

The Boy Who Made the TV

by Cate Foley

Have you heard of Philo T. Farnsworth? If not, don't worry. Many people are not familiar with him. Philo Farnsworth made a popular invention. He made the modern television. He was just fourteen years old when he got the idea.



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READ & RESPOND

Make Inferences

Does the author think Philo Farnsworth was smart? How do you know?

Farm Boy

Philo was born in Utah in 1906.
He helped work on his family's farm.

Philo's parents wanted to improve their lives. They moved the family to a new farm in Idaho. In the attic, Philo found science magazines. They would change his life.



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Make Inferences

How do you know that Philo was a hard worker?

Philo's Idea

Philo read the magazines. He learned about something called electrons. He read about a new idea. People wanted to use electrons to send pictures through the air.

One day Philo was plowing a field. He thought about electrons. He wondered if they could go back and forth like the plow. Maybe electrons could read pictures line by line! This was a new idea.



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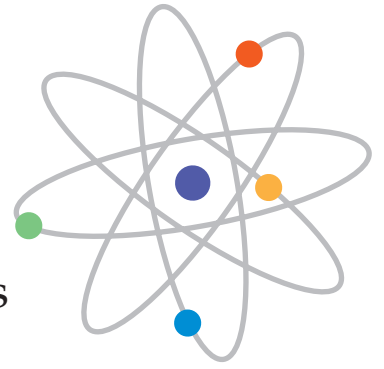
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Main Ideas and Details

How did plowing a field help Philo get a new idea about electrons?



Television was different then. One kind showed a picture on a wall. Philo had a new idea. He wanted to make an electron tube. It would make pictures by shooting electrons at a special screen.



Philo worked hard on his idea. He tried one experiment after another. Some of his teachers helped. They tried new ways of making the tube. The more they tried, the more they learned.



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Why do you think Philo had to conduct more than one experiment?

Success!

Finally, the tube was ready. Philo tried to send an image. Can you guess what image he sent? It was a dollar sign.

The tube worked! Philo sent a television image. It was like the ones we see today. He was just twenty-one years old. His research and testing were successful. He had made a new kind of television.

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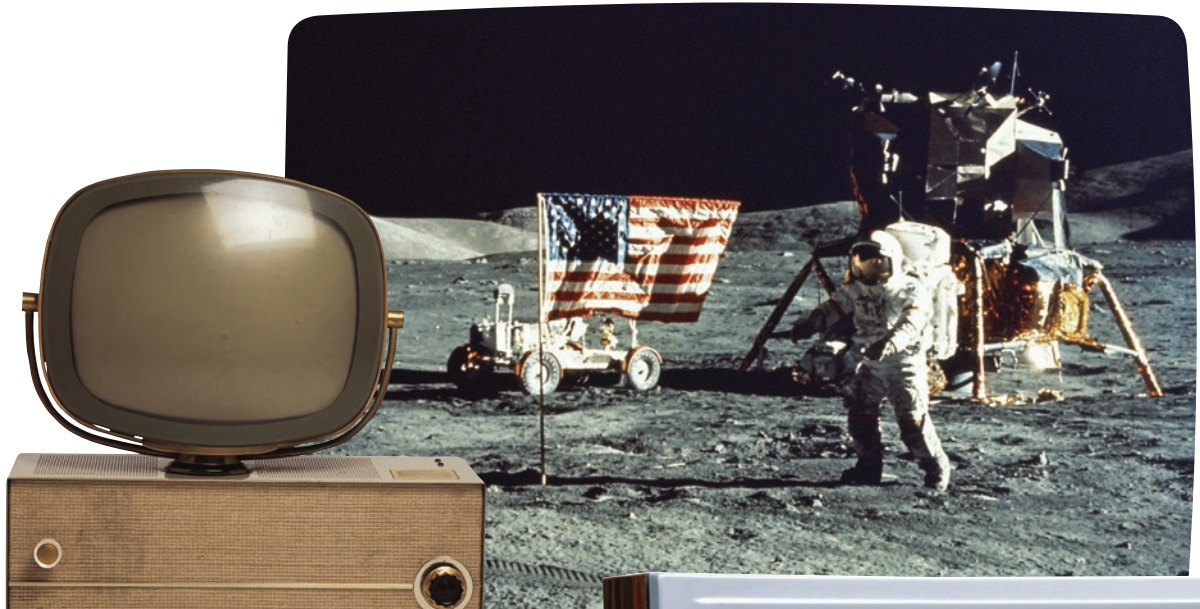
Make Inferences

How did Philo's research and testing lead to success?

TV Catches On

Television was getting popular. A large company said that it had invented the new electron tube. A court said that Philo was the inventor.

Philo did not always like television. He thought many shows were bad. Still, television showed important events, too. In 1969, Philo saw the first man walk on the Moon. Before, he would have read this news.



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Make Inferences

How do you know that Philo changed his mind about television after watching the first man walk on the Moon?

A Great Inventor

Philo made other inventions. He helped create radar. He thought of a machine that hospitals used to help babies. He found new ways for people to get electricity. He created over 300 inventions!

Philo Farnsworth died in 1971. Today, almost every home has a television. A magazine said Philo was one of the most important people of the twentieth century. Would you agree?



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Make Inferences

Why did a magazine say that Philo was one of the most important people of the twentieth century?

Reread and Respond



1 How did Philo become interested in science?

Hint

For a clue, see pages 171 and 172.

2 Why was Philo critical of television?

Hint

For clues, see page 175.

3 Do you think Philo cared about helping people? Explain.

Hint

For clues, see page 176.