

Aleck's Big Ideas

by Candyce Norvell



Inventions and Inventors

Think of great inventions of the last one hundred years. The telephone, television, car, and computer are a few of them.

We know how amazing these things are. What about the people who made them? An inventor can be as amazing as his or her invention. This is the story of one amazing inventor.

READ & RESPOND

Ask and Answer Questions

Write one question you have after reading this page. Start your question with "who."

A Boy Named Aleck

In 1847, a boy named Aleck was born in Scotland. He became interested in sound.

One day Aleck got lost. He heard his father calling him from far away. This made Aleck curious about how sound traveled.

As a joke, Aleck and his brothers made a machine. It sounded like a baby crying. Their neighbors thought it was a real baby!



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Main Ideas and Details

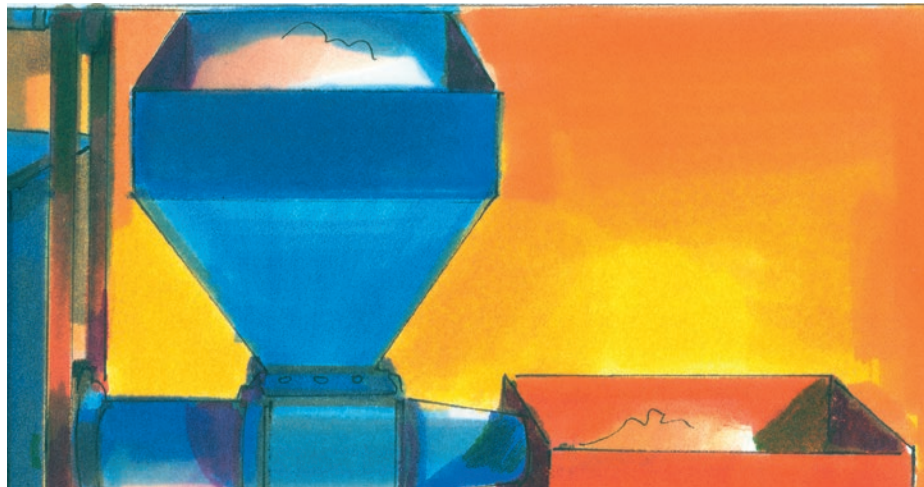
What made Aleck think about how sound traveled?



Early Experiments

Aleck tried new experiments. He even taught his dog to talk! He rubbed its voice box. He moved its jaws. The sounds that came out were like words. Soon the dog could say, “How are you, grandmamma?”

When Aleck was 14, he made a useful machine. Until then, farmers had to take the shell off wheat. Only then could people eat it. The young genius made a machine that did this job.



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Ask and Answer Questions

Write one question you have after reading this page. Start your question with “why.”



Growing Up

Aleck's mother was deaf. Aleck wanted to help her understand the things he said. He wanted to help people who could not hear well.

Aleck went to England to study. He met scientists there. He learned about a new idea called electricity.

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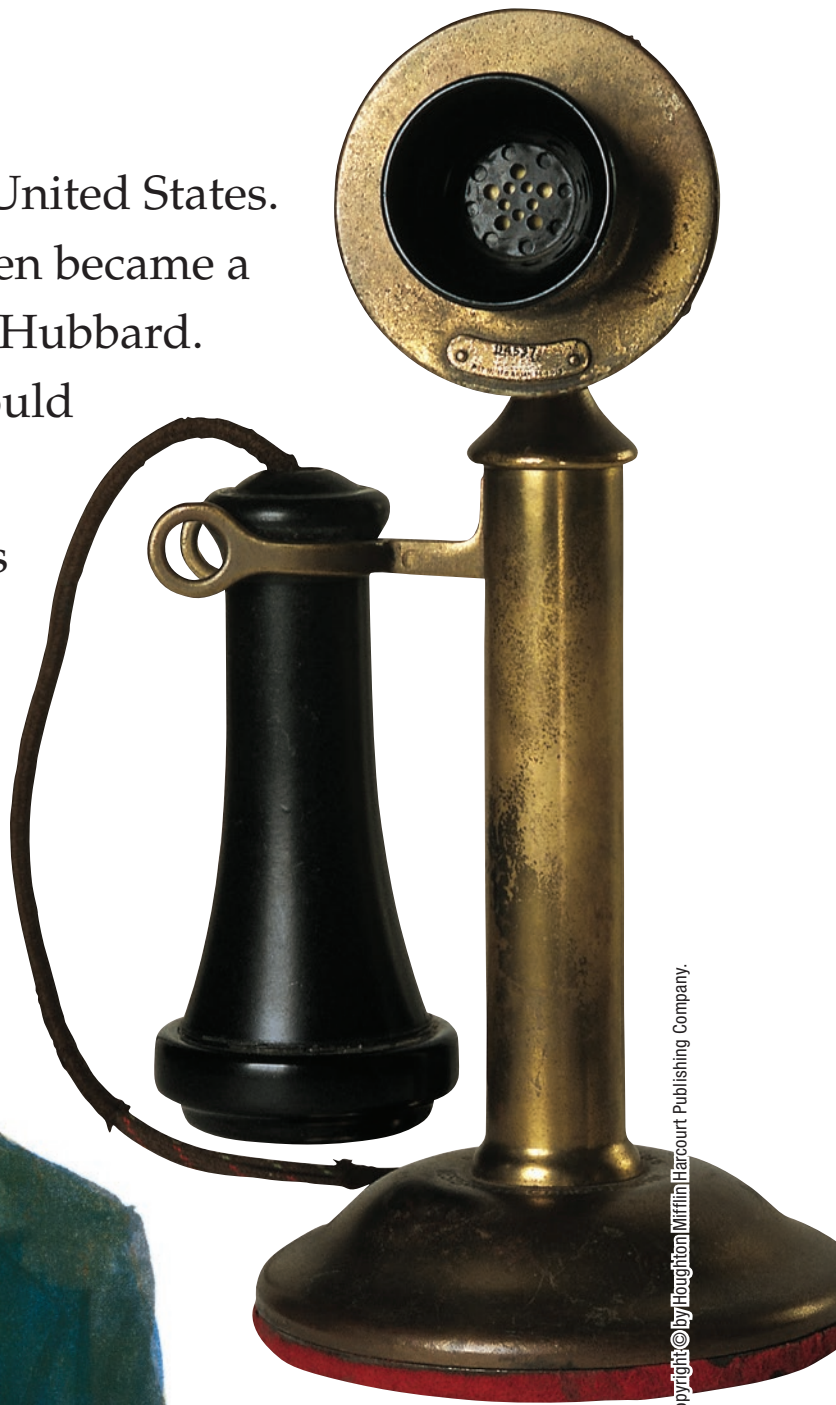
Main Ideas and Details

Write a detail that explains why Aleck wanted to help people who couldn't hear well.

Off to America

Later, Aleck moved to the United States. He finished his studies. He then became a teacher. Aleck married Mabel Hubbard. Like Aleck's mother, Mabel could not hear.

Aleck began to work on his biggest invention. It was the telephone. Yes, Aleck was Alexander Graham Bell!

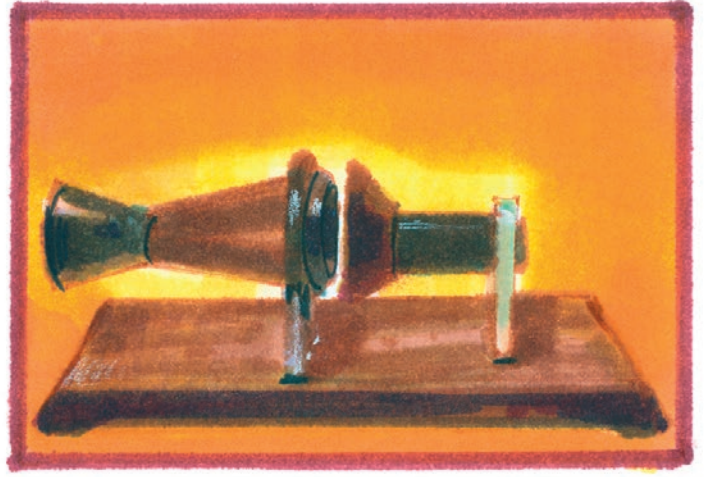
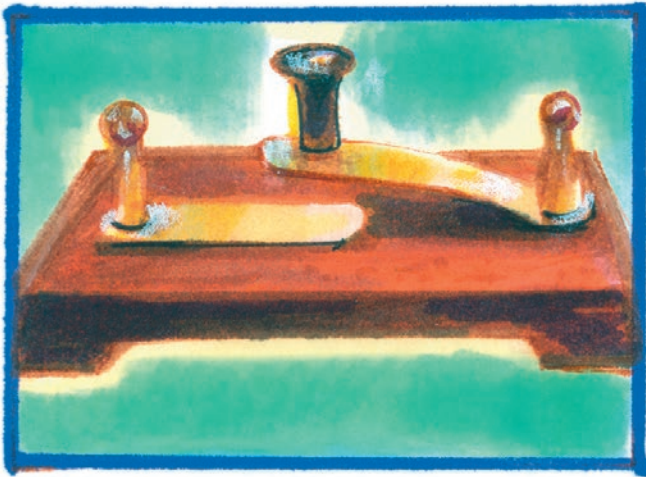


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Ask and Answer Questions

Have any of your questions been answered? Did the answer help you understand the text better? Explain.



Sending a Message

Aleck had an idea. He wanted to send voice messages over a wire. He and his friend Tom Watson began to try. They worked long hours in their laboratory.

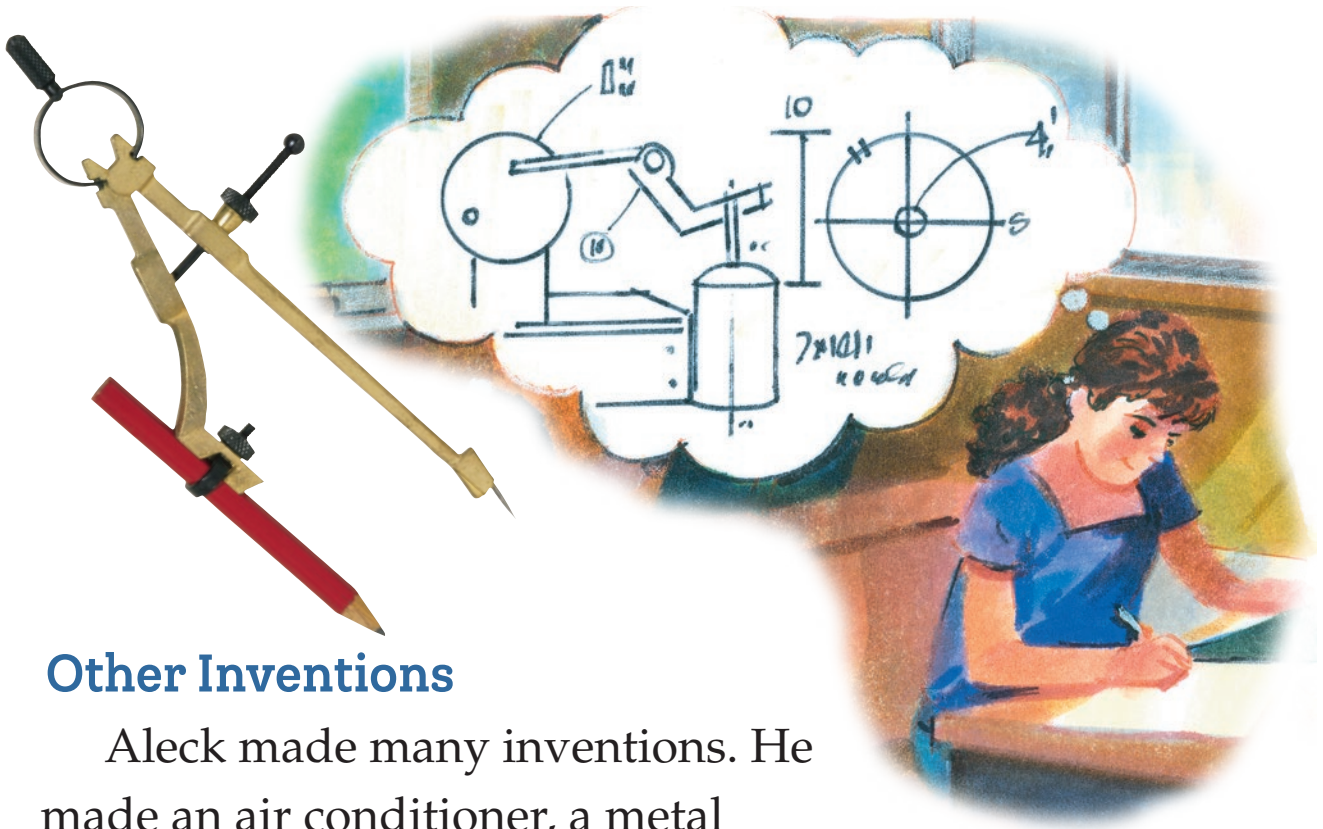
During one experiment, Aleck hurt himself. Tom was in another room. Aleck said, “Mr. Watson, come here.” Tom heard Aleck’s voice over the wire! The first telephone message had been sent.

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Main Ideas and Details

What did Aleck and Tom try to do in their laboratory?



Other Inventions

Aleck made many inventions. He made an air conditioner, a metal detector, and other useful machines.

Alexander Graham Bell once said, “All really big discoveries are the results of thought.” Aleck must have thought a lot. He sure made some big discoveries. Every day, other people’s thoughts lead to discoveries, too.

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READ & RESPOND

Ask and Answer Questions

Write one question you have after reading the story. What can you do to find your answer?

Reread and Respond



1 What is the central idea of this story?

Hint

Think about what every page of the story is mainly about.

2 Write two details that tell why Aleck was curious about sound.

Hint

For clues, see pages 203 and 205.

3 How would you describe Aleck?

Hint

For clues, see pages 203, 204, and 205.