Easy Reader Biographies: Alexander Graham Bell

A Famous Inventor

Guided Reading Level I
Do you like to talk on the telephone? Did you ever wonder who invented it? That person is Alexander Graham Bell. Keep reading to learn more about this great inventor.

Alexander Graham Bell lived from 1847 to 1922.
Alexander was born in Scotland in 1847. His family called him Aleck for short. Aleck’s father was a teacher who helped deaf people learn to speak.

Aleck’s father wanted him to study science.
Aleck’s mother lost her hearing as she grew older. She used an ear tube to help her hear. Mrs. Bell was an artist and a piano player. Like his mother, Aleck learned to play the piano.
Aleck could feel sound vibrations when his dog barked.

Aleck became fascinated by sound. He even studied his pet dog’s barking. This helped him learn how sounds are made.
Aleck’s brother would blow air through a tube. Aleck would move the machine’s lips to make it speak.

When he was a teenager, Aleck and his brother built a talking machine. It was shaped like a person’s head. They could make the machine say simple words like *mama*.
When Alexander was older, he got a job at a school in Boston. Like his father, he taught deaf people how to speak. Alexander was a great teacher, but he still wanted to invent things.

Alexander showed his students how to make sounds.
In Boston, Alexander met a woman named Mabel Hubbard. Mabel was deaf. Later, Mabel and Alexander got married and had children.
Alexander stopped teaching so that he could work on his inventions. He wanted to create a machine that could send sounds through a wire.
He hired a man named Thomas Watson to help him. Inventing was hard work. Sometimes the two men felt like giving up. But they kept going.
Alexander said into the machine, “Mr. Watson, come here. I want to see you!”

On March 10, 1876, something incredible happened. Alexander was in one room. Thomas was in another room. But they could hear each other’s voice through the machine. The invention was working!
Alexander called his invention a telephone. He entered it in a contest at the World’s Fair in Philadelphia. At the fair, he won a prize for his invention.
Soon Alexander was famous. People all over the world wanted to find out about his invention, including the president of the United States and the Queen of England.

In 1878, Rutherford B. Hayes became the first United States president to use a phone. Whom did he call? Alexander!
At first the telephone could be used only between places that were close together. But by 1915, it was possible to make calls all the way across the country!

In 1892, Alexander made the first call between New York and Chicago.
Alexander continued to invent many things, such as new kinds of planes and boats. He also continued to find ways to help deaf people.
Alexander worked hard to make people’s lives better. People will always think of the telephone as his greatest invention. The next time you call someone, remember Alexander Graham Bell.
Glossary

deaf (adjective) unable to hear

fascinated (adjective) very interested

incredible (adjective) amazing, hard to believe

inventor (noun) a person who creates new machines or other things

laboratory (noun) a place where a scientist works

tube (noun) a long object that is empty inside

vibration (noun) a fast, shaking movement

wire (noun) a long, thin, bendable piece of metal
Alexander Graham Bell
A Famous Inventor

Alexander Graham Bell (1847–1922) was an innovator who changed American life forever. Always fascinated by sound, he began his career as a teacher of deaf children. Then he began working full-time on his inventions—and in 1876, he invented the telephone. Throughout his life, Bell continued to work on different inventions and he continued to find ways to help deaf people.

Introducing the Book

Activate prior knowledge by asking: When was the last time you talked to someone on the phone? Who was it, and how far does this person live from you?

Encourage children to imagine what life was like before the telephone. Ask: If you wanted to invite a friend over who lived across town, how would you do it? (You might go in person or send a note.) How would you stay in touch with a relative who lived far away? (You would write letters.) Lead children to see the important role the telephone plays in their daily lives. Then explain that they’ll be reading about the man who invented it.

Spotlight Nonfiction Feature: Diagram

Talk with children about the purpose of diagrams. Explain that diagrams are pictures that show parts of something, or how a machine or a process works. Then explain that some diagrams show how something (such as an invention) has changed over time.

Have children turn to page 15. Explain that the caption tells what information the diagram shows, and ask a volunteer to read it aloud. Next, point out the year labels connected to each telephone. Ask: How is the diagram helpful? Why might it be better than a written description of each year’s phone? (It helps readers visualize the phones; it gives a lot of information in a small space.)

Use the diagram for a mini telephone quiz. Ask: How did the telephone change from 1876 to 1919? What’s the biggest difference between the 1964 phone and the 1992 phone? Do you think the phone has improved between 1876 and today? How?

Using the Reproducible

Give children copies of the graphic organizer on page 29. Explain that the biography they just read describes how Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone, but it also tells several other things about his life. Invite children to write four other things they learned about Bell.

Book Links

For more information on Alexander Graham Bell and the telephone, try these titles:

- *Alexander Graham Bell* by Victoria Sherrow (Lerner, 2003)
- *Alexander Graham Bell: An Inventive Life* by Elizabeth MacLeod (Kids Can Press, 1999)
- *The Telephone* by Marc Tyler Nobleman (Capstone, 2004)
Alexander Graham Bell is best known for inventing the telephone. What else did you learn about him? In each phone, write a detail from the book.
Sequencing Timeline

Write the person’s name on the line. Then write important events in the order in which they happened.

Important Events in ________________________’s Life

Name ____________________________________________ Date _______________________________
**Vocabulary Chart**

Record new words on the chart. First, write the vocabulary word. Next, write what it means. Then, use the word in your own sentence.

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<th>What It Means</th>
<th>Sentence Using Word</th>
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Write the person’s name in the center box. Then fill in the other boxes.

**Important Events in the Person’s Life:**

**His or Her Accomplishments:**

**What the Person Was Like:**

**How I Feel About the Person:**
Venn Diagram

Write one person’s name over each circle. Write facts about this person in that circle.
In the center, write what the two people had in common.

Name ___________________________   Name ___________________________

Both