



Read the passage carefully. Then answer each question in a full sentence, citing evidence from the text where asked.

The Light Bulb's Unsung Hero



Lewis Howard Latimer was born in Chelsea, Massachusetts, in 1848, to parents who had escaped slavery. His early life was marked by hardship, as his father was recaptured and later bought his freedom, but the family still faced significant challenges. Despite these difficulties, Latimer had a sharp mind and a passion for learning. He joined the U.S. Navy at the age of 16 during the Civil War, serving with distinction. After his military service, he began working as an office boy for a patent law firm, where his natural talent for mechanical drawing quickly became clear. This job was his first step into the world of invention and innovation.

Latimer's incredible skill allowed him to draft patent drawings for some of the most important inventions of his time. He worked alongside Alexander Graham Bell, helping to draft the patent for the telephone. However, his most significant contribution came when he joined the U.S. Electric Lighting Company, founded by Hiram Maxim, a competitor of Thomas Edison. Latimer improved the carbon filament for light bulbs, making them last much longer and more affordable than Edison's original design. Before Latimer's innovation, light bulbs burned out quickly, making widespread electric lighting impractical. His improvements were crucial for bringing electric light to homes and streets.

Despite his vital contributions, Lewis Latimer's name is often overlooked in history books. As an African American inventor during a time of widespread prejudice, his achievements were frequently overshadowed or attributed to others. He was a true innovator, holding several patents of his own, including one for an improved toilet system for railroad cars and another for a method of manufacturing carbon filaments. Latimer also co-authored a



book on electric lighting. His work was essential in making electricity accessible and practical for everyday life. Today, his legacy reminds us of the many unsung heroes whose brilliance shaped our modern world, challenging us to recognize the full story of scientific progress.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

(1) Where was Lewis Howard Latimer born in 1848?

(2) What does the word "innovation" mean in the context of Latimer's work with light bulbs?

(3) What is the author's main purpose in writing about Lewis Latimer?

(4)



Based on the text, why might Lewis Latimer's contributions have been overlooked in history books?

(5) What specific evidence from the text shows that Latimer's improvements to the light bulb were crucial?

(6) Is it enough to just learn about people like Lewis Latimer now, or does their story teach us something more?

(7) How does Lewis Latimer's experience connect to the idea of fairness in today's world?





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