What a Great Idea! Inventions That Changed the World


**CATEGORY**

Servant Leadership  Nonfiction/Biographies  Classic Literature  Multicultural Literature

**RECOMMENDATION FOR PROGRAM**

9th Grade: English  World History  Perspectives

10th Grade: English  World History  Communications

**SUMMARY**

*What A Great Idea!* basically divides all the major world inventions to date into sections based on the overarching discovery that dominated that era. Beginning with the Ancient World, the book discusses several inventions along with concepts like clothing, art, and cities. Next the book delves into the Metal Age with inventions and concepts like money, measurement, and irrigation. Throughout the preceding chapters, the Age of Discovery, the Age of Electricity and Communication, and the Age of the Atom, there is a shifted focus to inventions rather than concepts. Stephen Tomecek did a great job of narrowing the focus of inventions in the Age of Discovery, considering it covered A.D. 1-1799. The inventions highlighted in this age were the perfect choices with a lot to choose from. The Age of Electricity and Communication centers around things like the telegraph, photography, and the lightbulb. Finally, the Age of the Atom highlights the most recent inventions like radio, the airplane, and the nuclear reactor. Each individual invention has a picture and two pages of description. The description begins with a brief background of said invention, followed by a *how it works* section, an *impact* section, and a *children of this invention* section. I found the *children of this invention* section to be particularly interesting because it followed the progression of the inventions to show how they evolved over time.

**LEADERSHIP STYLES & THEMES**

While this novel may be a bit more difficult than others to fit into a particular style of Leadership, I think the most relevant one would probably be *transforming leadership*, as this type of Leadership covers leaders who motivate others and enact extreme social change. Inventors can certainly fall in the category of motivating the world around them to new heights, and typically the most dynamic of inventions will enact some kind of change in social order.

The overarching theme of *What A Great Idea!* could be most closely linked to *Situation & Community*, as this theme relates to community-based change and the impact of the environment and circumstances. Furthermore, an important contingency for the situation and community theme is that the leaders under this category are not commanders, but servers and supporters, which clearly relates to inventors.
LEADERSHIP & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS APPLICATIONS

As a freshman, I remember thinking throughout our study of leaders that a lot of seemed really repetitive. In reading this book, I realized that we didn’t take much time discussing people who had changed the world with their intelligence rather than with their authority. I think the inventors and groups of people who made the inventions possible in this book definitely deserve more recognition in our discussion our leadership contributions around the world in the 9th grade. International Relations applications also become relevant because many of these inventions have sparked international controversy, like the nuclear reactor and the rocket.

STUDENT INTEREST RATING

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

CONTEXT QUOTABLES

There aren’t many standout quotes simply because it is a book on non-fiction rather than a book detailing leadership themes and styles. The Looking Ahead section at the end of the book was probably the most enlightening selection as far as leadership application.

“At the present rate of development, it’s hard to imagine where we will be in 10 years, much less a century from now. Yet with all our improvements, it’s important to remember that technology has a dark side, too. While the invention of the internal combustion engine has given us the freedom to roam, it has also created environmental problems like air pollution and global warming. The development of nuclear power offers the promise of inexpensive electricity, but it has also produced highly destructive weapons that, in the wrong hands, could virtually wipe out life on our planet.”

COMPLEMENTARY SELECTIONS


Bridgman, Roger. (2006). 1,000 inventions and discoveries. DK Children.


Inventorspot.com