



## GREAT INVENTIONS

### THE MAIL



I am in charge of checking the mailbox at home. I always find the same things in it: bills and advertising. Today I found something special; for the first time, there was a letter for me in the mailbox. It was from my aunt, my mother's sister, who lives in another country.

I was excited when I took the envelope and checked it carefully. I could see it had the address of our house, a small square postal stamp with a beautiful design attached, and the name of the country of origin.

After reading the letter my aunt sent me, I wondered who invented the mail system? Was it old? Who invented the postage stamp?



To find the answers, I began researching.

The postal mail system transports both written documents and small to medium packages around the world. The packages and letters are transported by land with cars, trucks, motorcycles, bicycles, horses, and even camels depending on the country. They can also travel from one country to another on large ships or by plane.

How old is the mail system? The first to have an organized mail system were the Egyptians. The pharaohs used messengers to spread their decrees throughout the country since approximately 2,400 B.C. This system was used only under the orders of the pharaoh.



It is believed the Roman emperor Caesar Augustus, 62 B.C. to 14 B.C., created the first regular mail system. At that time, letters were written with ink on sheets of papyrus. These were rolled up and tied with ribbons or laces.

The service was called *cursus publicus* and had two services, fast with light carriages pulled by horses and slow with two-wheel carts pulled by oxen. By the way, the word postcard comes from *postea*, or staging post, the place the messengers rested.

In 1481, in England, King Edward IV established posts for messengers to be changed every thirty kilometers. This helped the mail move faster. This mail system was for the exclusive use of the state.

In 1834, any British citizen could send correspondence. The problem with the system was that the person receiving the letter paid for the delivery; many were returned.



English professor Rowland Hill proposed that the person sending the correspondence should pay for the delivery. A postage stamp would be purchased; the cost of the stamp followed a uniform rate that was determined by the weight of the correspondence. In 1839, Professor Hill's proposal was approved, and he designed the first postal stamp himself. The design had the profile of Queen Victoria, the word POSTAGE at the top, and the value of the postal stamp. ONE PENNY, which meant it cost a penny, was written on the bottom. The first postal stamp was circulated on May 6, 1840, and was known as the Penny Black.

The new postal system had excellent results. On the first day they were sold to the public, 60,000 copies of the first postal stamp were sold. The number tripled in a week. Professor Rowland Hill was appointed the director of the United Kingdom Post Office and dedicated the rest of his life to making extensions and improvements in postal services. In a few years, the postal stamp system was used by most countries in the world.

Professor Hill did not think it was necessary to write that the stamp was from the United Kingdom since Queen Victoria's face was on it. When the postage stamps became international, it was stipulated that the name of the issuing country should be written on it. The United Kingdom is the only country that is exempt from this obligation because it is the issuing country of the first postal stamps.



In modern times, email and instant messaging over our mobile devices have made the postal mail system more dedicated to transporting bills, advertising, and packages, instead of transporting personal letters. In some countries, children send letters to Santa Claus, at the North Pole, by mail.

I must say that from my own experience of finding a letter in the mailbox addressed to me and handwritten by a person who loves me is special. I am going to write a letter to my aunt right now, put a beautiful postage stamp on it, and send it to her. She can feel the same joy I felt when I discovered a letter in my mailbox.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## THE MAIL

Answer the questions.



1. Who sent me a letter?
  - a. my grandmother's brother
  - b. my mother's sister
  - c. my brother's wife
  - d. a friend of my mother
  
2. Who were the first to send correspondence?
  - a. Egyptian citizens
  - b. Roman citizens
  - c. Egyptian pharaohs
  - d. British citizens
  
3. Caesar Augustus \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. made the first paper letter.
  - b. sent the first email.
  - c. made the first decree sent.
  - d. began the 1st regular mail system.
  
4. Who could send a letter in 1834?
  - a. only the pharaohs
  - b. any British citizen
  - c. only the British government
  - d. only the Roman Caesar
  
5. How much did the first postal stamp cost?
  - a. one dollar
  - b. one pound sterling
  - c. a penny
  - d. a nickel
  
6. How many postal stamps did they sell the first day?
  - a. six thousand
  - b. sixty thousand
  - c. six hundred thousand
  - d. one thousand six hundred
  
7. Which country does not have to put its name on stamps?
  - a. Egypt
  - b. Spain
  - c. U.S.
  - d. United Kingdom
  
8. Today the mail system mainly transports \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. emails, advertising, and bills
  - b. bills, advertising, and packages
  - c. instant messages and stamps
  - d. invoices, emails, and packages
  
9. Why do they ship thousands of letters to the North Pole?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
10. Why do you think mail is important?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_