

Name: _____

Inventions

Lesson 104

Paired with *Board Sports—Advanced*

Written by Karri Ann Fisher

Illustrated by Nate Baertsch

Lexile®: 790L, 317 words



Have you ever heard of the word “serendipity”? Scientists use this word when they accidentally make a new discovery.

For example, in 1951, a Swiss inventor was walking through fields of weeds. He noticed that seed pods stuck to his pant legs. He looked at the pods carefully and saw that they had very small hooks on them. The hooks had grabbed the threads of his pants.

He decided to invent a fastener that grabbed like the seed pods. He called the fastener Velcro and sold it all over the world. Chances are, if you are wearing tennis shoes, you’ve already used this handy invention.

Sometimes serendipity can turn a failed experiment into a success. For example, an inventor was trying to create a very strong glue. But what he made wasn’t strong. It was very weak. Even though he thought the glue was a failure, this accident turned out to be quite a success. This weak, and reusable, glue was soon used to stick little pieces of note paper to almost anything.

You got it—they’re sticky notes.

Not only does serendipity improve our lives, it also saves lives. In 1928, a doctor was studying bacteria—tiny cells so small they can only be seen under a microscope. These bacteria caused sickness, so they had to be treated carefully. They were put in special dishes called Petri dishes.

One day, this doctor noticed that mold was growing in some of the Petri dishes. He began to wash the mold away, but then he stopped to take a closer look. He discovered that a chemical in the mold was stopping the bad bacteria from growing.

He studied this chemical and used it to make a medicine called penicillin. It is now used to treat many deadly diseases.

Because of serendipity, X-rays, microwave ovens, and even potato chips were invented. These happy accidents benefit our lives in many ways.

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ACCURACY: # of reading errors: _____ (Indep. = 0–6, Instr. = 7–16, Frust. = 17+)
SPEED: To calculate: $19020 \div$ _____ (Reading time in seconds) = _____ WPM

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Discover Story Vocabulary	serendipity, medicine, penicillin
Glossary Words	accidentally, penicillin, bacteria, serendipity

Question Type	Question
Compare	Both “Board Sports” and “Inventions” tell about _____. a. the history of invention show seeds fly b. how outdoor sports changed c. failures that became successes
Problem	The doctor in the article was trying to _____. a. wash Petri dishes safely b. stop bacteria from causing disease c. give his patients medicine
Synonym	Read this sentence from the article: “Sometimes <u>serendipity</u> can turn a failed experiment into a success.” What is a synonym for the word “serendipity”? a. difficult b. exciting c. lucky

