Name_____

Early Inventions

After the Civil War and up to the 1900s, industry began to boom in American cities. New industry brought people to the urban areas, and populations boomed. As transportation expanded, so did the cities, and for the first time in American history, people were moving into the suburbs. This economical growth led to many inventions still seen and used today.

During this time period, skyscrapers were new to America's skyline. The name derived from the idea that the buildings were so tall they "scraped the sky." Development of the steel industry helped make these buildings possible. Of course, taller buildings needed another invention: elevators. People needed a way to reach the highest floors of these new, colossal structures. Elevators had been used previously for moving freight. However, earlier elevators were often unsafe, and people did not ride them because they would crash without warning. Elisha Otis created a safety device that would prevent an elevator from crashing even if the cable on the elevator broke. This invention helped move elevators for people into skyscrapers, making the tall buildings practical for everyone.

Electricity was another important invention during this time. Thomas Edison created the first incandescent light bulb in 1879. This first invention led to the creation of the materials needed to generate the power to run electrical lighting. Electrical power led to other inventions, such as trolley cars powered by electricity. The electrical motors in the trolley cars were powered by an overhead wire located above the tracks. People loved the smooth ride of the trolleys, and such economical transportation helped people move outside the busy cities and into the suburbs.

Text Questions

1. What does the term "urban areas" mean as it is used in the first paragraph?
   a. places in the country or rural areas
   b. places just outside the city
   c. places out West
   d. places in the city

2. The first paragraph explains that the population boomed because of increased industry. What does the word *boomed* mean as it is used in this sentence?
   a. increased
   b. decreased
   c. remained stagnant
   d. moved to other areas

3. Write three or four complete sentences comparing how electricity was important in America's early history and why electricity is still important today.

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4. What was the author's purpose in writing this text?
   a. to explain the importance of transportation in America's early history
   b. to remember the importance of Thomas Edison
   c. to entertain the reader with stories of the past
   d. to give information about inventions that were an important part of America's history

5. Which answer best explains how skyscrapers became feasible inventions?
   a. the growth of the steel industry and the invention of trolleys
   b. the growth of the steel industry and the invention of passenger elevators
   c. the invention of passenger elevators and electricity
   d. the invention of electrical power and passenger elevators

LIVEWORKSHEETS