# THE HISTORY OF CARS

People began trying to build cars as early as the 1700s. In this time, engines ran on steam. Trains ran on steam engines, but steam engines did not work very well for cars. By the late 1800s, inventors got to work trying to make cars that would work well enough to use every day.

Once cars were ready to be bought, they were mostly bought by wealthy people who drove them for fun. Doctors sometimes bought cars because they were more reliable than horses. (Remember, this was back when doctors came to peoples' houses!) In 1908, the Ford Motor Company invented the Model T, a reliable car that was more affordable to the average person. The Model T became the most popular car in America, and soon it became common for families to own a car.

Many other companies began using the mass-production system that had been successful for Ford, and soon cars were everywhere. Cars began to take on many different styles suited to different customers' needs. There were many different options to choose from, too, from color and shape to "creature comforts" like radios and air conditioning

Though they were at first seen as an American invention, by the middle of the 20th century, companies based in countries like Germany and Japan began improving on American designs and creating their own original ideas for cars. By 1980, Japan was the world's leading car maker.

Now, we are looking to change cars yet again. Though gasoline engines were a breakthrough, fumes from gasoline engines can be harmful to the environment. Car companies now make cars that can run on a combination of gas and electricity, or just electricity, to help keep the environment safe.

Cars didn't just change the way we travel, they changed American culture to the core. The popularity of cars brought communities together for the first time – the ease and speed at which people could travel from the country to the city changed the way we live, work, and spend our free time.

1. Why do you think a doctor would want to own a car in the early 1900s?

_____

_____

2. Why was the Ford Model T so popular?

_____

_____

3. In your own words, describe how cars helped bring different communities together.

_____

_____