

# Victorian Inventors

Read the history files to discover more about three great 19<sup>th</sup>-century inventors whose creations continue to affect our lives today.

**Name:** Margaret E. Knight

**Most Famous Invention:** Paper Bags

Margaret E. Knight was born in Maine, USA on 14<sup>th</sup> February 1838 to her father, James Knight, and her mother, Hannah Teal. 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. She decided to invent a safety device for the mill machine, which is thought to have stopped it 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 call the design her own. Margaret continued inventing useful objects, including a number of engines, for the rest of her life.



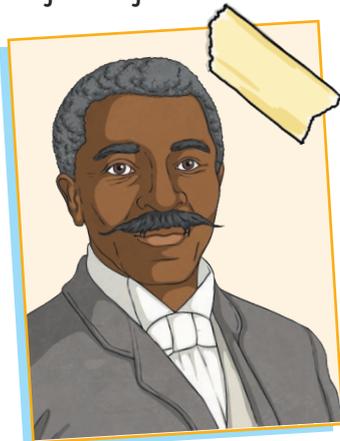
## Did You Know...?

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 in the early 1860s to 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 in their home. George was interested in science and the arts. In 1896, George became a teacher at Tuskegee University where he taught for 47 years. During this time, he also worked on his inventions. He invented more than 300 products from peanuts, including plastics, paints, soap and wood stains. He even invented a plantbased petrol.

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

## Did You Know...?

**Name:** William Henry Fox Talbot

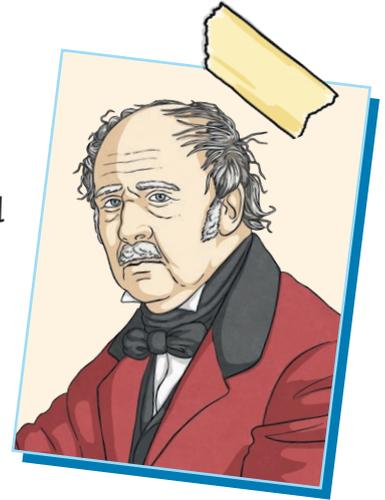
**Most Famous Invention:** Light-sensitive paper

William Henry Fox Talbot was born on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1800 in Melbury, Dorset. He went on to become a Member of Parliament (MP), scientist and inventor.

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. William received his early education at home, before going to Harrow School and then to Cambridge University in 1817.

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

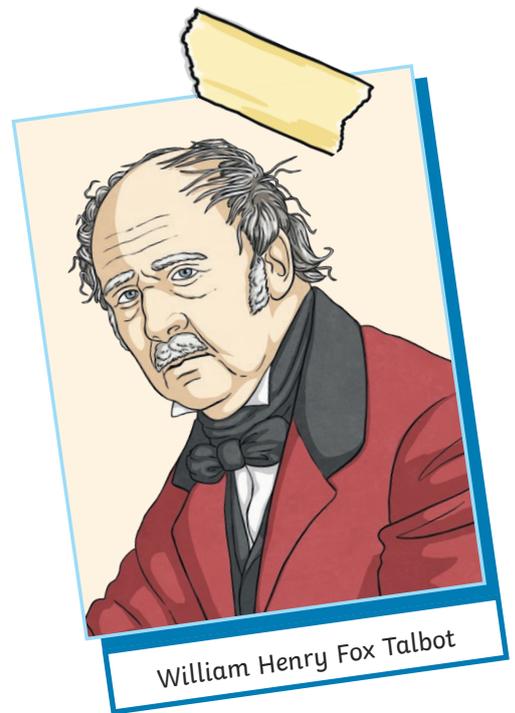
William was interested in studying light and chemicals. He used this knowledge to invent his 'art of photogenic drawing', which used light-sensitive paper. He went on to further develop photography with the use of chemicals which 'fixed' the image onto the paper.



Margaret E. Knight



George Washington Carver



William Henry Fox Talbot

# Questions

1. When was Margaret E. Knight born? Tick one.

- 11<sup>th</sup> February 1800       14<sup>th</sup> February 1867  
 14<sup>th</sup> February 1838       14<sup>th</sup> February 1868

2. Match the innovator to their invention:

Margaret E. Knight

Flat-bottomed paper bag machine

George Washington Cover

Light-sensitive paper

William Henry Fox Talbot

Plant-based petrol

3. Which two inventors sadly lost their fathers at a young age?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

4. Fill in the missing words: Many people in the \_\_\_\_\_ era did not believe that \_\_\_\_\_ were as intelligent as \_\_\_\_\_.

5. Find and copy a phrase which shows that **William's drawing was not good**.

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Which of these inventors do you think had the most impact on our lives? Explain your answer.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

7. Sum up Margaret's inventions in your own words.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

8. How do you think George felt when he became a teacher? Explain your answer.

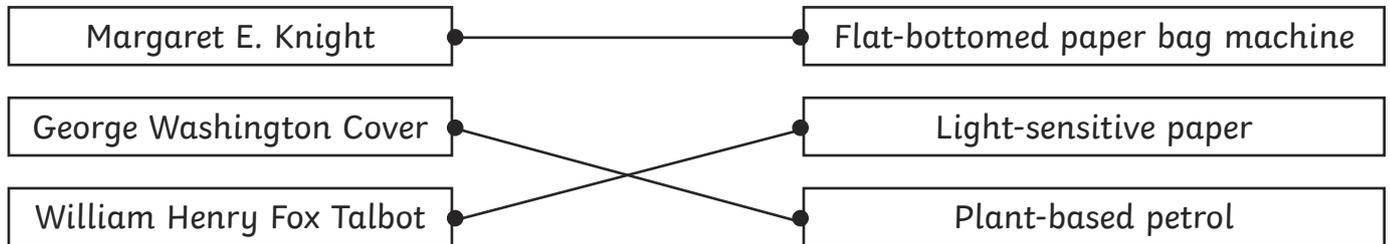
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# Answers

1. When was Margaret E. Knight born? Tick one.

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 **14<sup>th</sup> February 1838**       14<sup>th</sup> February 1868

2. Match the innovator to their invention:



3. Which two inventors sadly lost their fathers at a young age?

- **Margaret E. Knight**
- **William Henry Fox Talbot**

4. Fill in the missing words: Many people in the **Victorian** era did not believe that **women** were as intelligent as **men** .

5. Find and copy a phrase which shows that **William's drawing was not good**.  
**his sketching skills were limited**

6. Which of these inventors do you think had the most impact on our lives? Explain your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that William had the most impact on our lives because everyone enjoys taking photos and looking back on them to remember happy or exciting events from our lives.**

7. Sum up Margaret's inventions in your own words.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Due to an accident that she witnessed in the mill where she worked, Margaret invented a safety device for the machine. She also invented a machine to make flat-bottomed paper bags and a variety of engines.**

8. How do you think George felt when he became a teacher? Explain your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that George would have felt very proud and keen to help others due to the fact that he was the child of slaves so was not entitled to an education himself as a child.**