



Great Inventions

Activity type: Small Groups – speaking
Level: B1/B2
Language: Expressing opinions, agreeing & disagreeing
Lesson time: 1 x 90 mins or 2 x 60 mins

Discussion (5-10 mins)

What are the most important inventions the students can think of? What are the most important inventions in their lifetimes? What effect have they had on their lives? What could they or couldn't they live without? Why?

Language work (10-15 mins)

Explain that the students are going to have a debate. Write up the following chart headings on the board. Read out some expressions randomly from the expressions for agreement and disagreement in the handout below and ask the students which column they should go in.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Give out the 'Expressions for Agreeing and Disagreeing' handout. Ask the students to look through to see if there are any expressions they are unfamiliar with.

Read out the following statements (and/or add your own ideas that you know will provoke different responses) and get different students to give their response using the expressions on the handout.

Football is the greatest sport in the world

English is an easy language to learn

We should stop travelling by plane

Group work (20 mins)

Divide the class into groups of 3 or 4 and give each group the invention cards (cut out from resources below). Check they are all familiar with what the inventions are.

Give out the date cards and give the groups 10 minutes to match the inventions to the dates.

Bring the whole class together, ask one member from each group to write up the order they have on the board next to the dates which you have already written, this way it's easy to compare each group's answers.

Where there are differences ask the students to explain their reasons. Encourage them to use language from the handout.

Write the correct answers (below) on the board. See which group was the closest.

Answers

- The Internet 1969
- light bulb 1906
- telephone 1876
- refrigerator 1850
- steam engine 1698
- thermometer 1593
- microscope 1590
- printing 1440
- paper 100 AD
- wheel approx 3,500 BC

Balloon Debate (45 – 60 minutes)

Divide the class into 4 - 5 groups – try to mix them up a bit from the previous activity. Give each group the choice of two inventions on the list (make sure each no group has the same inventions as another) and ask them to decide as a group which one they think was more important.

Once they have decided, tell them that they are going to do a [balloon debate](#) as a class. Explain that each group will represent the inventor of their chosen invention.

They need to come up with **four or five main arguments** (depending on the number of groups taking part) as a group as to why their invention is the most important or useful, but also prepare for possible arguments against their invention and how they might defend them.

Give them 20-30 minutes to prepare. It's up to you if you think they can use their phones/devices to research online, however this might require more time. If a group is struggling to come up with ideas try to give them some prompts.

When they are ready one student from each group makes a brief presentation giving just **the first reason** why their invention is so important.

After each student has presented their argument invite questions from the other students. Encourage them to use vocabulary from the **Expressions for Agreeing and Disagreeing** handout.

Once all the first arguments have been made and questions answered get the students to vote by writing down the invention they think should be thrown out of the balloon on a small piece of paper. Collect the pieces of paper and do a count. Announce which one was voted out.

Repeat this process with a different student giving a different reason each time. The groups who have been voted out can still ask questions and vote.

The winner is the last remaining group.

Feedback on language used during the debate (try to take notes as its going on).

the Internet	Approx. 3500BC
light bulb	100AD
telephone	1440
refrigerator	1590
Steam engine	1593
thermometer	1698
microscope	1850
printing	1876
paper	1906
wheel	1969

the Internet	Approx. 3500BC
light bulb	100AD
telephone	1440
refrigerator	1590
Steam engine	1593
thermometer	1698
microscope	1850
printing	1876
paper	1906
wheel	1969



Expressions for Agreeing and Disagreeing

Giving an opinion

- In my opinion...
- The way I see it...
- If you want my honest opinion....
- According to...
- As far as I'm concerned...
- If you ask me...

Asking for an opinion

- What are your thoughts on all of this?
- How do you feel about that?
- Do you have anything to say about this?
- What do you think?
- Do you agree?
- Wouldn't you say?

Expressing agreement

- That's true...
- I couldn't agree with you more.
- That's so true.
- You might be right, but...
- You're absolutely right.
- Absolutely.
- That's exactly what I was thinking.
- Exactly.
- No doubt about it.
- Me neither.
- I suppose so/I guess so.
- You have a point there.
- I was just going to say that.
- Perhaps you're right

Expressing disagreement

- I don't think so.
- That's not the point I was making
- I'm afraid I disagree.
- **(strong)** I totally disagree.
- I beg to differ.
- **(strong)** I'd say the exact opposite.
- That's not always true.
- That's not necessarily the case.
- No, I'm not so sure about that.

Interruptions

- Can I add something here?
- Is it okay if I jump in for a second?
- If I might add something...
- Can I throw my two cents in?
- Sorry to interrupt, but...
- **(after accidentally interrupting someone)** Sorry, go ahead. OR Sorry, you were saying...
- **(after being interrupted)** You didn't let me finish.

Settling an argument

- Let's move on, shall we?
- Let's leave this and move on to the next point.
- I think we're going to have to agree to disagree.