

GARRETT MORGAN

Entrepreneur Extraordinaire



What things do we use everyday were invented by Blacks?

This activity will look at the story and historical significance of Garrett Morgan, and explore the legacy and impact of his actions.

STRAND:

The Rise of Industrial America
(1877 - 1918)

THEMES:

Inventions, racial prejudice, Black history,
STEM.

VIDEO SUMMARY:

Have you heard of Garrett Morgan? Many haven't. Garrett Morgan was born in 1877, in the years following the Civil War and the end of slavery. He was the son of an enslaved person, a community leader, entrepreneur, and inventor from Kentucky whose inventions weren't trusted because he was Black. You might be familiar with some of his inventions, have you heard of the traffic light?

VIDEO LINK



BACKGROUND RESOURCES:

[8 Black Inventors Who Made Life Easier](#)

[Seven Black Inventors Whose Patents Helped Shape American Life](#)

[Engines of Our Ingenuity.](#)

[Making History: African American Pioneers of Science](#)

[The Black innovators who elevated the United States: Reassessing the Golden Age of Invention](#)

Following are 3 activities that you can use to engage with the video before watching, explore the story whilst watching and explore its wider meaning after watching.

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PRE-VIEWING: ENGAGE WITH THE STORY

KEY VOCABULARY: entrepreneur, racial prejudice, socially conscious, patent

DID YOU KNOW?

- The Industrial Revolution is considered one of the most innovative eras in world history, but the contributions of Black inventors has largely been acknowledged.
- From 1870 - 1940, Black people living in the North were eight times more likely to be awarded a patent than Black people living in the South.
- In the North, Black people's share of patents equaled their share of the population.
- With 50,00 total patents, Black people accounted for more inventions during this period than immigrants from every country except England and Germany.

INQUIRY QUESTIONS:

- Have you ever heard of Garrett Morgan, Marie Van Brittan Brown, and Lonnie Johnson? They were all Black inventors who helped shape American life. Why do you think most people have never heard of them?
- Can you list any everyday items that were invented by Blacks? If you can't, why do you think this is the case?

ALTERNATIVE PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES [HERE](#)

WHILST VIEWING: EXPLORE THE STORY

TWEET IT ACTIVITY

- Before viewing the video, give students sticky notes or use an online tool like Padlet or Trello and ask them to write a series of tweets as they watch the video.
- The tweets should be 280 characters or 35 words or less, to explain what they are learning, what surprised them and questions that they have about the video and its themes.
- You may need to watch the video a couple of times to enable the students to create a number of tweets.
- After watching the video, if in a physical classroom those tweets can be placed on a wall, in an online space, they will already be on a shared document.
- Give students an opportunity to respond to at least three of the 'tweets'.
- Use the tweets and the responses to frame a larger discussion around the contents of the video, around untold Black stories, racial prejudice or Black inventors.

CHECK OUT ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITIES [HERE](#).

GARRETT MORGAN

The Serial Inventor



What things do we use everyday were invented by Blacks?

POST VIEWING: THE STORY UNCOVERED

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- How has history changed as a result of Garrett Morgan's accomplishments?
- Garrett Morgan's inventions were often ignored because of his race - are there people today whose achievements are ignored or downplayed because of their background?
- Garrett Morgan was the son of an enslaved person and faced strong adversity during his life - what obstacles still face people of color in the United States today? How is it different than 100 years ago?

EXPLORE FURTHER

SELF-DISCOVERY

Ask your students to explore other [Black History Stories](#) from the Untold collection, and share what you've learned with others.

TELLING STORIES ABOUT BLACK HISTORY

Is there a story about Black history that you think we should be told? You or your students can share your idea [here](#). If it's chosen to be included in a future series of [Untold](#), we'll be in touch.

We'd love to get some feedback on this resource.
Click [here](#) to share your thoughts.