

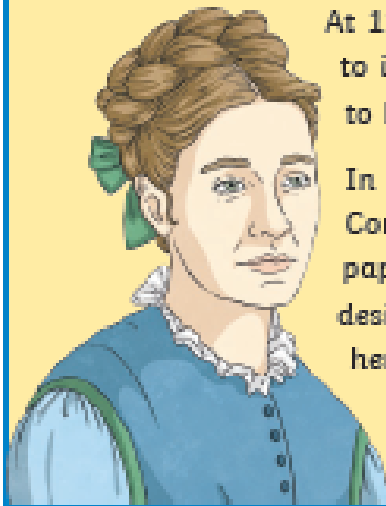
Victorian Inventors

Delve into the history files and discover more about three great 19th-century inventors whose creations continue to affect our lives today.

Name: Margaret E. Knight

Most Famous Invention: Paper bags

Born in Maine, USA on 14th February 1838, Margaret E. Knight was nicknamed 'the lady Edison' due to the amount of inventions she made. She was the daughter of James Knight and Hannah Teal but sadly her father passed away when she was young. This meant that Margaret received only a basic education and went to work in a cotton mill when she was still a child.



At 12, Margaret witnessed an accident at the mill. This prompted her to invent a safety device for the mechanical loom, which is thought to have stopped the loom if something got caught in it.

In 1867, Margaret was employed by the Columbia Paper Bag Company. In 1868, she invented a machine that folded and glued paper to form flat-bottomed paper bags. Charles Annan stole her design but Margaret took him to court and won the right to patent her design.

Margaret continued inventing useful objects, including a number of engines, for the rest of her life.

Did You Know...?

During the Victorian era, women were seen as less intelligent than men; many people did not believe that Margaret was capable of inventing useful things.

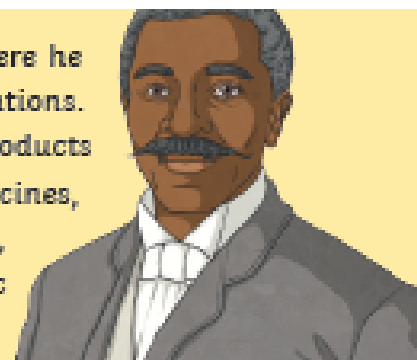
Name: George Washington Carver

Most Famous Invention: Peanut products

George Washington Carver was an African-American teacher, scientist and inventor. He became known as 'the peanut man' due to his inventions that used peanuts to create many useful objects and materials.

George was born into slavery sometime in the early 1860s to Mary and Giles, an enslaved couple owned by Moses Carver. In 1865, slavery ended but Moses and his wife, Susan, decided to continue to look after and educate George and his brother, James, in their home. George was interested in science and the arts and later became a botanist after attending university.

In 1896, George became a teacher at Tuskegee University where he taught for 47 years. During this time, he also worked on his inventions. There were all related to plants. He invented more than 300 products from peanuts, including: plastics, paints, dyes, cosmetics, medicines, oils, soap, ink and wood stains and 118 from sweet potatoes, including: postage-stamp glue, flour, vinegar and synthetic rubber. He even invented a plant-based petrol.



Did You Know...?

During the Victorian era, many African-Americans were sold as slaves and they were not treated as equals; they were often not allowed to receive an education.

Name: William Henry Fox Talbot

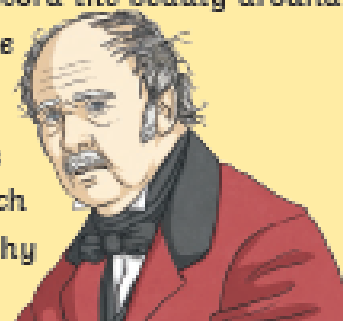
Most Famous Invention: Light-sensitive paper

William Henry Fox Talbot was born on 11th February, 1800 in Melbury, Dorset, and went on to become a **Member of Parliament (MP)**, scientist, inventor and a pioneer of photography.

William's father died when he was less than a year old and he and his mother lived in many different homes until she remarried in 1804. After receiving his early education at home with a **governess**, William went to Harrow School and then to Cambridge University in 1817.

In 1832, he married Constance Mundy and was elected as MP for Chippenham in the same year. In 1833, he visited Lake Como in Italy where he wanted to record the beauty around him but his sketching skills were limited; he dreamed up a machine which would automatically make the sketch for him.

He was interested in studying light and chemicals and used this knowledge to go on to invent his 'art of photogenic drawing', which used light-sensitive paper. He went on to further develop photography with the use of chemicals which 'fixed' the image onto the paper.



Glossary

botanist: An expert in or a student of the scientific study of plants.

governess: A woman employed to teach children in a private household.

mechanical loom: A machine for making fabric by weaving yarn or thread.

Member of Parliament (MP): A person formally elected to the UK government.

patent: A government licence excluding others from making, using or selling an invention.

Questions

1. How old was Margaret when she witnessed an accident at the mill? Tick one.

- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14

2. Order the following statements from 1-5 to show the order they happened in William's life.

	William married Constance Mundy and became an MP.
	William invented light-sensitive paper.
	William's father died.
	William visited Lake Como.
	William dreamed of a machine that could sketch for him.

3. Name two of the jobs that William did?

- _____
- _____

4. Fill in the missing words from this sentence:

During the Victorian era, many _____ were sold as _____ and they were not treated as _____.

5. Find and copy a phrase from the text that shows that George's exact birthdate is not known.

6. Summarise William's first invention, and his reasons for making it, in 30 words or less.

7. Why do you think that Charles Annan stole Margaret's design?

8. Why do you think that George became a botanist?

9. Describe an invention that you would like to make.
