

'Spinners, Matches and Karaoke' Answers

1. What gadgets are listed in first paragraph? List three.

Students might list Pokémon cards, Beanie Babies and Loom Bands. They might also count fidget or finger spinners here.

2. Who invented the 'fidget spinner'? When?

Catherine Hettinger invented the device in the early 1990s and patented it in 1997.

3. What toy company was originally interested in producing the 'spinner'?

Hasbro

4. List two things Hettinger has stated about her invention.

Students might list the fact that she isn't angry about the patent, that she is glad that someone is using her device, that inventions often don't make money or that she couldn't afford to update the patent for the device in 2005. Students might also remember that she said only 3% of inventions make money for the inventor.

5. How did the invention of the match happen?

It was an accident. John Walker was experimenting with lighting (fire starting) materials and a splint of wood, covered in the mixture, struck the fireplace and ignited.

6. Why do we call ballpoint pens 'biros'?

Laszlo Biro was the original inventor and first person to hold the patent for the ballpoint pen.

7. State two things you learn about karaoke from the article.

Students may choose from the name of the man who invented it: Daisuke Inoue or the fact that his band originally played live to audiences who then sang the lyrics. They may talk about the fact that it is a multi-billion-dollar industry, that Inoue sees no profit from his invention or the fact that karaoke means 'empty orchestra'.

8. State two facts you know about the 'smiley face' design.

It was designed in 1963 by Harvey Ball for an advertising company. He received \$45 for his design but 50 million pins had been created within a decade of his design appearing.

9. Who is Tim Berners-Lee and what is he famous for?

Sir Tim Berners-Lee is the inventor of the internet – he and a team created the first web server, first website and webpages in 1991 from an idea he had in 1987.

10. Where does the word patent come from?

From the Latin verb patere, meaning 'to lay open'. This refers to patents requiring that the inventor shows the true working of the invention when applying for exclusive rights.

Extension

Research one of the most successful inventors of all time. You might look at Thomas Edison, Leonardo da Vinci, the Wright brothers or James Dyson, inventor of the Dyson vacuum cleaner. What is the story of the invention? What kinds of challenges did the inventor face in bringing their invention to completion?

A variety of books and websites are dedicated to great inventors – any of these may be useful. Students might complete a fact file on their chosen inventor. They might want to concentrate on the difficulties surrounding the invention process – consider how many variants of the lightbulb were invented by Edison for example.

Imagine that you have invented something of your own. It might be something that would help the third world, provide entertainment or make student life easier. Write a three to four-page story in which you describe the inventing and marketing of your device. What happens when you try to sell it?

Students might use the illustrations and designs from Leonardo da Vinci's notebook here to help as a writing prompt or they may do this after researching the real life stories of some of the greatest inventors.

Find out more about the criticism around patent law. What are the pros and cons of having patents? Why do some people believe (as Tim Berners-Lee did about the internet) that some ideas should simply be for everyone? Write an opinion piece in which you decide on your side in the issue.

This can alternatively be prepared as a debate with each side researching the issues around patent. They might also look at jurisdiction and whether an international patent would be more sensible rather than a sovereign state-by-state one. They might investigate the particular problems of drugs and drug testing and the patenting of designer medicines by pharmaceutical companies.