

Elon Musk: Innovator and Tech Guru

The 21st century is all about innovation. Technology is progressing at an unprecedented rate and the way we live is changing along with it. When historians look back on the early 21st century, they will identify a handful of people who embodied the supremacy of technology. Elon Musk will undoubtedly feature prominently on this list.

Memory questions:

What century are we currently living in?

The 21st century.

Other questions:

Find an adjective that we use to refer to something that has never happened before.

Unprecedented

Do you know what “prominently” means?

Obviously, or in a way that stands out.

Find a noun that means a state of having power.

Supremacy

Global Citizen

Many people are surprised to learn that Elon Musk was born and raised in Pretoria, South Africa. He had a difficult childhood, with his parents separating when he was 9 years old. As an adult, Elon has become estranged from his father. He moved to Canada when he was 17 and then to the United States of America. Currently, he sits quite high on a number of global rankings. His net worth, currently around 93 billion dollars, makes him the world’s 5th richest person. Forbes rated him the most innovative leader of 2019. And his time as

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Tesla makes him the longest standing CEO of an automotive company.

Memory questions:

Where was Elon Musk born?

Pretoria, South Africa

Do you know someone in Pretoria, South Africa?

Open answer.

In what year was he rated the most innovative person?

2019

Other questions:

Find an adjective that means “separated” or “disconnected”.

Estranged

What does it mean if something or someone is “innovative”?

Creative, able to generate new ideas

What does the acronym CEO stand for?

Chief Executive Officer

Tesla, Inc.

This automotive company is perhaps what most people associate with Elon Musk. It’s an interesting quirk of history that one of his greatest achievements would involve a company named after someone as eccentric and brilliant as him. Tesla Incorporated was founded in 2003 and named for Nikola Tesla, the Serbian inventor and scientist who contributed more than anyone else to the development of electrical technology. Like Musk, Tesla was no ordinary man. It’s fitting that his name should be attached to a company that makes electric cars. Tesla, Inc. is rapidly changing how we think about transport and energy use. Who knows - by the time you are old enough to learn to drive, it may well be in an electrical vehicle!

Memory questions:

When was Tesla Incorporated established?

2003

What connection does the writer make between Nikola Tesla and Elon Musk?

They are both innovative and brilliant people.

Other questions:

Find a phrase that means a funny or strange fact in history.

Quirk of history.

Do you know someone you could describe as “eccentric”? Is this a good or a bad thing?

Open answer: eccentric can be used negatively or positively depending on context.

Find an adverb that means “quickly”.

Rapidly

SpaceX

But Musk’s most interesting project – outlandish or prophetic, depending on your point of view – is space exploration. In 2002, he founded Space Exploration Technologies Corporation (SpaceX) to pursue the vision of making space travel cheaper and perhaps even colonizing Mars. In May 2020, SpaceX sent a manned craft into orbit and docked it at the International Space Station (ISS). Whether or not humans end up farming on Mars, Elon Musk has revived an entire generation’s enthusiasm for space travel. Great things tend to happen when people have their eyes focused upward. Who knows what the future might bring?

Memory questions:

Name two of the aims of SpaceX.

Colonizing Mars and making space travel cheaper.

How has this company affected the way people think about space travel?

It has made people interested in it again.

Other questions:

Find an adjective that means “very strange”.

Outlandish

Do you know any synonyms for “enthusiasm”?

Excitement, desire, interest

X Æ A-12

Much like Nikola Tesla, Elon Musk doesn't leave his eccentricity at the office. He recently named his youngest child “X Æ A-12”. The pronunciation is something like “eks ash A twelve”. The first letter is simply the letter “X” and the second one, which is a combination of “a” and “e”, is actually a letter in several Scandinavian languages. In those languages, it is referred to as “ash”. The “A-12” refers to the Lockheed A-12 “archangel”, which is a military aircraft. Publicity stunt? Maybe. But there's no doubt that Elon Musk represents our age, in which tradition and stability are giving way to innovation and uncertainty. We are certainly living in interesting times.

Memory questions:

What was the inspiration for the A-12 in the child's name?

The A-12 aircraft which was the precursor to the SR-71 Blackbird.

What do you think of this child's name?

Open answer

Other questions:

What part of speech is “eccentricity”?

Abstract noun.

Find two other words of this part of speech in the last paragraph.

Uncertainty, stability, tradition, innovation, combination.