Explain Events, Procedures, and Ideas

Grade 4 Reading Worksheet - Challenge Me

Name _____ Date _____

Read the text. Circle the answer to each Why question.

READ THIS FIRST

How the Printing Press Changed Books

Six hundred years ago, a book in Europe was a rare treasure. Every page was copied by hand, usually by monks or trained writers called scribes. A scribe dipped a quill pen in ink and wrote each letter carefully. Copying a long book could take months or even years. Because books took so much work, they cost a great deal. Only churches, universities and wealthy families owned more than a few.

In the 1440s, a German metalworker named Johannes Gutenberg began working on a new idea. Printing itself was not new. In China, Korea and other places, people had printed with carved wooden blocks for centuries. Korean printers had even used metal type. Gutenberg, however, combined several inventions into one system that worked quickly.

First, he made movable type. Each letter was cast as a separate small block of metal. A worker could arrange the letters into words and lines and print many pages. Then the worker could take the letters apart and use them again. Next, Gutenberg mixed an oil-based ink that stuck well to metal. Finally, he changed a screw press, the kind used to squeeze grapes and olives. The press pushed paper firmly and evenly against the inked type.

With this system, a small team could print hundreds of copies of a page in a single day. Around 1455, Gutenberg's shop finished a Bible. About 180 copies were printed, far more than a scribe could copy in a lifetime.

The effects spread quickly. Printing shops opened in city after city. By 1500, millions of books had been printed in Europe. As books became easier to make, their prices dropped. More families could afford them, so more people had reasons to learn to read.

Books also helped ideas travel. Before, a scholar's new idea might reach only the people nearby. Now the same words could be printed in many copies and sent far away. Scientists could read one another's work and build on it. Printed maps helped explorers. News sheets began to tell people about events in other places.

Printing also made texts more reliable. When scribes copied by hand, small mistakes crept in. Each copy could be a little different. Printed copies of a page were the same. A reader in Italy and a reader in England could read exactly the same words.

Gutenberg did not become rich from his invention. Still, his system changed the world. It turned books from treasures for a few into tools for many.

1. Why was movable type faster than carving a new wooden block for every page?

   Each metal block held a whole page of words.

   The same metal letters could be rearranged and used again.

   Metal type did not need any ink.

   Metal letters were larger and easier to read.

2. Why did Gutenberg use a screw press?

   It squeezed oil from olives to make the ink.

   It pushed paper firmly and evenly against the inked type.

   It folded the pages into finished books.

   It cut the metal letters into shape.

3. Why were printed books more reliable than hand-copied ones?

   Every printed copy of a page had exactly the same words.

   Printers checked every page against the original scroll.

   Scribes made fewer mistakes after printing began.

   Printed books used larger, clearer letters.

4. Gutenberg did not become rich. Why does the author still say his system changed the world?

   His Bible was the only book printed for many years.

   Scribes used his system to copy books by hand.

   He later became the richest printer in Europe.

   Its effects on books, reading and ideas were huge.

Scan to get this marked free. No screen time for your child.
Print it · do it in pencil · scan it · PencilGo picks the next sheet.

Explain Events, Procedures, and Ideas

Answer Key - Grade 4 Reading Worksheet - Challenge Me

Read the text. Circle the answer to each Why question.

READ THIS FIRST

How the Printing Press Changed Books

Six hundred years ago, a book in Europe was a rare treasure. Every page was copied by hand, usually by monks or trained writers called scribes. A scribe dipped a quill pen in ink and wrote each letter carefully. Copying a long book could take months or even years. Because books took so much work, they cost a great deal. Only churches, universities and wealthy families owned more than a few.

In the 1440s, a German metalworker named Johannes Gutenberg began working on a new idea. Printing itself was not new. In China, Korea and other places, people had printed with carved wooden blocks for centuries. Korean printers had even used metal type. Gutenberg, however, combined several inventions into one system that worked quickly.

First, he made movable type. Each letter was cast as a separate small block of metal. A worker could arrange the letters into words and lines and print many pages. Then the worker could take the letters apart and use them again. Next, Gutenberg mixed an oil-based ink that stuck well to metal. Finally, he changed a screw press, the kind used to squeeze grapes and olives. The press pushed paper firmly and evenly against the inked type.

With this system, a small team could print hundreds of copies of a page in a single day. Around 1455, Gutenberg's shop finished a Bible. About 180 copies were printed, far more than a scribe could copy in a lifetime.

The effects spread quickly. Printing shops opened in city after city. By 1500, millions of books had been printed in Europe. As books became easier to make, their prices dropped. More families could afford them, so more people had reasons to learn to read.

Books also helped ideas travel. Before, a scholar's new idea might reach only the people nearby. Now the same words could be printed in many copies and sent far away. Scientists could read one another's work and build on it. Printed maps helped explorers. News sheets began to tell people about events in other places.

Printing also made texts more reliable. When scribes copied by hand, small mistakes crept in. Each copy could be a little different. Printed copies of a page were the same. A reader in Italy and a reader in England could read exactly the same words.

Gutenberg did not become rich from his invention. Still, his system changed the world. It turned books from treasures for a few into tools for many.

1. Why was movable type faster than carving a new wooden block for every page?

Each metal block held a whole page of words.

The same metal letters could be rearranged and used again.

Metal type did not need any ink.

Metal letters were larger and easier to read.

2. Why did Gutenberg use a screw press?

It squeezed oil from olives to make the ink.

It pushed paper firmly and evenly against the inked type.

It folded the pages into finished books.

It cut the metal letters into shape.

3. Why were printed books more reliable than hand-copied ones?

Every printed copy of a page had exactly the same words.

Printers checked every page against the original scroll.

Scribes made fewer mistakes after printing began.

Printed books used larger, clearer letters.

4. Gutenberg did not become rich. Why does the author still say his system changed the world?

His Bible was the only book printed for many years.

Scribes used his system to copy books by hand.

He later became the richest printer in Europe.

Its effects on books, reading and ideas were huge.