

Timeless Thomas: How Thomas Edison Changed Our Lives

By Gene Barretta

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Common Core State Standards-English Language Arts-Literacy, Reading Informational Text, Grade 4

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2 Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.3 Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.

Focus

Students will listen to Timeless Thomas: How Thomas Edison Changed Our Lives and research the inventions of Thomas Edison.

Activation

Introduce author Gene Barretta to students and share information about his website www.genebarretta.com. Explain we will be reading a book written by Gene and talk about a very famous inventor.

Pre Reading Conversation:

- Who has heard of Thomas Edison? Where and when did he live? Aside from inventing, what else made him famous?
- What was life like during the 19th and 20th centuries? (in America and the rest of the world).
- What did they do for transportation?
- How did they communicate long distance?
- What were their homes like?
- Why are inventors a valuable part of society?

Post Reading Conversation:

- How many of Edison's inventions exist in your modern life?
- How similar or different are his designs from the more modern versions?
- Does he inspire you to invent something?
- How would the world function differently without certain inventions like the Phonograph, the movie studio, the light bulb etc?
- Do you think Thomas Edison could ever imagine our modern conveniences and achievements, like computers, space travel, TV, etc?
- Would Thomas Edison be a fascinating person to meet?

- Would you have preferred to live at the same time as Edison?
- Which invention is your favorite or least favorite? Why?

Vocabulary:

Invention
Innovation
Research
Breakthrough
Arcades
Dictation
Transmitter
Vend
Patent
Technology
Phonograph
Peephole
Synchronized
Discouraged
Kiln
Generator
Tribute
Ambition

Details for discussion:

The diversity of ideas.

Perseverance: How many times he failed and did not give up.

Collaboration: His Invention Factory and the men who developed the inventions with him.

Other Discussion/Lesson Idea Points:**Inventions, Innovation Timeline-**

- Write the word timeline for the students to see. Explain that a timeline shows when things happen in the order that they happened. Share an example timeline, such as a typical day in school.
- Write the word innovation for the students to see. Explain that an innovation is a new idea, new invention, or a new way to do something. As an example, smart phones are an innovation that changed the way people communicate and find information. Explain to students what telephones were like before the invention of smart phones.
- Students will select one of the inventions from Gene's book and research to see how it has improved since it first appeared from Thomas Edison.

Biography-

- Talk about biography as a genre. What is it? You may wish to discuss how biography combines informational writing with narrative. It's filled with facts and usually based on research, but also tells the story of a person's life.
- What did you learn or what can you assume about Edison's personal life?
- Starting the invention process as a boy.
- Is there enough information to describe his personality?
- What have you learned about Thomas Edison from reading Mr. Barretta's book that really made an impression on you?

Some biographies begin with someone's birth and continue through to his or her death OR (if the person is still living) to the present time. Mr. Barretta's book focuses on Edison's inventions, rather than his life story. Is it OK to leave out some information? Why? If the writer did try to cover everything, how long might this book become?

Unpacking the process of inventing, using the book illustrations as a guide-

- Inspiration and Design: understanding how Edison saw the need for the items he invented or developed.
- Execution: Edison's inventions on the right page of the spread.
- Evolution of the idea: The more contemporary items on the left page.
- How does one become an inventor? How old do you have to be?
- Name some famous inventions in the classroom.

Character Counts/Student character building attributes:

- Curiosity
- Creativity
- Ingenuity
- Collaboration
- Perseverance

Extra:

Share a Gene Barretta video about [Timeless Thomas](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvE6sQzzZPc&list=UU9a7IN0ZWu4WeNtBAO04xKA) found on Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvE6sQzzZPc&list=UU9a7IN0ZWu4WeNtBAO04xKA>

Guided Instruction:

- Have students think of a possible person they would like to have Mr. Barretta write about next.
- If students would like to research, have them access PebbleGo for more information.
- If students are using information from PebbleGo, have them cite their source.

Individual Learning:

- Working in pairs (or individually), when students have found a person they wish to present to Mr. Barretta to write a book about, have them create a "Wanted" poster.

- Students will support their person with two reasons why they would like to see a biography written.
- The “Wanted Poster” can be created with simple paper and drawing materials. Or to incorporate computer technology, have students go to www.bighugelabs.com Once there, students can select “Motivator” and fill in the fields to create a Wanted Poster.
- If Mr. Barretta is visiting the school, hang work or email and get him to get a conversation started: gene@genebarretta.com

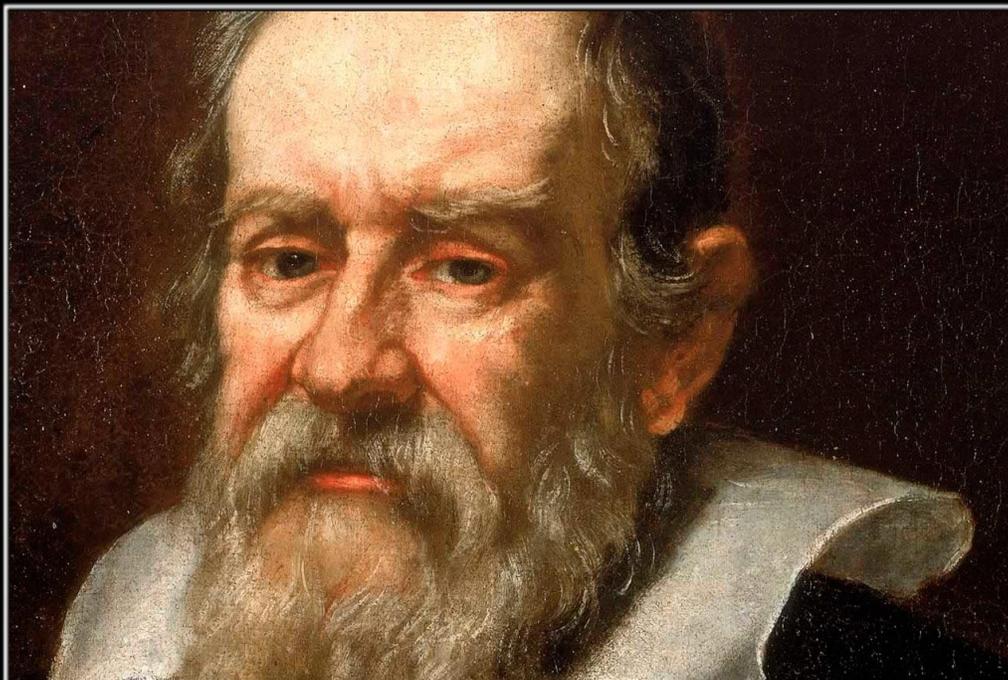
Technology:

PebbleGo database

www.bighugelabs.com

Reflection:

See examples of WANTED poster attached below, first from Big Huge Labs, second from MSPublisher:



WANTED: BOOK ON GALILEO

I like how you made the characters come to life in Neo Leo and Now & Ben and would like to see the same kind of picture book on Galileo. Galileo was a great man who was treated unfairly and I would like students to know about his great contributions to science and astronomy.

WANTED!

Dear Mr. Barretta,

Would you consider writing a biography about Galileo Galilei?

Here are my reasons:

1. I like how you made the characters come to life in Neo Leo and Now & Ben and would like to see the same kind of picture book on Galileo.
2. Galileo was a great man who was treated unfairly and I would like students to know about his great contributions to science and astronomy.

