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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*)?

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15 questions in full document.