva Edison believed that inventing useful products offered everyone the opportunity for fame and fortune while benefiting a society.