Name: _____ Date: _____

ELIJAH MCCOY



Read the biographical passage about Elijah McCoy and answer the questions.

Elijah McCoy was an African Canadian inventor whose work in steam engine technology made a significant impact during the Industrial Revolution. Born on May 2, 1844, in Colchester, Ontario, to parents who had escaped slavery, McCoy showed a strong interest in mechanics from a young age. He was sent to Scotland at 15 to apprentice as a mechanical engineer. Despite his qualifications, McCoy faced racial barriers upon returning to Canada, limiting his employment opportunities.

McCoy eventually secured a position as a fireman and oiler for the Michigan Central Railroad. Here, he invented a lubricating cup that could automatically drip oil onto steam engines and machinery, dramatically improving efficiency and reducing maintenance stops. This invention was pivotal, leading to the phrase "the real McCoy," denoting something as being the best or genuine.

Throughout his career, McCoy obtained more than 50 patents, demonstrating a wide range of ingenuity. His most notable contributions were in lubrication technology, but he also invented items like a folding ironing board and a lawn sprinkler. Despite his achievements, McCoy faced ongoing racial discrimination and struggled to receive immediate recognition and financial success for his innovations.

Elijah McCoy's legacy is profound, highlighting not only his technical contributions but also his resilience in overcoming racial barriers. He passed away on October 10, 1929, leaving behind a legacy as a trailblazer whose inventions had a lasting impact on industrial machinery and efficiency.

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1 How did racial discrimination affect McCoy's professional opportunities?

2 What does the phrase "the real McCoy" signify, and how is it related to Elijah McCoy?

3 Discuss the legacy of Elijah McCoy in terms of his contributions to technology and overcoming racial barriers.

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