

Lesson 1 Innovation

Main Ideas

- An innovation is an invention, an idea, an improvement or change that is successfully introduced into and widely adopted by the society at large.
- Henry Ford’s innovative vision was to produce a car for average people.

Key Concepts

- Innovation
- Vision
- Car for the multitude

Digitized Artifacts from the Collections of The Henry Ford

Lesson 1 Innovation

- [Ford Model T Touring Car, 1914, Given to John Burroughs by Henry Ford](#) ID# THF70573
- [Letter from James H. Bear to Edsel Ford Praising Henry Ford and the Model T, 1938](#) (page 1 ID# THF68267) (page 2 ID# THF68268)
- [First Official Ford Motor Company Portrait of Henry Ford, 1904](#) ID# THF36449

Materials

- Computers with access to the Internet, digital projector and screen (preferred) OR printed handouts of digitized artifacts’ images and descriptions
- Sign: “How do people create society-changing innovations?”
- Student Activity Sheet 1A: Reading Primary Sources: Letter, James H. Bear to Edsel Ford
- Answer Key 1A: Reading Primary Sources: Letter, James H. Bear to Edsel Ford
- Student Activity Sheet #1B: Henry Ford and Innovation

Duration

One class period (45 minutes)

Instructional Sequence

1 Engagement

Write the questions and answers from the Pre-Unit Student Activity Sheet: Innovations Survey on the board and ask students to add their results. Engage them in a discussion analyzing the results by asking questions such as:

- Which innovations were considered the most society-changing?

- Which innovations did people not want to live without?
- What is one innovation you personally could not live without?
- Did you notice any correlation, or relationship, between what people of various ages said? (For example, those under 40 may not be able to imagine life without cell phones or the Internet.)

Point out the sign displaying the question “How do people create society-changing innovations?” Tell students that during their lifetimes, many innovations will change society. The class will be using Henry Ford and Ford Motor Company as a case study in how one society-changing innovation was created.

Talk with students about the widely held belief that the automobile is a major society-changing innovation. Discuss whether your survey results do or do not support this belief. Share the story of the farm wife who, when asked why her family purchased a Model T instead of indoor plumbing, replied, “You can’t go to town in a bathtub!” Illustrate the story by showing them an image from **The Henry Ford’s** collection of digitized artifacts, [Ford Model T Touring Car, 1914, Given to John Burroughs by Henry Ford](#) ID# THF70573.

continued...

Lesson 1 Innovation Continued

2 Primary Document Analysis

To reinforce the impact of the Model T on people's lives, you and your class will read and analyze a primary source document. This letter from James H. Bear to Edsel Ford, praising Edsel's father for changing life for farmers and their families, is one piece of evidence of how Henry Ford changed society.

Have students work in small groups or as a whole class using Student Activity Sheet 1A: Reading Primary Sources to read and analyze the [Letter from James H. Bear to Edsel Ford Praising Henry Ford and the Model T, 1938](#) (page 1 ID# THF68267) (page 2 ID# THF68268).

To assist students with the Reading Between the Lines section of Student Activity Sheet 1A: Reading Primary Sources, you may want to have students consider these questions first:

- In the last paragraph, what is the writer hoping?
(Ford's spirit will be reincarnated in the President of the United States.)
- What does the writer think of the current president?
(Does not think the president had the proper character.)
- Who was president at the time this letter was written?
(Franklin D. Roosevelt)
- What big events were occurring in the United States and the world at this time? *(Great Depression; Hitler was mobilizing German army for war.)*

3 Innovation and Vision

Ask students to define innovation. Encourage students to think about how innovators go about inventing, improving or changing something. This is an open-ended question, as different innovators have different ways of working. For background information, see [OnInnovation.com](#) and especially “[Speech on ‘Advancing a Culture of Innovation.’](#)”

Tell students that many innovations, such as Henry Ford's Model T, began with a vision. Read them the following quotation, and illustrate it with the image [First Official Ford Motor Company Portrait of Henry Ford, 1904](#) ID# THF36449.

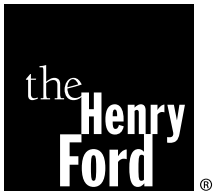
“A Car for the Multitude”

I will build a motor car for the great multitude. It will be large enough for the family but small enough for the individual to run and care for. It will be constructed of the best material, by the best men to be hired, after the simplest designs that modern engineering can devise. But it will be so low in price that no man making a good salary will be unable to own one – and enjoy with his family the blessing of hours of pleasure in God's great open spaces.

– Henry Ford, 1913

Assessment

Have students complete the Student Activity Sheet 1B: Henry Ford and Innovation.



Name _____

reading primary sources

Letter, James H. Bear to Edsel Ford

The following questions will help you piece together what this document tells you about the people in the past. Use the digital image of the document and the document description to answer the questions.

Reading for Main Ideas

What type of document is this?

When was this document written?

To whom was the document sent?

Who wrote this document?

What is the purpose of this document?

Reading for Details

What do you learn about the writer's personal background?

What does the writer appreciate about Henry Ford's work?

Whose lives did the Model T change, according to the writer?

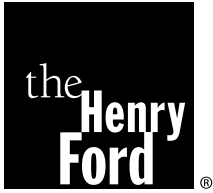
Give an example of how life was different.

Reading Between the Lines

In the second-to-last paragraph, what president does the writer compare with Henry Ford?

What do you think the writer liked about American society at this time?

What do you think the writer disliked about American society at this time?



Name _____

reading primary sources

Letter, James H. Bear to Edsel Ford

The following questions will help you piece together what this document tells you about the people in the past. Use the digital image of the document and the document description to answer the questions.

Reading for Main Ideas

What type of document is this?

Letter

When was this document written?

August 26, 1938

To whom was the document sent?

*Edsel Ford
(Son of Henry Ford)*

Who wrote this document?

James H. Bear

What is the purpose of this document?

To congratulate Edsel on having Henry Ford as a father, to praise Henry Ford, give Henry Ford well wishes for his seventy-fifth birthday.

Reading for Details

What do you learn about the writer's personal background?

He grew up on a farm and was a salesman in the rural Midwest.

What does the writer appreciate about Henry Ford's work?

Henry Ford's Model T made it possible for farm families to travel farther from home. Farmers were able to play more of a role in society because of this better transportation.

Whose lives did the Model T change, according to the writer?

Give an example of how life was different.

The Model T changed the lives of farmers and their wives and children. Prior to that car, many farm wives and children hadn't traveled much more than 5 miles from home.

Reading Between the Lines

In the second-to-last paragraph, what president does the writer compare with Henry Ford?

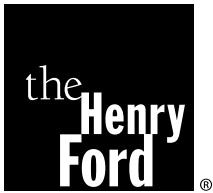
Abraham Lincoln

What do you think the writer liked about American society at this time?

He liked the increased mobility the Model T and other cars had created. He feels people are equal in American society.

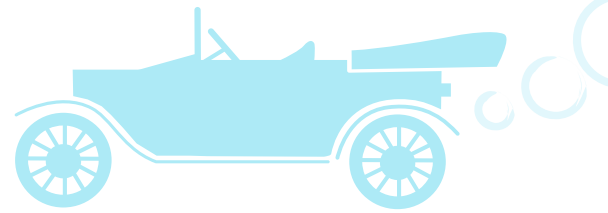
What do you think the writer disliked about American society at this time?

The writer did not like the president and seems to feel Roosevelt did not have the character, integrity, foresight and unselfishness needed to lead the country. Perhaps he did not like Roosevelt's New Deal policies or how Roosevelt was dealing with the growing threat of war in Europe.



Name _____

Henry Ford and innovation



Define innovation.

Henry Ford’s Innovative Vision: “A Car for the Multitude”

I will build a motor car for the great multitude. It will be large enough for the family but small enough for the individual to run and care for. It will be constructed of the best material, by the best men to be hired, after the simplest designs that modern engineering can devise. But it will be so low in price that no man making a good salary will be unable to own one – and enjoy with his family the blessing of hours of pleasure in God’s great open spaces.

Henry Ford, 1913

In your own words, what was Henry Ford’s vision?
