

Thomas Alva Edison Unit Study

Book Recommendations:

Who Was Thomas Alva Edison?– Margaret Frith

Thomas Edison: The Great Inventor– Caryn Jenner

Timeless Thomas- How Thomas Edison Changed Our Lives– Gene Barretta

Thomas Edison (Lifetime Series)– Richard Tames

What Makes the Light Bright, Thomas Edison?– Melvin and Gilda Berger

Inventing the Future: A Photobiography of Thomas Alva Edison– National Geographic

Inventions- FAQ– Valerie Wyatt

So You Want to Be an Inventor?– Judith St. George

Vocabulary:

phonograph

innovation

patent

laboratory

kinetograph

electricity

kinetoscope

lightbulb

kinetophone

incandescent

telegraph

technology

technology

battery

incandescent

electric

receiver

addled

inventor

transmitter

invention

experiment

scientist

engineer

Suggested Activities:

#1- Thomas Edison was born on February 11th, 1847. How old would he be if he were still alive today? (history, math)

#2- Al, as his parents called him, was born in Milan, Ohio. Locate Ohio on a map. How far is it from where you live? (geography, history, math)

#3- Thomas Edison's mother provided him with a basement laboratory. It was filled with, among other things, empty jars and bottles, feathers, and rocks. Create a temporary lab in the kitchen or basement and experiment using materials similar to Edison's in addition to: a magnifying glass or microscope, baking soda, vinegar, corn starch, and other household items. (science)

#4- As a child, he once broke open a bee's nest to see what was inside. Watch a video showing the inside of a bee's nest. (science)

#5- Al once suffered from scarlet fever. Research it, and write a report. (science, language arts)

#6- Tom, as he was called as he got older, and a friend used to send messages to each other across a wire using Morse Code. Find out how to spell your name using this code. (social studies, history)

#7- Thomas Edison worked on a train in his youth. Learn about trains and how they work. (history, science)

#8- Tom set up his own printing press on a train that he worked on. Start up a weekly or monthly family newspaper to share your news with friends and relatives. (language arts)

#9- Visit a newspaper office to see how newspapers are printed now. (field trip, social studies)

#10- Thomas Edison once said, “Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration.” Discuss the meaning of this quote. (language arts, character)

#11- Most inventors worked alone, but Tom liked working with a team. Gather a team of your own, and see what unique ideas you can come up with together! (science)

#12- Edison bought 2 large plots of land in Menlo Park, NJ. His “community” had a lab, office, library, carpentry shop, machine shop, glass blowing shed, and engine house. Choose one and research what sort of work would be done there. If possible, take a field trip to one in your area. (social studies, field trip)

#13- Write a report on the phonograph. (science, language arts)

#14- U.S. President Rutherford B. Hayes invited Thomas Edison to the White House so that he could see the phonograph. Which President was he, and what years was he in office? (history)

#15- Build your own lightbulb. (science)

#16- Find out how a lightbulb works. (science)

#17- Tom and his second wife, Mina, used to have lavish dinner parties. Orville Wright, Helen Keller, and Henry Ford were all guests of theirs. Find out what each of these people is famous for. (history)

#18- If you could invite anyone in the world, alive or dead, to a dinner party, who would you invite? Write an essay explaining why you chose that person. (language arts, social studies)

#19- Draw a comic strip of Edison working on one of his inventions. (art)

#20- While the lightbulb and phonograph are the two inventions he is most known for, what other inventions did Edison come up with? Were they all successful? (science, history)

#21- Thomas Edison passed away on October 18th, 1931. How old was he? (math)

#22- On the night of Edison's funeral, President Herbert Hoover requested that all Americans turn off their lights for 1 minute. Turn off your lights for 1 minute in honor of the man who made the world a brighter place. (character)