Thomas Edison

Thomas Alva Edison lit up the world with his invention of the electric light. Without him, the world might still be a dark place. However, the electric light was not his only invention. He also invented the phonograph, the motion picture camera, and over 1,200 other things. About every two weeks Edison created something new.

Thomas A. Edison was born in Milan, Ohio, on February 11, 1847. His family moved to Port Huron, Michigan, when he was seven years old. Surprisingly, he attended school for only two months. His mother, a former teacher, taught him a few things, but Edison was mostly self-educated. His natural curiosity led him to start experimenting at a young age with electrical and mechanical items at home.

When he was 12 years old, he got his first job. He became a newsboy on a train that ran between Port Huron and Detroit. He set up a laboratory in a baggage car of the train so that he could continue his experiments in his spare time. Unfortunately, Edison's first job did not end well. He was fired when he accidentally set fire to the floor of the baggage car.

Edison then worked for five years as a telegraph operator, but he continued to spend much of his time on the job conducting experiments. He got his first patent in 1868 for a vote recorder run by electricity. However, the vote recorder was not a success. In 1870, he sold another invention, a stock-ticker, for $40,000. A stock-ticker is a machine that automatically prints stock prices on a tape. He was then able to build his first shop in Newark, New Jersey.

Thomas Edison was totally deaf in one ear and hard of hearing in the other, but thought of his deafness as a blessing in many ways. It kept conversations short, so that he could have more time for work. He called himself a "two-shift man" because he worked 16 out of every 24 hours. Sometimes he worked so intensely that his wife had to remind him to sleep and eat.

Thomas Edison died at the age of 84 on October 18, 1931, at his estate in West Orange, New Jersey. He left numerous inventions that improved the quality of life all over the world.

1. Thomas Edison received his first patent for inventing what item?
   A. An electric light.
   B. A phonograph.
   C. An electric vote recorder.
   D. A stock-ticker.

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2. The word *laboratory* means
   A. The last car in a train.
   B. A place for doing scientific research.
   C. A school for inventors.
   D. A type of dog.

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3. What is the main idea of this passage?
   A. Thomas Edison was interested in science and invented many important things.
   B. Thomas Edison could not keep a job and kept getting fired.
   C. Thomas Edison worked day and night on his experiments.
   D. Deaf people make good inventors because they can focus better than hearing people.

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4. Why was Edison able to build his first shop in Newark, New Jersey?
   A. He had more free time because he was fired from another job.
   B. He inherited a building after someone in his family died.
   C. He found an investor willing to buy him a building.
   D. He made money when he sold an invention.

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5. Which of the following is a fact not an opinion?
   A. Edison usually worked about 16 hours per day.
   B. Edison spent too much time working on inventions.
   C. Edison is the most famous American inventor.
   D. Edison was not a good employee.

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On a scale between 1 and 10 with 1 being low and 10 being how well did you like this passage?

Didn't Like It At All	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	I Really Liked It

Imagery: Using the information you learned in the passage, create a time-line of Thomas Edison's life.

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