

The Greatest Invention in History ?

1. **We are** going to watch part of a documentary about a most remarkable (if not one of the greatest) inventions in History. Before we start, give this matter a little think. **What are the top 3 most important inventions in the History of humankind in your opinion? Explain why you think they deserve to be in your top list.**
2. **What** do you associate these common English phrases with:

to be out of sorts to be on the same page to make a good impression

3. **Instructions:** The documentary has been divided into 9 parts. Before we watch each part, read **the necessary vocabulary** and try to **work out the meaning of the phrases with your teacher**. After we have watched that part, **you must answer a question** and try to **retell the story using your own words and the vocabulary** you practiced. Your teacher will guide you during the exercise.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQ88yC35NjI>

Part 1 – beginning to 5 min (stop at “unique experiment”)

- **jump at the chance**
- **shrouded** in mystery
- **get to grips with**
- **hands-on** story
- **sowing** the seeds
- a **calling card**

Question: The documentary is called “*The machine that made us*”. Why do you think that is?

Part 2 – 5 min to 9:20 (stop at “a journey to make”)

- have your work **cut out** for you
- **uncharted** territory
- one-**pull** v two-pull press
- the whole **width of the chisel**
- a **fossil** coming out of a rock

Question: What is the most challenging aspect of building a replica of the first printing press ?

Part 3 – 9:20 to 18:24 (“in XV century Mainz”)

- first **port of call**
- **bolstered by** some post war concrete
- a **round** number
- the city’s **goldsmiths**
- books were produced in the *scriptoria* (*scriptorium*)
- to hold the **feather** (= **quill**)
- beyond the **cloisters**
- these **contraptions** are ...
- a frame with a **spindle**
- to get his **creative juices running**
- a **tall order**

Question: What was the advantage of the printing press over hand-written documents (such as Bibles)?

Part 4 – from 18:24 to 26:36 (“a snapshot of an early Gutenberg press”)

- the **plague** was there
 - a **budding** entrepreneur
 - a **hefty** wooden **thread**
- 5 ★ [countable] the raised line that runs around the length of a **screw** and that allows it to be fixed in place by **twisting**
- 6 ★ **threads** [plural] (*North American English, old-fashioned, informal*) clothes
- a **bustling** city
 - start work **in earnest**
 - less than a **prepossessing** street
 - **Albrecht Dürer**



Questions:

Why did Gutenberg decide to settle in Strasbourg ?

What did Alan discover while preparing the replica press in England?

Part 5 – 26:36 to 29:48 (“playing with fire”)

- the Strasbourg **guild**
- a **hamlet** downstream, far away from the **prying eyes**
- a ***second revenue stream to keep the wolf from the door***
- the relics at **Aachen**

- *lo and behold*, a great idea came to Gutenberg
- a **concave metal mirror**
- to **scupper** the best business plan
- the pilgrimage is **put off**
- not exactly in **the lurch**
- *this setback would have deterred a lesser man, but by now ...*

Question: Why did Gutenberg decided to work on a secluded little island?

Part 6 – 29:48 to 34:57 (“spreading the word”)

- this is a **type foundry**
- to create a “**punch**”
- some types slightly wider, some slightly narrower, *so that he could always have justified lines*
- *it’s hand-carved, and grooved, and shaved and emiered and rasped and shaped and hardened and tempered*
- **strike a matrix**
- **molten** metal – lead, tin and **antimony**

Questions: Can you explain how the little device used by Stan works? Why does Stephen Fry call it “revolutionary”?

Part 7 – from 34:57 to 46:00 (“worthy of the finest printer’s art”)

- a **self-assembly** wardrobe
- all these little **cunning** things
- a **marauding** band of Frenchmen
- he **road-tested** the new technology on ...
- a papal **indulgence**
- you pay to **offset your carbon**
- his **magnum opus**
- writing was done on something called **vellum**
- **mathematical modelling**
- *Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Leviticus...*
- from cloth **rags**

Questions: What is the difference between *vellum* and *paper*? Why did Gutenberg have to change his original plan?

Part 8 – 46:00 to 51:30 (“what a beginning it was”)

- a reasonable **fac-simile**
- my doubts have been **cast aside**
- it's an **assembly line**
- hand-decorated by an **illuminator**

Questions:

What confession does Stephen make? How did he and his partners cheat?

How did the assembly line work?

Last Part – 51:30 to end

- **the Frankfurt Trade Fair**
- **tingling** with excitement
- it's giving me **goose flesh**
- you called that **that a rubrication**
- he used what the monks used, that is, **abbreviation**
- **mass production**
- it was snatched from **Gutenberg's grasp**

Questions: What was the most important consequence brought about by the invention of the printing press? What important movement in History did it kick-start?

