
The Walsworth Brothers

Walsworth Publishing Company

By M. Karen Hubbard

LESSON DESCRIPTION

In this lesson, students will explore the concepts of “invention” and “innovation” as they learn about the contributions of entrepreneurs Don, Ed, and Bill Walsworth. Students will read the story of the Walsworth brothers. Then, they will do an Invention/Innovation Activity sheet and follow-up with inventing a good and then make an innovation on another good.

ECONOMIC CONCEPTS

- entrepreneur
- human capital
- invention
- innovation

MATERIALS

- One copy of “The Walsworth Brothers” story for each student
- One copy of Activity 1 – “Invention or Innovation?” for each student
- One copy of Activity 2 – “You Be the Inventor” for each student

TIMES

- 50 minutes

PROCEDURES

1. Ask if any of the students have heard of the Walsworth Publishing Company. Instruct the students to read the story about the Walsworth family and the Walsworth Publishing Company.
2. Explain that the Walsworth brothers are called **entrepreneurs**. An entrepreneur is a person who controls the production process of a business, makes business-policy decisions, attempts to be innovative in new products or methods of production and bears the risk of their time, effort, and money invested in a business.
3. Discuss:
 - a. In what year did the brothers start the Walsworth Brothers Company? (1937)
 - b. What were the brothers’ names? (Don, Ed, and Bill Walsworth)

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- c. Where did the brothers open the company? (Marceline, Missouri)
 - d. Look on a map of Missouri and locate Marceline, Missouri. Where is it in comparison to where you live? (north, south, east, west, far away, close by, I live in Marceline!)
 - e. What did the company do when the brothers first started it? (printed playbills for plays, cookbooks, and memorial books to honor those who had served the U.S. in WWII)
 - f. What became the company's main business and in what year? (publishing yearbooks in 1947)
 - g. What happened in 1956? (The Walsworths changed the company's name to Walsworth Publishing Company, Inc.)
 - h. Why was spring the company's busiest time of the year? (Yearbooks were produced and distributed to the schools.)
4. Explain that **human resources** are people doing mental and physical work to produce a good or service. Some examples of human resources include a teacher, firefighter, a doctor, and a lumberjack. Ask the following question:

What did the company have to do after the yearbooks were distributed? (layoff their employees.) Why? (The company could not afford to pay their employees if there was no work for them to do.)
 5. Explain that the company had invested in the **human capital** of their employees. This does not mean that the company hired more workers. It means that they trained their employees and paid for their education. Ask:
 - a. What do you think could happen to some of the employees when the company laid them off? (The laid-off employees would look for work somewhere else.)
 - b. Why would this be bad for the Walsworth Company? (These employees were trained/educated in the publishing of yearbooks and if they did not come back to work the next spring, the company would have to hire new people and spend time and money to train them. This would increase their cost of production.)
 6. Explain that there is a difference between **invention** and **innovation**. An invention is the making of a new good. An innovation is an improvement in a good or an improvement in the way a good is made. Ask:
 - a. What are some ways the company tried to keep their employees? (persuaded some schools to have yearbooks delivered in the fall, started a Commercial Book Division so yearbook people could concentrate on their schools and commercial people could concentrate on people with different printing needs, i.e., textbooks, catalogs, magazines.)
 - b. Would these new ways be called inventions or innovations? (innovations) Why? (These were improvements on the use of their employees. Yearbook people could concentrate on schools and
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yearbooks, and the commercial people could concentrate on customers who had other printing needs.)

7. Distribute Activity 1 – “Invention or Innovation?” to each student. Instruct them to classify the goods according to “invention” or “innovation.” When the students are finished with Activity 1, have them check their answers with you.

ANSWERS TO ACTIVITY 1

INVENTIONS	INNOVATIONS
jet plane	rocket to space
ice cream	Eskimo pie
ovens	microwave
typewriter	computer
coffee	flavored coffee
telephone	cordless phone
pizza	takeout pizza
pen with a top	click pen (pushes tip in and out)

CLOSURE

Have the students act as **inventors** and do the top part of Activity 2 – “You Be the Inventor.” When they are finished, have the students exchange papers and become **innovators** by making a small change to the invention at the top of the paper. When they have made the change, have the students show their invention and explain how it works. Then have the innovators speak about their change which they made to the invention.

(OPTIONAL: Allow students one week to build a prototype of their inventions. Have students present their prototypes in class before passing the invention along to the innovator.)

EXTENSION

1. After each student has completed his or her invention, instruct them to write a paragraph describing the human capital required to create his or her invention. (These skills may include reading and math proficiency, the ability to write directions, creativity and imagination.) Have them follow this paragraph with another describing the human capital required to be an entrepreneur. (This would require similar skills applied to the invention but would also include risk-taking, organization and communication skills.)
2. Teacher can invite an entrepreneur from the community to discuss the risks and benefits of starting a business.

Activity 1- Invention or Innovation?

Name _____ Date _____

Classify the following goods into “invention” or “innovation” by writing the goods in the correct column.

jet plane	ice cream	microwave	computer	coffee
cordless phone	pen with a top	pizza	ovens	typewriter
rockets to space	flavored coffee	telephone	Eskimo Pie	takeout pizza
click pen (pushes tip in and out)				

INVENTIONS

INNOVATIONS

ACTIVITY 2 – YOU BE THE INVENTOR

Name _____ Date _____

You get to be an inventor! In the space below, draw an idea you have for an invention and describe what it does. (Remember, it has to be a new idea for a good.) Then pass this paper to another student so they can be innovators and make a little change to your invention.

You get to be an innovator! In the space below, make a small change to the invention drawn above and explain what the change does to the invention.

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In 1937, three brothers, Don, Ed, and Bill Walsworth started the Walsworth Brothers Company in Marceline, Missouri. At first, the company sold ads for playbills (for plays being produced around the neighboring states) which they printed with a borrowed typewriter and a mimeograph machine. Soon they printed cookbooks, and then memorial books to honor those who had served the United States after World War II.

In 1947, the company began to publish yearbooks which has been their main business ever since. In 1956, soon after adding yearbook publication, the Walsworths decided to change the company's name to Walsworth Publishing Company, Inc. Spring was their busy time of year because yearbooks were produced and distributed to the schools. After spring, there would be a slow down in production and employees would be laid off. To keep their company going during the slow times, they persuaded some schools to have their yearbooks delivered in the fall. This enabled the company to keep their employees busy in spring and fall.

One of the founder's sons, Don Walsworth, began working with the company in 1957 and became president 10 years later. There were still slow times, when the company would layoff skilled employees and the company's valuable equipment would sit unused. These slow periods troubled Don.

To solve this problem, the company started a commercial book division in 1974. This division published textbooks, catalogs, magazines and other specialty publications. It enabled the yearbook people to serve their customers by concentrating on their schools while the commercial people concentrated on customers with different printing needs.

Walsworth Publishing Company employs more than 1,400 people all over the world. More than 600 of these employees have attained the status of Master Printer of America, and more than 90 employees have 20 or more years of service to the company. This company is the only family-owned yearbook company in the world and one of the top printing companies in North America.