
NOT BORING MEDIA

THE INVENTOR BURIED IN HIS OWN CREATION

High-Interest Nonfiction Reading Passage

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ✓ Reading Passage
- ✓ Comprehension Questions
- ✓ Answer Key
- ✓ Teacher Guide

GRADES 4-6 • LEXILE ~750L • DOK LEVELS 1-4

Reading they'll actually do.

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WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ✓ High-interest nonfiction reading passage (300-400 words)
- ✓ 6 comprehension questions spanning DOK levels 1-4
- ✓ Complete answer key with explanations
- ✓ Teacher guide with standards, pacing, and extensions

Questions or feedback? Leave a review or message us through TPT!

THE INVENTOR BURIED IN HIS OWN CREATION

Fredric Baur spent years perfecting the distinctive shape of the Pringles can—that tall, cylindrical tube with the resealable lid that keeps chips fresh and unbroken. He was so proud of his invention that when he died in 2008, his family honored an unusual request: they buried part of his ashes inside a Pringles can.

Baur was a chemist and food storage expert who worked for Procter & Gamble. In the 1960s, the company wanted to solve a problem that plagued the snack industry: potato chips arrived broken and stale in their flimsy bags. Baur designed a solution that was revolutionary—a stackable chip shape and a protective canister.

The tube wasn't just clever packaging. Baur also helped develop the saddle shape of the chips themselves, a design called a hyperbolic paraboloid. This mathematical curve allows the chips to stack perfectly without breaking and gives them their distinctive crunch. The shape was so precise it required a special machine to create.

Baur retired in the 1980s, but he never lost his affection for his invention. He told his family that when he died, he wanted part of his remains placed in a Pringles can. His children thought he was joking at first, but he was completely serious.

When Baur passed away at age 89, his family drove to Walgreens on the way to the funeral home. They bought a can of original flavor Pringles—Baur's favorite—ate the chips in the parking lot, and placed some of his ashes inside. The can was buried with him at his grave in Cincinnati.

'My siblings and I briefly debated what flavor to use,' his son Larry later told reporters, 'but we all agreed original was the way to go.'

Baur's unusual burial request became a testament to the pride inventors can feel for their creations. Sometimes the things we make become part of who we are.

Word Count: 314 | Lexile: ~750L | Grades 4-6 | Source: Time Magazine

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Name: _____ Date: _____

1

What problem was Baur trying to solve with his invention?

- ☐ A) Chips were too expensive
- ☐ B) Chips arrived broken and stale
- ☐ C) Chips were too salty
- ☐ D) Chips were hard to manufacture

2

What is the mathematical name for the shape of Pringles chips?

- ☐ A) Parabola
- ☐ B) Hyperbolic paraboloid
- ☐ C) Cylinder
- ☐ D) Sphere

3

Why does the curved shape of Pringles work better than flat chips?

- ☐ A) It tastes better
- ☐ B) It allows chips to stack without breaking
- ☐ C) It uses less potato
- ☐ D) It cooks faster

4

What flavor of Pringles was used for Baur's burial?

- ☐ A) Sour cream and onion
- ☐ B) Barbecue
- ☐ C) Original
- ☐ D) Salt and vinegar

5

What does Baur's burial request suggest about his relationship with his work?

- ☐ A) He regretted his invention
- ☐ B) He identified so strongly with his creation that it became part of his identity
- ☐ C) He wanted free publicity
- ☐ D) His family forced him

6

How does Baur's story illustrate the connection between creativity and legacy?

- ☐ A) Only food inventors are remembered
- ☐ B) Inventions can outlive their creators and become how they're remembered
- ☐ C) Burial requests should always involve inventions
- ☐ D) Pringles are the most important invention ever

ANSWER KEY

The Inventor Buried in His Own Creation

1. B) Chips arrived broken and stale

DOK 1 — Recall. The passage states: 'potato chips arrived broken and stale in their flimsy bags.'

2. B) Hyperbolic paraboloid

DOK 1 — Recall. The passage states: 'a design called a hyperbolic paraboloid.'

3. B) It allows chips to stack without breaking

DOK 2 — Inference. The passage explains: 'This mathematical curve allows the chips to stack perfectly without breaking.'

4. C) Original

DOK 2 — Inference. The passage states: 'They bought a can of original flavor Pringles—Baur's favorite.'

5. B) He identified so strongly with his creation that it became part of his identity

DOK 3 — Analysis. The passage concludes: 'Sometimes the things we make become part of who we are.' Baur wanted to be literally buried with his life's work.

6. B) Inventions can outlive their creators and become how they're remembered

DOK 4 — Extended Thinking. Baur died in 2008, but his canister design lives on in billions of cans sold worldwide. His story shows how creative work can become a lasting legacy.

TEACHER GUIDE

The Inventor Buried in His Own Creation

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.1 — Refer to details and examples in a text
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.4 — Determine meaning of words and phrases
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.8 — Explain how author uses evidence
- C3 Framework — Historical thinking skills

PACING OPTIONS

- Quick Read (10-15 min): Passage + questions 1-4
- Standard (20-25 min): Full passage + all questions
- Deep Dive (35-40 min): Add discussion + extension

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Baur wanted to be buried with his invention. What object would you want to represent your life's work?
- The Pringles shape solved a real problem. What everyday problems do you wish someone would solve with clever design?
- Is it strange or touching that Baur identified so strongly with a snack container? Defend your answer.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Research the hyperbolic paraboloid shape and find other examples of it in architecture and nature.
- Design your own food packaging that solves a specific problem (freshness, breakage, portion control, etc.).
- Write a biography of another inventor who became famous for a single creation.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Struggling: Pre-teach vocabulary, partner reading
- Advanced: Add research, compare to related events
- ELL: Visual supports, pre-teach context

SOURCE

- Time Magazine / Cincinnati Enquirer