

# Ballpoint Pens

## Gap fill

Listen to the story and fill in the blanks.

Ballpoint pens are \_\_\_\_\_. Around the world, 57 ballpoint pens are \_\_\_\_\_ every second. How did this simple pen become so \_\_\_\_\_? The history of the ballpoint pen begins in the \_\_\_\_\_. Laszlo Biro was a newspaper \_\_\_\_\_. While working, he noticed that his fountain pen created problems. It regularly \_\_\_\_\_ ink, so refilling was common. Sometimes ink made a \_\_\_\_\_ on the paper. He wondered if it were possible to \_\_\_\_\_ a better pen. So, he did.

Biro did not invent the ballpoint pen. He \_\_\_\_\_ it. The first one was invented in the 1890s, but it did not work well. Its \_\_\_\_\_ tip frequently cut the paper. Occasionally, the ink came out too fast.

Biro made two important improvements. First, he placed a tiny \_\_\_\_\_ ball inside a pocket at the tip of the pen. A small \_\_\_\_\_ carries ink to the back of the ball. When the pen moves along paper, the ball \_\_\_\_\_. This turning action \_\_\_\_\_ ink to the front of the ball. The ink on the ball sticks to paper. The ball and tiny space around it \_\_\_\_\_ a consistent amount of ink is delivered from pen to paper.

The second improvement was ink \_\_\_\_\_. Biro and his brother developed a \_\_\_\_\_ ink. This change made the pen's ink flow with greater \_\_\_\_\_. In addition, their ink dried almost immediately after \_\_\_\_\_ contact with paper. This was an important change: people didn't need to wait for the ink to \_\_\_\_\_.

Biro's pen worked \_\_\_\_\_ well. But, it wasn't successful until a Frenchman \_\_\_\_\_ the manufacturing rights in \_\_\_\_\_. Marcel Bich changed the pen's design. He divided it into eight separate \_\_\_\_\_ pieces that were easy to construct and put together in a \_\_\_\_\_. These changes greatly \_\_\_\_\_ costs and made it more \_\_\_\_\_. He also changed the name to BIC, the first three letters of his last name. By 1965, BIC pens were \_\_\_\_\_ around the world. The history of the ballpoint pen has a lesson for everyone. It's not necessary to come up with an \_\_\_\_\_ idea before going into business. Sometimes improving an old idea is good \_\_\_\_\_.

## Synonym match

Match the words or phrases.

- |                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. simple         | a. make certain    |
| 2. pocket         | b. movement        |
| 3. flow           | c. rotation        |
| 4. reliable       | d. straightforward |
| 5. turning action | e. dependable      |

## True or false

Choose the correct answer.

1. The first ballpoint pen was marketed in 1950. T or F
2. Early pens damaged paper. T or F
3. A sphere controls ink flow. T or F
4. BIC pens are named after the inventor. T or F
5. Bich invented a fast drying ink. T or F

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## Anagrams

Move letters. Make a new word.

LGIENLFRI

\_\_\_\_\_

UGNITRN

\_\_\_\_\_

AERPETAS

\_\_\_\_\_

INUNFAOT

\_\_\_\_\_

REEEIDDVL

\_\_\_\_\_

UCAREDSPH

\_\_\_\_\_

## ESL discussion questions

Talk about the story

- 
1. What kind of story is this?
  2. How does a ballpoint pen work?
  3. What improvements did Biro make?
  4. Describe how Bich improved manufacturing efficiency.
  5. Where did the pen name come from?
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## Writing practice

Put the words in the correct order.

1. improvement / ink / The / was / quality / second

\_\_\_\_\_

2. he / problems / created / noticed / While / that / pen / his / fountain / working

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Sometimes / improving / an / is / old / good / idea / enough

\_\_\_\_\_

4. First / ball / pocket / of / tiny / he / a / a / placed / pen / the / inside / tip / the / at / metal

\_\_\_\_\_

5. reliable / costs / made / These / reduced / and / more / it / greatly / changes

\_\_\_\_\_