

Sample Pages from
Informational Texts Pack
January 3
Drinking Straw Day
by Margaret Whisnant



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January 3

Drinking Straw Day

by Margaret Whisnant

On January 3, 1888, the U.S. Patent Office granted patent No. 375,962 to Marvin C. Stone for the world's first modern drinking straw. In his description, Mr. Stone refers to his invention as an artificial straw, and rightly so. His new straw was made of paper, a man-made material. Before his innovation, people sipped their drinks through rye grass reeds. That's right! Straws were plants!

Ancient Egyptians are believed to have created the first drinking straws from the reeds that grew along the banks of the Nile River. Historians theorize that, without the technology to remove impurities from liquids, the Egyptians used the reed tubes as a way to avoid swallowing the sediments that sank to the bottom of their containers.

A documented image from a 3,000 B.C.E. tomb in ancient Sumer (now Iraq) shows two men using what appear to be reed straws to sip an ancient brew from a jar. In the same tomb, archeologist also found a straw made of gold, but it was most likely reserved for royalty.



And so, Mother Nature's straw was sufficient for 5,000 years or so until one spring afternoon when Marvin Stone sat relaxing with a mint julep after a long day at his factory in Washington, D.C. As usual, his rye grass straw was getting soggy and crumbling into his drink. Floating plant material was destroying its flavor and making it difficult to drink. This time, he lost his patience. Straws needed a makeover, and he was just the man to do it. A prolific inventor since he was a youngster, Mr. Stone had already designed the machine that made the paper cigarette holders he produced in his factory. That afternoon, he started working on the prototype for a non-vegetable drinking straw.

Full document is two pages.

Questions

for

Drinking Straw Day

Directions: Refer to *Drinking Straw Day* to answer the following questions. Write your answers in the spaces provided.

- _____ 1. *Drinking Straw Day* is about
- (A) inventors Marvin Stone and Joseph Friedman.
 - (B) why people need drinking straws.
 - (C) the history of drinking straws.
 - (D) how necessity leads to invention.
- _____ 2. The main purpose of the second paragraph is to
- (A) give the reader a theory as to why people began using drinking straws.
 - (B) explain why Mr. Stone’s invention was important.
 - (C) illustrate how rivers influenced the way early people lived.
 - (D) show the important role of plants in ancient civilizations.

3. What problem (*cause*) motivated Marvin Stone to improve the drinking straw (*effect*)?

15 questions in full document.

Introduction: This addendum is a copy of the actual diagram and the major portions of the specifications included in Marvin Stone's patent for his paper straw design. Bold print and italicized words have been added for student convenience.

Addendum 1
Marvin Stone Patent No. 375,962
U. S. Patent Office January 3, 1888

Full document includes Mr. Stone's diagram and patent application specifications, part of which are shown below.

M. C. STONE.

ARTIFICIAL STRAW. No. 375,962. Patented Jan. 3, 1888.

United States Patent Office

MARVIN C. STONE, of WASHINGTON, DISTRICT of COLUMBIA.

SPECIFICATION forming part of Letters Patent No. 375,962, dated January 3, 1888.

Application filed May 11, 1887. (No model)

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, MARVIN C. STONE, of Washington, in the District of Columbia, have invented certain Improvements in Artificial Straws, of which the following is a specification.

The aim of my invention is to provide a cheap, durable, and unobjectionable substitute for the natural straws commonly used for the administration of medicines, beverages, etc., and to this end it consists, essentially, of a straw formed by winding a paper strip into tubular form and securing the final or outer edge by an adhesive material, the whole being coated with paraffin or other waterproof material, and, preferably, colored in imitation of the natural straw.

In the accompanying drawings, **Fig. 1** represents a perspective view of my new product in its preferred form. **Fig. 2** is a face view of the blank from which it is produced. **Fig. 3** is a spindle adapted for its formation. **Fig. 4** is a view showing the manner of winding the blank upon the spindle.

Questions

for

Addendum 1:

Marvin Stone Patent No. 375,962

U. S. Patent Office January 3, 1888

Instructions: Most of the following questions can be answered by referring to the information in Addendum 1. Several require information from **Drinking Straw Day**. Enter your answers in the spaces provided.

_____ 1. What word could be substituted for *addendum* without changing the meaning of the author's heading and title?

- (A) addition
- (B) example
- (C) index
- (D) documentation

2. Mr. Stone stated in his specifications that he wished *to provide a cheap, durable, and unobjectionable substitute for the natural straws commonly used for the administration of medicines, beverages, etc.. . .* What information from **Drinking Straw Day** explains Mr. Stone's use of the word *unobjectionable*?

_____ 3. Which diagram location indicates the only spot where *paste or other adhesive material* is to be applied to the straw?

- (A) **Figure 4** at **a**
- (B) **Figure 2** at **c**
- (C) **Figure 4** at **e**
- (D) **Figure 3** at **a**

4. What textual evidence indicates that Mr. Stone thought his paper straw would be better accepted by the public if it looked like the natural straws that were popular at the time?

Complete document includes 10 CCSS aligned questions for Addendum 1

Document also includes Addendum 2: Joseph Friedman's 1937 application (diagram and specifications) for a flexible straw and 10 accompanying CCSS aligned questions.

Answer Keys--Samples

January 3 Drinking Straw Day

1. B (RI. 6.2, 7.2, 8.2)
2. A (RI. 6.6, 7.6, 8.6)
3. The rye grass straw that Mr. Stone was using to drink his mint julep got soggy and began crumbling into his drink, leaving floating plant debris that caused it to taste bad. He was probably swallowing the remains of his drinking straw. Without a doubt, the disintegrating natural reed straw was probably clogging itself shut. (RI. 6.5, 7.5, 8.5)
4. The most obvious reason Mr. Stone chose paper was because he had already invented a paper cigarette holder. He was familiar with the material. Another likely reason is that paper is flexible, and he could easily mold it into a tube. Another possibility is that paper was inexpensive and easy to get, especially when compared to a metal or another natural substance like wood. (RI. 6.1, 7.1, 8.1.)
5. B (RI. 6.1, 7.1, 8.1)
6. D (RI. 6.6, 7.6, 8.6)
7. C (RI. 6.1, 7.1, 8.1)
8. Mr. Stone and Mr. Friedman were American men. Both had a background as inventors. Each one of them identified a problem with the drinking straw, and came up with a way to solve the problem. After they invented and patented their straws, both men formed companies to manufacture and sell them. (RI. 6.3, 7.3, 8.3)
9. B (RI. 6.8, 7.8, 9.8)
10. 3
1
5
2
4 (RI. 6.5, 7.5, 8.5)
11. C (RI. 6.1, 7.1, 8.1)
12. A (RI. 6.4, 7.4, 8.4)
13. C (RI. 6.4, 7.4, 8.4)
14. A (RI. 6.4, 7.4, 8.4)
15. B (RI. 6.4, 7.4, 8.4)

Addendum 1

Marvin Stone Patent No. 375,962 U. S. Patent Office January 3, 1888

1. A (RI. 6.4, 7.4, 8.4)
2. In ***Drinking Straw Day***, the author wrote about Mr. Stone's experience with a natural rye grass straws that always got soggy and crumbled into his drinks, destroying their flavor and making them hard to drink. These circumstances were *objectionable* in that people did not want these things to happen. They objected to them. His paper straw was *unobjectionable* because it would allow people to enjoy their beverages without the hassles of a natural grass straw. (RI. 6.1, 7.1, 8.1.)
3. C (RI. 6.1, 7., 8.1)