

Lesson 32: Inventing Something

Two inventors, Thomas Edison and Nikola Tesla, discuss the invention of new technology. Listen to their conversation and mark the statements “True” or “False”:

Listening Comprehension

True or false?

1. Edison is annoyed about the explosion Tesla caused.
2. Some members of Edison's team like Tesla's ideas.
3. Tesla has some doubts about the viability of his own theory.
4. Edison's main concern is the cost.
5. The public has a high demand for energy.
6. Edison encourages Tesla to work faster.
7. Edison made ten thousand attempts before succeeding in his invention.
8. Tesla believes his technology is superior to Edison's.
9. Edison asks Tesla to make his equipment more efficient.
10. Tesla refuses to accept the deal.

Conversation Text

Thomas Edison: Ah, Tesla. **Could I have a word with you?** I've heard some interesting things **through the grapevine** about your work.

Nikola Tesla: Um, if it's about the little explosion in the lab last week, I promise it'll never happen again! --

Edison: Hm? Oh, no, it **has nothing to do with** that. I'm talking about your theories on energy transfer. It seems your ideas are **resonating with** some of our guys.

Tesla: You mean, the team working on your **generators**?

Edison: Now **don't let this go to your head**, but some of our top engineers think your alternating current theories are brilliant. They want to see you take the idea and **run with it**. And **frankly**, I'm a bit curious myself.

Vocabulary

Could I have a word with you? = This is a polite way to ask to talk to someone

heard through the grapevine = heard indirectly (by one person telling another, who tells another, etc.)

has nothing to do with = is completely unrelated to

resonating with = appealing to, sounding interesting

generators = machines that can generate electricity

don't let this go to your head = don't let this praise/accomplishment inflate your ego

run with it = continue it

frankly = honestly

Tesla: But... you don't sound pleased. I'm telling you – alternating current is *more* than brilliant. It's the way of the future! The only true path forward in the development of energy.

Edison: Now, **don't get carried away**. It is a fascinating idea – in theory. But when it comes to actually *designing* these conductors, then we have to think about the cost, and about the market for this new energy, not to mention the *dangers*. You know the risks better than anyone else. Having two currents running at once? People might be **electrocuted**. You'll never be able to **win over** the public with technology that's potentially **lethal**.

Tesla: But we don't have to find a new market for alternating current. The demand is already there. People are **wild about** energy and they're just waiting for – no, **begging for** the right tools so that they can get more of it. Alternating current would be a *revolution* in power supply!

Edison: And revolutions involve **bloodshed**. No, sir. With a new idea there is nothing so

Vocabulary

don't get carried away = don't let enthusiasm make you take action too quickly or too much

electrocuted = injured or killed by electricity

win over = succeed in making people accept or like something

lethal = could kill you

wild about = extremely excited about

begging for = asking with a lot of emotion and urgency

bloodshed = people getting injured or killed

important as careful deliberation and patience. A great deal of patience. If every **starry-eyed** revolutionary went ahead with so little regard for the consequences... why, then there'd be complete **anarchy**.

Tesla: But I'm not being **hasty** – I've already done my calculations hundreds of times.

Edison: Hundreds of times? That's nothing. Do you know how many different substances I tried in my light bulb before I **stumbled upon** the right one? Ten thousand! And that is how the careful inventor should do his experiments.

Tesla: I disagree. That is the work of a **sloppy** inventor. When I make my calculations, I make them precisely. And when I have finished them, they are **bulletproof**. **Mark my words** – my alternating current will make your direct current **obsolete**.

Edison: That is *highly* doubtful. But let's put your little theory to the test. You've **insinuated** that my motors aren't efficient enough, isn't that right?

Vocabulary

starry-eyed = having an unrealistic optimistic view

anarchy = complete lack of any order; chaos

hasty = too quick to take action, without thinking carefully

stumbled upon = found by accident

sloppy = not being careful or organized

bulletproof = solid; unable to be damaged

Mark my words = this will *definitely* happen in the future

obsolete = when a piece of technology is outdated and no longer used

insinuated = implied; said indirectly

Tesla: They run **slower than molasses**.

Edison: And I bet you think you could do better. All right, I'll cut you a deal – if you redesign my motors so that they don't cost this company a fortune to maintain, there's fifty thousand dollars in it for you—*if* you can do it in six months.

Tesla: I'll only need three. **Let's shake on it.**

Vocabulary

slower than molasses
= *extremely* slow

Let's shake on it =
let's shake hands to
make the agreement
official

Vocabulary Quiz

Complete each sentence with a word from the box. Three words are not used.

begged for	hasty	running with	went to my head
bulletproof	insinuate	sloppy	wild about
frankly	mark my words	starry-eyed	won me over
got carried away	resonating with	stumbled upon	

1. Buying your first home is a big investment, and you shouldn't make a _____ purchase. Do your research first.
2. He didn't offer me a job, but he did _____ that there might be an opening in the department this fall.
3. I didn't like my new neighbor at first, but as I got to know her she eventually _____.
4. My kids are _____ this new video game; they're constantly talking about how to beat the next level.
5. I went to the store to buy one thing, but I ended up buying twenty. Guess I _____.
6. Los Angeles is full of _____ young people who are trying to launch their acting careers.
7. _____ - my son is going to be a famous musician someday!
8. My mother _____ my diary while cleaning out the closets at home.
9. The teacher's new approach is really _____ the students; they seem to be enjoying the class.
10. Wow, you have really _____ handwriting; I can barely read it.
11. I know you've got your heart set on studying philosophy, but _____, I don't think that's very practical.
12. He knew he'd hurt her deeply, and he _____ forgiveness.

Speaking Task

Talk about a time when you had a good, creative idea and put it into practice (either at work or in your personal life). How did you come up with the idea? What was the result – did it work as well as you imagined?

Record your answer at www.speakpipe.com/espressoenglish or send the MP3 to homework@espressoenglish.net for feedback!

Answers

Comprehension Questions

1. False
2. True
3. False
4. False
5. True
6. False
7. True
8. True
9. True
10. False

Vocabulary Quiz

1. hasty
2. insinuate
3. won me over
4. wild about
5. got carried away
6. starry-eyed
7. mark my words
8. stumbled upon
9. resonating with
10. sloppy
11. frankly
12. begged for