

READING AND USE OF ENGLISH PART 6

You are going to read an article about unsuccessful inventions of the 19th century. Six sentences have been removed from the article. Choose from the sentences A–G which one fits each gap (1–6). There is one extra sentence which you do not need to use.

Unusual inventions from the Victorian age

Inventions and inventors were at their peak during the Victorian era in the UK. Sewing machines, underground railways, lifebuoys, hydroelectric power stations and many more innovations that are still in use today date from the latter two thirds of the nineteenth century. But what about the other more bizarre inventions like a pair of glasses for horses or flying chairs? A new book tells the story of some of the more unusual creations dreamt up by Victorian inventors.

These have been brought back to life in a new book by Caroline Rochford. Caroline came across a collection of rare magazines from the 1880's, many of which enthusiastically advertised what were seen as the next big technological breakthroughs. (1) Before long, Caroline had details of a substantial number of remarkable contraptions. One of her favourites was an office chair 'railway' system which used steam to move a chair around the office, so that the person working there wouldn't need to keep getting up from their seat all day. There were hundreds more.

Caroline was hooked on the illustrations of the inventions as soon as she saw them. She loved their charm and the unique ideas, as well as the diversity of the technology. (2) Perhaps unsurprisingly, neither of these took off.

One of several striking inventions depicted in Caroline's book is the steam-powered man, which was invented in about 1893 by a Canadian professor, George Moore. Moore dreamt that one day, all work would be carried out by robots, and so he set about building a mechanical man powered by steam, which would pull a small train filled with commuters through city streets. (3) Looking like a robot, the body contained the furnace, boiler and engine, and inside the legs were the mechanisms for walking.

Sadly, it is not known what became of the steam man, and Professor Moore's invention appears to have been a one-off. (4) After seeing the success of the railway network, an unnamed American inventor from New Jersey came up with the idea of a bicycle railway, which enjoyed some success both in Britain and in the US for a while. There was no danger of falling off, and no need to steer. This meant that commuters could look about and enjoy the nature and scenery. It also combined exercise with travel. Plans were made for double tracks, to allow travellers to go both ways, and to provide stations at intervals where they could get on and off. Although similar railways existed for a time in a number of English coastal towns, this unusual mode of transportation fell out of favour, and the New Jersey railway was demolished.

Another variation on the bicycle was the road and river cycle, which was introduced in America. It was essentially a boat with wheels, meaning that a person could travel over roads and rivers in a single vehicle. (5) As a result, they would have more time for leisure activities.

Caroline believes that people often see the Victorians as boring and conservative. (6) As she argues very persuasively, in our modern technology-obsessed world we should be grateful to our 19th century ancestors for the innovations they left.

- A This chance discovery led to further research.
- B Probably for this reason, the design never really became popular.
- C The idea was that this would make journeys significantly quicker.
- D In actual fact, many of them were full of wonderfully creative ideas.
- E The futuristic figure could move at a pace of eight kilometres an hour.
- F However, other Victorian inventors came closer to reaching the mass market.
- G Designs ranged from an automatic egg-boiling machine to a steamship made out of paper.