

## Innovation Nation

### Task 1: British inventions

The British have a long history of invention and inventiveness. Match the inventions with the inventors.

Invention	Inventor & Year
The Television	George Stephenson, 1814
The steam locomotive	Tim Berners Lee, 1989
The pocket calculator	John Dunlop, 1808
The first pneumatic tyres	John Logie Baird, 1926
The World Wide Web	Clive Sinclair, 1971

### Task 2: Favourite inventions

To celebrate the British Patent Office's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, BBC Radio 4 asked listeners to vote for the best and worst inventions. Here are some of the examples of the survey results:

#### Best inventions

- Penicillin
- Bikes
- The internet
- TV

#### Worst inventions

- Nuclear weapons
- Car alarms
- Landmines
- Mobile phones
- Plastic bags

Try to think of reasons why the invention is useful or not useful.

Nominate one example for each category.

### Task 3: Innovation nation

BBC Science launched a competition to find a new invention. Thousands of ordinary people around the UK wrote in with very interesting ideas. Judges then voted for the best invention.

Read a description of the top ten inventions. Find:

- a) An invention which helps make a home safer
- b) An invention which helps you keep your home cleaner
- c) An invention which helps travellers

- A padlock with a unique shape. This lock cannot be picked or forced open so it is safer and tougher than ordinary locks.
- A sausage cooker. This is a metal tray with spaces for each sausage to fit into a frying pan. The sausages only need turning once and are more evenly cooked.
- A hairbrush. This special brush clamps shut on a section of hair and pulls it straight. This allows you to dry your hair straight.
- Swimming goggles. These soft goggles wrap around your head like a mask and are more comfortable than traditional goggles.
- A pen with no fibre tip, ball point or nib for ink. It is made out of a single piece of plastic. This pen uses surface tension and gives a clean line of ink through a hole drilled into its tip.
- A carpet cleaner. This special attachment fits on to the end of a vacuum cleaner and can suck up spilt liquids from carpets and floors.
- A bath plug. This plug fits any bath size and it opens automatically if the bath overfills with water.
- A collapsible kitchen bin. This bin can be made smaller to remove the bin bags and it is so small that it fits into the sink and the dishwasher so it is easier to clean.
- A deep vein thrombosis device. This electronic device is useful for long haul flights. It stimulates the calf muscles in your legs and increases your blood circulation. This prevents the dangers of deep vein thrombosis.
- A bead bin for kitchens. A wire spiral sits inside the bin and the beads on the spiral move. This helps you remove the bin bags more easily.

Discuss these questions:

- Which invention do you think won the competition?
- Why do you think this should be the winner?

**Task 4: Describe an invention**

Pick an invention from recent years. Write a description of it.

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**Task 5: Society and inventions**

New ideas and inventions can cause great changes to your lifestyle, your way of working and your health or life expectancy. New advances in medical science mean that Britons are living longer. New advances in domestic technology mean people work less hard to clean their homes or cook. Many Britons eat pre-packed food which they cook in microwaves and more and more people shop on the Internet.

Compare your life as a teenager to your parents' lives as teenagers.

- Which inventions have caused the changes?
- Think about your school or work life. Which modern inventions have an impact on your studies? How?
- Are you happy with the changes that are happening in your society?
- Are people's lives easier or harder? Are people more or less fulfilled or happy?

**Task 6: A new invention**

Think of something that is a problem for you or that you find difficult. Now try to think of an invention that could help you with this part of your life. Think of the following things:

- What is the problem that this invention solves?
- How does it work?
- What does it look like?
- Who is this invention designed for?
- How much will it cost to buy?
- What is the name of the invention?

Make notes and present your idea to the class.