

## Computer Geniuses Through History

**WebQuest Description:**

**Grade Level:**

**Curriculum:**

**Keywords:**

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### Introduction

If I have seen further than others, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants.—Isaac Newton  
Much of the short history of computers can be traced through the lives of some of the geniuses of the field. The development of the computer science field is different from the development of many other fields of science in that we did not realize at first how necessary it would be. In comparison, the development of medical science has been urgent for our survival from the beginning. The development of agriculture was similarly urgent for mankind's development. Yet, we went without computers for the vast majority of our time here on earth. Now that we have come to see how the computer can create models, compute maths and facilitate communication, we are starting to see how this one tool will expedite the development of almost every other scientific field we know or can imagine. It would take the irritable genius of Charles Babbage to even give us a glimmer of the potential of the first computers. Even that bright glimmer was barely noticed at the time. Now that so much of our world is illuminated by computer technology, we can scarcely believe we existed without it before. What is most interesting about the development of the computer as we know it is: what sort of geniuses imagined, in what must have seemed like wild dreams, that the computer could be the tool it has become? This web quest is an exploration of the various people who had those dreams, and who brought us to the quickly accelerating future we live in now.

### Tasks

Our objectives in studying Computer Geniuses are the following:  
Get to know the key figures in the brief history of computer technology.  
Be familiar with the timeline of events of computer technology.  
Understand where a particular person fits in to the timeline.  
Our primary task for this unit of study is to select a genius out of those listed on this website and answer these questions for that person.  
Where in the timeline of computer history does this person emerge? Give not only the dates, but also tell us after what significant events in history did this person work?  
This person worked before what significant events in history?  
How did this person contribute to computer history? You must describe what this person developed or invented. Did this person work together with others to make his or her contribution?  
Who were the persons he or she worked with?

### Process

Create a Google Site and give it the title that includes the name of the person you chose.  
1. On the homepage and the first additional page of your website, give the following information:  
When the person was born, and if he/she is dead, then the year the person died.  
Where the person lived and worked in their adult life.  
What the person studied or worked at in order to become part of computer history.  
Any information you can find about the person's family life.  
2. In the next few pages of your website, answer these questions:  
Where in the timeline of computer history does this person emerge?  
What significant events in history happened at the time this person did their work?  
How did this person contribute to computer history?  
You must describe what this person developed or invented. Did this person work together with others to make his or her contribution?  
Who were the persons he or she worked with?  
3. Your website must have:  
4 or more pages on your website  
6 or more images  
correct spelling and grammar  
insert maps, videos, charts or other objects for extra credit  
This project is worth 45 points. Extra credit can be earned for doing a very good job of answering the questions in the second part of the presentation and adding features like charts, maps or videos (up to 5 pts.)  
Your website is due on April 26. Use the suggested websites provided on this web quest to locate reliable information about your person. You may also use reliable web sources and the library database.

### Evaluation

Each presentation must have:  
12 slides  
Correct grammar and spelling  
at least 6 images  
a title slide  
an ending slide  
The slide show must provide full answers to the questions posed in the process section of this web quest.

Category and Score	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Very Good	Exemplary	Score
Student read and followed detailed instructions regarding the assignment.	Student is missing several key details because he or she did not read the instructions carefully.	Students basically followed instructions at a minimal level.	Student read instructions carefully and made an obvious effort to do all tasks.	Student read the instructions carefully. He or she not only followed the letter of the instructions, but attempted to fully answer every aspect of the questions included in the Task.	
Use of suggested resources, and careful evaluation of any additional resources.	Students made no effort to use the suggested resources.	Student made an effort to use the suggested websites linked to this web quest.	Student used suggested websites carefully to locate reliable information.	Student used suggested websites and located lots of relevant information there. Students also located resources referred to on websites and mined further information there.	
				Total Score	

## Conclusion

Look at the article about How Geniuses Work. Read through until you find the part where the author concludes that "Usually, a genius's work changes the way people view the world or the field in which the work took place." The very next sentence states "in other words.." what? In a Google document with the title "geniuses" and your name, please tell me what the author states "in other words." Now, one more question: By the definition of genius used in this article, is the person you studied a genius? Please explain why or why not.

## Teacher Page

This web quest is meant to serve as a small unit on Computer History included in a 7th grade Computer Skills class. I believe that this web quest could be used in a Science class, English Language Arts class, or a Social Studies class. I plan to follow up this unit with a unit about the Human Brain. In the human brain unit, we talk about learning styles, right-brain versus left-brain and how the teenage brain differs from the adult brain. This leads quite nicely into a discussion about artificial intelligence.

### Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

### Credits

Most of the inspiration for this web quest came from the Computer History Museum webpage:

<http://www.computerhistory.org/education/educators/#downloads>, especially the materials provided for Educators.

### Other