



## 5th Online Learning #1 ELA

Subject: English Language Arts

State: Ohio

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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*Read the article. Then, answer the questions.*

## **Sneakers!**

by Patrick Joseph

Look down at your feet. What are you wearing on them? Odds are the answer is sneakers. Sneakers are everywhere. But how much do you know about this popular footwear? How were sneakers invented? What are they made of? And why are they called “sneakers” anyway?

### **Rooted in Rubber**

The story of sneakers started about 500 years ago. That’s when European explorers in Central and South America noticed Native Americans playing with an unusual ball. The ball was made from a milky, white liquid that oozed out of the cahuchu (ka OO choo) tree. The liquid, known today as latex (LAY tex), hardened as it dried.

Native Americans had practical uses for latex too. They spread the sticky liquid on their feet. Once it dried, it formed a very thin “shoe” that protected their feet from water. They also made waterproof bottles with latex.

When explorers brought latex samples back to Europe in the early 1700s, scientists started searching for their own ways to use it. In 1770, an English chemist named Joseph Priestley discovered that the gummy stuff could rub out pencil marks. People dubbed it “rubber,” and the name stuck.

### **The Right Stuff**

By the early 1800s, manufacturers in the United States and Europe had found many uses for rubber. They used the stretchy, waterproof stuff for raincoats, hoses, elastic bands, and more. But rubber wasn’t very good for making most things. It got too brittle in the cold and too sticky in the heat.

That changed in 1839. An inventor named Charles Goodyear mixed rubber and a smelly yellow chemical called sulfur. Then he accidentally spilled the mixture onto a hot stove. The resulting glop stayed firm and stretchy whatever the temperature. It was called vulcanized (VUL can ized) rubber, named after Vulcan, the Roman god of fire.

### **Sneaking Around**

A few years later, manufacturers teamed vulcanized rubber soles, or shoe bottoms, with a tough fabric called canvas. The result was comfortable, lightweight shoes. Up until then, almost everyone wore leather shoes with hard soles that clomped loudly with each step. The new rubber-soled shoes were very quiet. You could easily sneak around in them, so people started calling them “sneakers.”

At first, sneakers weren’t very popular. For one thing, they were expensive. And people were more excited about using vulcanized rubber to make tires for bicycles—and, later, cars. But in 1916, a rubber company introduced a simple sneaker called Keds. Its price was low, so many people could afford a pair. Keds were a huge success.

A year later, another company called Converse created the first basketball sneaker. The All Star model featured rubber soles that kept players from slipping on the court. They also had canvas tops that went up around the ankle for good support. Sneakers were off and running.

### **Stepping Up Design**

It wasn't until the fitness craze of the 1970s that many people started taking sneakers seriously, though.

Track coach Bill Bowerman was one of these people. He realized that if he could create lighter sneakers, his runners would save energy. In fact, shaving just one ounce off the shoes would help. The runner's legs would lift 200 fewer pounds over the course of a mile. That could help his athletes win races.

One day in 1971, inspired by his breakfast, Bowerman poured liquid rubber into his wife's waffle iron, and let it harden. The experiment ruined the waffle iron. But it resulted in the first "waffle soles." These were lighter than flat soles because of all the notches in the waffle pattern. Plus they gave better traction, or grip. A new model for sneaker soles hit the pavement.

### **Modern Wonders**

Today, sneakers are big business. In 2000, people in the United States spent more than \$15 billion on them. That means they purchased more than 405 million pairs. Modern sneaker designs jump far beyond the first canvas-and-rubber model.

Whether you wear sneakers to play sports or for fashion flair, the choices today are endless. So the next time you get a new pair of sneakers, take a good look at how they're made. Think about what goes into them and all the history behind them. Then slip them on and take off!

Sneakers! The All-Stars of Footwear "Sneakers" by Patrick Joseph, National Geographic for Kids, March 2002, pp. 12–14. Used by permission of National Geographic Image Collection. Artwork: Taken from the Clip Art Collection of Art Explosion, copyright © 1995–2002. Nova Developments Corporation and its licensors. All rights reserved. USA.

1 Charles Goodyear accidentally discovered rubber. Which statement shows the cause of that accident?

- (A) He added some raised notches and a waffle pattern.
- (B) He poured hot rubber onto a waffle iron to harden.
- (C) He let white liquid latex cool and harden as it dried.
- (D) He dropped rubber mixed with sulfur on a hot stove.

2 How did rubber get its name?

- (A) People were excited about using it to make bicycle tires.
- (B) European explorers found Native Americans playing ball.
- (C) An inventor mixed hot latex with a chemical called sulfur.
- (D) An English scientist discovered that it erased pencil marks.

3 "It wasn't until the fitness craze of the 1970s that many people started taking sneakers seriously, though." Which definition of **craze** is used in the sentence?

**craze**/kræz/

- 1) v. to annoy someone.
- 2) n. a popular fashion or thing to do.
- 3) n. a very thin crack.
- 4) v. to cover in small thin cracks.

(A) definition 1

(B) definition 2

(C) definition 3

(D) definition 4

4 Write a summary of the selection. Begin with the main idea. Use the subheadings as a guide, and use evidence from the text in your answer.

5 Use information in the selection to describe two different ways that Native Americans used latex.