🏛️ Leaders & Legends

Grade 6 Name: _____

Read the passage comparing two historical figures. Then answer the questions — support every answer with evidence from the text.

Compare their backgrounds, methods, achievements, and lasting impact. Always quote or paraphrase from the passage.

Marie Curie vs Nikola Tesla: Brilliant Innovators

Marie Curie and Nikola Tesla were two extraordinary minds who revolutionized science and technology at the turn of the 20th century. Curie, a Polish-French physicist and chemist, is renowned for her groundbreaking research on radioactivity. Tesla, a Serbian-American inventor and electrical engineer, is best known for his contributions to the design of the modern alternating current (AC) electricity supply system.

Curie's most significant achievements include the discovery of the elements polonium and radium in 1898. Her work laid the foundation for understanding radioactivity and led to applications in medicine, such as X-rays and radiation therapy. She was the first woman to win a Nobel Prize, the first person and only woman to win the Nobel Prize twice, and the only person to win the Nobel Prize in two different scientific fields.

Similarly, Tesla's inventive genius transformed daily life. He developed the Tesla coil, which is still used in radio technology, and pioneered remote control and wireless communication. His AC system triumphed over direct current (DC) in the "War of the Currents," making long-distance power transmission efficient and affordable, thus electrifying the modern world.

However, their approaches to scientific endeavor differed significantly. Curie was a meticulous experimentalist, often working in harsh conditions to isolate elements and understand their fundamental properties. Her focus was on pure scientific discovery. **In**

contrast, Tesla was a visionary inventor, often conceptualizing complex machines and systems in his mind before building them. His work was largely driven by practical applications and the future of technology.

Both figures were driven by an insatiable curiosity and a relentless pursuit of knowledge, facing skepticism and challenges from the scientific establishment of their time. They pushed the boundaries of what was thought possible, fundamentally altering human understanding and capabilities in their respective domains.

Curie famously stated, "Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood." Her legacy continues to inspire women in STEM and her discoveries remain critical to modern medicine. Tesla, who once proclaimed, "The present is theirs; the future, for which I have really worked, is mine," left an indelible mark on electrical engineering, with his innovations powering homes and industries worldwide. Their profound impact on the 20th century and beyond is undeniable.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

(1) Who is credited with the discovery of polonium and radium?

(A) Marie Curie (B) Nikola Tesla (C) Both (D) Neither

(2) Who developed the alternating current (AC) electricity supply system?

(A) Marie Curie (B) Nikola Tesla (C) Both (D) Neither

(3) "Curie focused on pure scientific discovery, while Tesla was driven by practical applications and future technology." Is this a SIMILARITY or DIFFERENCE?

(A) Similarity (B) Difference

(4) "Both were driven by an insatiable curiosity and a relentless pursuit of knowledge." Is this a SIMILARITY or DIFFERENCE?

(A) Similarity (B) Difference

(5) Use TWO specific details from the passage to explain ONE key similarity between these two figures.

(6) Which figure do you think had a greater impact on the world? Use THREE pieces of evidence from the passage.