

A Salute To CREATIVE WOMEN

Inspiring Us Every Day

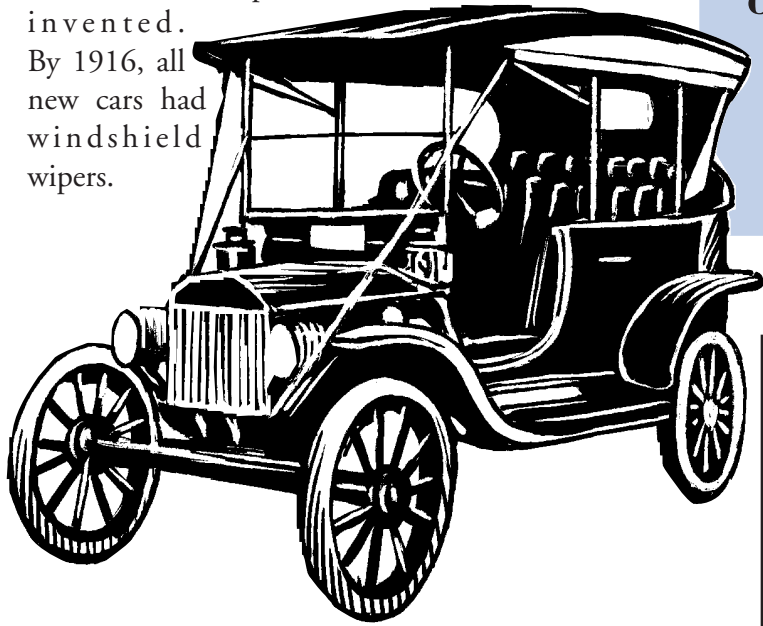
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Swish, Swish, Splat!

One stormy day in 1902, a woman named Mary Anderson was riding in a streetcar when she noticed that the driver had to open the window (in those days the front windshield opened in the middle) in order to see because snow was covering the window. That didn't work too well, and the poor streetcar driver was hit in the face with an icy blast of cold and snow. Once she saw the problem, Anderson thought of a solution and – swish, swish – the windshield wiper was invented.

By 1916, all new cars had windshield wipers.



“Necessity,” it is said, “is the mother of invention.” That means that inventors see a need or a problem and come up with a way to fill that need or solve that problem. Other inventions might be the result of curiosity or accident. That means that someone might invent something without really trying.



Women have used curiosity, creativity and hard work to come up with ways to make all our lives easier.

How many times has your mother helped you solve a problem in some clever way?



The ice cream cone may have been invented – by a woman. One story (although there are several stories of this invention) is that a young woman was attending the World's Fair in St. Louis, Mo., in 1904. She was walking along, eating an ice cream sandwich and carrying a bunch of flowers. She was having a hard time balancing both, so she took one cookie from the sandwich and wrapped it around the flowers to hold them together. She wrapped the other cookie, cone-like, around the ice cream so she could hold it without it splattering on her dress. The nearby ice-cream vender saw this, thought it brilliant and started selling ice cream with a cone of cookie wrapped around it. Voila! The ice cream cone was born. One person thought of the idea, but another person was smart enough to use it and tell others. Sometimes the idea belongs to the inventor and sometimes the inventor is just clever enough to know a good idea when she sees one!

We salute the women who have thoughtfully gone about their daily tasks.

Necessity gave birth to invention



Within seconds after you were born, you took your first test, which was invented by a woman. In 1949, Dr. Virginia Apgar developed a test for checking a baby's health right at birth. Up to that point, doctors figured that a baby was healthy unless he or she had something noticeably wrong at birth. Dr. Apgar knew that the moments just after birth were really important to the health of a baby. She didn't think that just looking at a baby was a careful way to test for problems. So, she created a point system to check a baby's breathing, reflexes, muscle tone, heart rate and color. The points make up an “Apgar score” based on the results of those checks. This system has saved thousands of lives and is used all over the world.



Since the earliest times, women have designed creative ways of doing things. The first women were responsible for their families' food and clothing, so it is likely that they also invented the first tools for preparing food and creating cloth. Anthropologists (people who study the development of people) believe that women invented tools like the mortar and pestle (a heavy bowl and a club-like hammer), used to grind flour and prepare food and medicines. They also think that women were the first to design shelters and clothing. In other words, necessities (such as food, clothing and shelter) led to inventions (such as tools, cloth and places to live).

Patents Protect Inventors

Sometimes when an inventor gets an idea, she chooses to protect it so that others cannot steal it or make money from it. A patent is a government document that does just that. To patent an invention, the inventor has to prove that it is new and useful. The inventor will often hire a lawyer or a patent agent to help complete the complicated application. Then, if the patent is approved, the inventor pays a fee and her invention is protected for 20 years.

The U.S. Patent office has a great Web site for students. Check it out at <http://www.uspto.gov/go/kids/>

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