

Eureka! Eureka! - Inventions and technology through the ages By Sid River

Background

Written to accompany a 'Britain since 1948' history topic, this little epic does stray outside the timescale a little (JUST A LITTLE!) It can be used as a stand alone fun drama or assembly, or possibly a teaching resource (you could print it out and do handwriting practice on the back!) There are loads of parts so it is useful for a class. You can be sparse with the props if necessary but some TV theme tunes and snippets of music really bring this to life.

| Parts | Description |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Narrators (up to 8) | There are 8 of these in the script but you can reduce the number by doubling up the actors. It helps if these narrators can 'act' as they are like characters in the script really. |
| BBC announcer & Pathe newscaster | You know, bow ties, penguin suits, posh accents with plums, really over the top if poss. |
| Voice 1 & 2 | I deal for those who don't want to be on stage. Just sit in a corner and shout! |
| Sigmund Freud | Wild hair, glasses, notepad, sofa etc. A fake OTT accent adds laughs! |
| Inventor | Another mad professor but must be able to deliver a grand speech with Land of Hope and Glory in the background (Tim Brooke-Taylor in the Goodies!) |
| Granite & Grunt | Two cavemen. Messy hair and rags for clothes. Need a flip-chart and a picture of a square wheel! Think of Eric and Ernie! |
| Band musicians (3) | Bad singers with out of tune instruments in tail-suits and bow-ties |
| Passenger | Runs on in posh frock with wet hair and shouts a lot. |
| Chuckle brothers (2) | Look them up on the internet if you haven't lived on Earth for the last 15 years. Could be replaced with other celeb duo like Ant n Dec if necessary. |
| Alex Graham-Bell | Famous man in waist-coat and bow tie. |
| USA & USSR reps | Two tough-looking military men carrying toy flags and snarling a lot. |
| Yuri Gagarin | Space man with Soviet emblem. |
| Yuri's mother | Headscarf, apron, rolling pin, lippy (think Hilda Ogden) |
| Neil Armstrong | Spaceman with USA emblem. |
| Richard Branson | Jeans, business shirt, can of cola and smiley goatee beard. Toy mobile phone. |
| Bank President | American man or woman in PJ's. Toy mobile phone. |
| Policeman | Silly policeman's helmet and truncheon. |

Notes

Musical snippets really make this one come alive. You just need someone reliable to press the buttons at the right time. A table to one side of the stage is really useful. Oh, and you need an extra-special prop for the sketch punch line.

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Narrator 1: Hello, good morning/afternoon/evening and welcome to our revue.

Narrator 2: Today, we are going to take you on a action packed journey through modern history. The subject of our revue is inventions and discoveries since 1948".

Narrator 3: Yes, inventions and discoveries since 1948. But why 1948? I hear you ask.

Voice 1: (*shouts*) But why 1948?

Narrator 3: Thank you, a good question. Why indeed? Lets face it, the industrial revolution had already happened. Machines were being invented all over the place.

Narrator 4: The motor car, for instance, had been around for a long time.

Narrator 5: Aeroplanes had been used in both world wars.

Narrator 6: Movies were being watched by millions and even the first television programs had been transmitted.

Newsreader enters to news program music and sits at desk

BBC Announcer: Here is the news. Many new discoveries had been made in the area of medicine prior to 1950. Antiseptics were invented by Joseph Lister in 1865 to make operations less deadly, and anaesthetics were used in 1842 to make them less painful, although the NHS *continues* to counter this by serving soggy boiled cabbage as part of their healthy option menu. The first X-rays were used in 1895 and penicillin was discovered in the 1900's. Also, in the early 20th century, psychologist Dr Sigmund Freud, was exploring how dreams can help to understand the mind.

S. Freud: Now zen, tell me about zis drreeem you are haffing.

Inventor: (*Dramatically and with Land of hope and glory plays in background*)
I t's the same every night Herr Doctor. I dream about inventing this wonderful device that is going to revolutionise the way we work and think. One day, it will allow instant communication between people all over the world and will be really easy and quick to use! When they become really advanced they will be quite small and everyone will have at least one on their desk at work!

S. Freud: Vell, let me zee. On rrrreflection I sink zat you are qvite, qvite mad. I n fact, completely barrking!

Narrator 7: I wonder what wondrous discovery he was talking about?

Narrator 8: I have absolutely no idea, but I *do* know that that spirit of invention has always been at the forefront of the human race. The quest to improve our lives with machines has been one of the milestones that has intellectually set us apart from the apes.

Narrator 1: (*scratching under armpits*) Speak for yourself!

Narrator 2: Think back to the time when stone age humans roamed the Earth. When Neanderthal man suddenly found that he had two brain-cells to rub together, the ideas just kept on flowing!

Narrator 3: He'd already discovered fire and the next great invention was on the horizon.

Narrator 4: (*confidently*) Yes, he invented marsh mallows and barbeque marinade. (*he pauses whilst the other stare*) To go with the fire? No?

Narrator 5: (*sighs and shakes head*) Aren't you a bright spark! No, we're talking about something that we all still find quite useful today.

Narrator 4: Err . . . (*suddenly excited*) The filter coffee maker!

Narrator 5: A good idea but no, I'm talking about the wheel!
Two cavepeople walk on stage. One has a flipchart and a pointer.

Granite: I really appreciate you coming round here Grunt.

Grunt: Well it's not every day that your best friend claims to have invented something that's going to change the world, is it Granite?

Granite: How right you are! Here's my first draft. Just cast your eye over this then matey and tell me what you think! (*reveals a picture of a square stone wheel on flip chart*)

Grunt: Oh yes, yes! That's smashing that is. Very . . . Very . . . *angular*. Yes! (*pauses in thought*) What is it exactly?

Granite: Well, I call it . . . **the Whale!**

Grunt: (*gushingly*) The Whale! Oh yes, very nice, very nice! Sort of like those large fishy shaped things that swim about in the sea and blow bubbles?

Granite: I don't know what you're talking about!

Grunt: No, neither do I. What does it do exactly?

Granite: What does it do? (*laughs*) What does it do? . . . Well . . . I haven't quite thought that far yet. The idea is still in it's de-vel-op-mental stages. But it's got potential, grant me that!

Grunt: Oh yes, *loads* of potential. It's got potential written all over it! Or at least it should have. Look, you know I've just moved cave? Well I tell you what, I'll take two to stick on the wall!

Granite: Marvellous! I knew that you'd like it. I'll have them sent round tomorrow! (*they shake hands*)

Both move to the front of the stage and look upwards and into the distance. Grunt speaks dramatically.

Grunt: Yes, then in years to come, tourists will wonder at the extraordinary detail and lifelike qualities of the Whales on the wall of my cave! (*They leave the stage*)

Narrator 6: As you can see, inventors need a lot of self belief. A good time in history for inventors in Britain was the 18th century. This was the beginning of the Industrial revolution and a time when new technology had a big impact on everyone's lives.

Narrator 7: A good example of this was the Spinning Jenny . . .

Narrator 8: Wasn't she a circus act?

Two clownish circus performers run on to circus music and begin an acrobatic act. They stop dead when the next narrator speaks.

Narrator 7: No, you're thinking of the Travelling Raviolis. (*Narrator gestures for them to get off—they do, looking glum*) This was a machine that could spin up to eight times more thread than was previously possible. Inventions like these scared people who did the same jobs because they were worried about being replaced by them, rather like a teacher/director being replaced by a lap-top computer. (*Whole cast laugh and pause, they look thoughtfully at teacher/director and say hmmm?*) Worth thinking about!

Narrator 1: It always takes a long time for people to become comfortable with new technology, but when they do, there is always the danger that they will become over-confident. Listen to this well known example
Pathé news reel music. Reporter comes on and sits down at desk.

News-caster: Here is an important news report. The mighty cruise ship, The Titanic has struck an iceberg off the coast of New Foundland and has been fatally holed. The ship has sunk with the loss of over 1500 lives. The Titanic was on her maiden voyage to New York and carried many rich and famous people, some of whom, it is reported, took life boats for only themselves and left others to go down with the ship. An eyewitness said that the band was still playing as she sank but as yet, we have no idea what song they were playing at the time.

Motley dinner-jacketed band run on with instruments.

Band: *(singing badly and rocking from side to side)* We all live in a yellow submarine, a yellow submarine, a yellow submarine!

Passenger: *(running on)* STOP! Do you do requests?

Band: *(Looking eager and pleased)* Yes!

Passenger: Well shut that racket up and throw yourselves overboard! *(runs off stage, band leave with heads hung low)*

Newscaster: No-one could have foreseen such a tragic event as everyone knew that the Titanic, when it was built, was supposed to be unsinkable. The BBC have dismissed the idea of making a film about the disaster saying that audiences would not bother watching it as they know what happens at the end.

Narrator 2: Travel was one of the areas where inventions made a big impact on the way the world worked.

Narrator 3: For example, there were those famous brothers who built and flew the first air craft.

Enter Chuckle brothers wearing swimming goggles and scarves and carrying cardboard box with wings

Bro 1 To you, to me, to you, to me.

Bro 2 *(Puts down box and looks out to sea)* By 'eck that's a big pond. 'Ave you brought the dingy?

Narrator 4: Excuse me, you're the wrong brothers. It was the Wright brothers!

Bro 1 You mean we're not the right brothers!

Bro 2 I thought we were the *Chuckle* brothers!

Bro 1 It's plane to see we're the wright brothers for the job!

Bro 2 Come on, lets go and have a cup of tea in France!

They pick up box/aeroplane, shout 'CHOCS AWAY' and head off in opposite directions, ripping the box.

Narrator 5: No, it was in fact the real Wright brothers, Wilbur and Orville Wright, who made the first aeroplane flight in 1903.

Narrator 6: Alexander Graham Bell, affectionately known as “Ding-dong” to his closest friends, was credited with inventing the first telephone.
AGB enters, picks up the phone and dials a number.

Bell: Hello? (pause) Hello? (shouts) HELLO! Anyone there?
He looks at the phone in confusion and leaves the satge scratching his head

Narrator 7: Yes, if only he had invented a second telephone at the same time then his idea would have taken off a lot sooner.

Narrator 8: Then there was Edi-son. He invented the light bulb.

Narrator 2: Do you think that Eddie was very proud of his son for coming up with that little gem? *(looks around hopefully for a laugh but none are forthcoming)*

Narrator 4: But hang on a minute, we haven't even reached 1948 yet! I sn't that that the whole point of this presentation!

Narrator 1: Yes indeedy, but all this background information is vital when trying to understand modern advances in technology. All the world's continents had been discovered and well and truly explored by 1948, so again, “Why that year?” I hear you ask.

Voice 2: *(shouts)* Why that year?

Narrator 3: Well, think about it. W.W.II was over and everyone was sitting around at home with absolutely *nothing* to do! What better way could there have been to pass the time than to invent or discover something.

Narrator 4: To explore somewhere!

USA rep: To seek out new worlds and civilisations!

Russian rep: To boldly go where no man has gone before!

USSR/USA: *(eyeing each other suspiciously)* Space! The final frontier!

Narrator 5: After the war the two great superpowers, The USA and the USSR raced each other to send humans into space and land on the moon.

Narrator 6: Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin was the first man in space in 1961. He would have gone all the way to the moon but, he left his packed lunch on the side board at home and had to turn back early.

Mother: *(stands with hands on hips and yells)* Yuri! Come back here you silly boy and eat your sandwiches!

Yuri: Oww! Mum!

Mother: *(grabs Yuri's ear)* I don't know! What's a mother to do? I turn my back for 5 minutes and you jet off round the universe!

Narrator 7: In 1969, the USA managed to land astronauts on the moon. Neil Armstrong became the first man to set foot on another world and finally confirm that it was not in fact made of green cheese, but of moon rock!

Narrator 8: Millions of television viewers around the world stopped drinking tea and watched in awe as the Apollo 11 space craft touched down on lunar territory for the first time with these words:

Neil: Houston, the Eagle has landed! One small step for a man, but one giant leap for mankind! Now, where did I put my sandwiches?

Narrator 3: Mmm . . . Yes. Moon rock! Is that like Blackpool rock?

Narrator 2: Probably. Just more expensive I should think.

Narrator 1: Anyway. The space race has led to the invention of more powerful rockets and probes that have begun to explore planets such as Venus, Mars and Jupiter.

Narrator 6: And the technological advances have brought us the Space shuttle Challenger and a space station call MIR!

Narrator 5: It wont be long before some bright spark invents a personal space-ship that we can all use to go to work in!

Inventor: *(running on and shouting)* Eureka! Eureka!

Narrator 4: Eureka? Isn't she a television presenter?

Inventor: What? No! That's Ulrika! Eureka means I've had a great idea! A vision!

Narrator 7: Oh, right! Well lets hear it then.

Inventor: *(Land of Hope and Glory plays in background)* I dream about inventing this wonderful device that is going to revolutionise the way we work and think. One day, it will allow instant communication between people all over the world and will be really easy and quick to use! When they become . . .

Narrator 8: *(interrupting)* Wait a minute! Haven't we heard all this before! What is it called?

Inventor: A name! Of course . . . it needs a name. But what could I call a contraption that is going to bring about an information revolution, that is going to change the way that we work for ever? I have to think.....

Narrator 1: Well, I think that we'll let him get on with it. But while we're on the subject of things that revolutionise the way that we work, how about supersonic travel and the jet air liner.

Narrator 6: Yes. It is now possible to fly around the world in a few hours compared to a number of days 100 years ago. In aircraft like the Concorde vast journeys could be made in no time at all.

Narrator 5: Concorde flew so fast that it broke the sound barrier.

Narrator 4: Isn't that what happens in school dinner halls every lunch time?

Narrator 3: Just imagine, you're flying faster than the speed of sound. *(someone runs on like a plane, 'vrooming' sound from cast follows later after they have left stage)* That must make it difficult to ask for an in-flight drink. I wonder if that's why the meals are always served cold, the cook doesn't get the order until you are 500 miles further over the Atlantic!

Narrator 2: Well there is a solution to that. Global communications!

Narrator 7: Yes of course. Telecommunications have become so advanced that you don't even have to leave the comfort of your own bed to conduct business on a world wide scale.

Richard Branson enters with a mobile phone and dials

Branson: Hello? Is that the president of the First National bank of New York?

President: *(yawns and stretches having been woken up)* Yes?

Branson: This is Richard Branson here. Could you lend me a fiver until the weekend, I'm a little short.

President: *(getting angry)* I'm sorry but it is not our policy to hand out money to people on the basis of their height! Try standing on a box!

Richard Branson leaves looking downhearted.

Narrator 8: Satellite links and the INTERNET mean that we can speak to someone live in Australia and be face to face with them on a video screen.

Narrator 5: Or we can send papers electronically around the world in seconds without even putting a stamp on them.

Narrator 4: But, you know, all these would not be possible without the invention of one important machine.

Narrator 3: You don't mean the Brevell sandwich toaster?

Narrator 4: No!

Narrator 2: The cordless drill from Black and Decker?

Narrator 4: No!

Narrator 1: The revolutionary, no suction lost, ACME portable ear wax remover!

Narrator 4: Certainly not! I'm talking about the computer!

Narrator 6: Ahh! Of course. The computer.

Narrator 7: Where would the modern world be without the computer!

Narrator 8: Did you know that when computers were first invented they were as big as a room and only as powerful as a chimpanzee with an abacus.

Narrator 2: (*incredulous*) No!

Narrator 1: Yes, and that to make them work you had to feed in miles of punched tape and wait for hours for an answer.

Narrator 3: Some things haven't changed then!

Narrator 5: Don't be silly! (*Land of Hope and Glory plays in background*) The computer is a device that has revolutionised the way that we work and think. One day, it will allow instant communication between people all over the world and will be really easy and quick to use! When they become really advanced they will be quite small and everyone will have at least one on their desk at work!

Narrator 4: Wait a minute! Haven't we heard all that before?

Inventor: (*running on*) Eureka! Eureka!

Narrator 6: Oh not you again!

Inventor: Yes! And at last it is finished. My invention that will revolutionise the way that we work and . . .

Narrator 7: STOP! Stop right there! So you claim that your so called invention can do that?

Inventor: Yes!

Narrator 8: That it can “allow direct communication between people of all nationalities”!

Inventor: Yes! Yes!

Narrator 1: That it is small and compact and will be on the desk of every worker in years to come?

Inventor: Yes! I have one in this box!

Narrator 2: Er...It’s not a computer by any chance is it?

Inventor: A computer? No, certainly not!

All: Then what is it?

Inventor: I call it . . . (*whips object out of box and holds it up*) The Post-it-note! (*Everyone groans*)
Freud and policeman run on

S. Freud: Quick officer, zer he is! Seize him

Policeman: Now then sir, come quietly! (*leads the inventor away*)

Inventor: No! Stop! I must be allowed to work! I am too important! I shall write to Richard Branson! . . .Help!

R Branson: (*spring on*) Did I hear someone call?
Freud picks up the post-it-note

S. Freud: Hmm. Post-it-notes? I vonder..... very in-ter-esting.

R Branson: (*walking over and putting his arm round Sigmund*) I think I smell a bit of an opportunity here, Siggy old son. How does ‘Virgin all weather wacky, trendy, pink post it notes’ sound to you? (*they leave stage chatting*)

Narrator 8: Well, I’m glad that’s over. But unfortunately, so is our revue. (*everyone says aahh!*) Thank you for listening, we hope that you enjoyed our brief guide to inventions and discoveries since 195480! Even if we did stray a little out of the time zone.

All: Just a little!

Narrator 4: Oh well! And remember, if you have any ideas for inventions, just put together a model made out of old egg boxes, yoghurt pots and sticky back plastic and send them along to the directors/head teachers office, where they will be only to pleased to decorate the room with them. Thank you!

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