

Name: _____

Date: _____

The Machine That Changed the World

Grades 5-6

Nonfiction

- 1 Imagine a world where every book had to be copied by hand. Before the 1400s, that was how books were made in Europe. Scribes spent months, sometimes years, carefully writing out a single book. Books were rare and expensive, and few people learned to read.
- 2 Around 1440, a German goldsmith named Johannes Gutenberg began developing a printing press. He later set up his workshop in the city of Mainz. His big idea was movable type: small metal blocks, each with a single raised letter, that could be arranged into words, inked and pressed onto paper. When a page was finished, the letters could be taken apart and used again.
- 3 Gutenberg's press could produce pages far faster than any scribe. In the 1450s, his workshop printed a famous Bible, and copies of it still exist today.
- 4 Printing spread quickly across Europe. Within about fifty years, presses in many cities had printed millions of copies of books. As books became cheaper, more people learned to read, and new ideas in science, religion and art traveled farther and faster than ever before.
- 5 Many historians consider the printing press one of the most important inventions in history. In a way, it was the information revolution of its time, much like the internet is today.

Draw something you learned from this text.

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Questions: The Machine That Changed the World

Read the passage again if you need to. Circle the best answer.

1. How were books made in Europe before the printing press?

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ a By machines | ☐ b Copied by hand |
| ☐ c Printed with wood blocks only | ☐ d They were not made |

2. What was Gutenberg's job before he became a printer?

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ☐ a A teacher | ☐ b A goldsmith |
| ☐ c A farmer | ☐ d A scribe |

3. What is movable type?

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ a A moving truck for books | ☐ b Small metal letters that can be arranged and reused |
| ☐ c A kind of paper | ☐ d A machine for binding books |

4. Why does the author compare the printing press to the internet?

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ a Both are made of metal | ☐ b Both helped information spread quickly |
| ☐ c Both were invented in Germany | ☐ d Both use electricity |

5. Explain two ways the printing press changed people's lives.

Reading Comprehension: Answer Key

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1. b) Copied by hand
2. b) A goldsmith
3. b) Small metal letters that can be arranged and reused
4. b) Both helped information spread quickly
5. Sample answer: Books became cheaper so more people learned to read, and new ideas spread faster across Europe.