

Quiz A: RI.4.1

Read the passage. Then answer the question below.

Before There Were Smartphones

- 1 Since its invention, the telephone has become very important to American culture. Telephones have even changed our language. Someone who wants to talk to you might say “Give me a ring.” If you misunderstand someone, you might say “Our lines are crossed.” When people slack off, they might be criticized as “just phoning it in.”
- 2 Recently, many people have replaced their telephones with smartphones. Like a telephone, a smartphone can call people from a distance. However, it can do many other things as well. A smartphone is a camera that takes pictures and videos. It has speakers that play music and a screen that plays video. It has a keyboard that people use to type e-mails and text messages. It is a computer that people use to access the Internet.
- 3 Today, technology changes very quickly. Every few months a new smartphone seems to appear in stores. In contrast, for most of its history, the telephone changed at a slower pace. Yet each new phone has had the power to amaze people—beginning with the first telephone, patented by Alexander Graham Bell in 1876.

Alexander Graham Bell

- 4 Alexander Graham Bell was born in Scotland in 1847. From a young age, he was fascinated by sounds. When his mother lost her hearing, Bell learned to speak in low tones close to her head. He thought she could hear him through the vibrations of his voice. As a result, Bell realized the human voice sent messages as sound waves.
- 5 Bell became a speech specialist who worked with deaf people. In the 1870s, he experimented with electricity to send voice messages. After years of effort, Bell and his assistant, Thomas Watson, created a device that could send and receive multiple messages at the same time. This first practical form of the telephone used electrical signals to transmit, or send, messages over a wire. These wires were installed as telephone lines.
- 6 The first telephone completely transformed communication. It offered a way for people to speak instantly, even if they were far apart. In 1915, Bell and Watson made the first coast-to-coast telephone call in the United States: from San Francisco, California, to New York City. This call used the longest phone line in the world at that time. It stretched across 130,000 poles and contained 2,500 tons of copper wire.

Operators and Exchanges

- 7 If you watch movies or TV shows from the first half of the 20th century, you might notice something unusual. When characters use the telephone, they do not directly call the person they want to talk to. Instead, picking up their phone connects them with a telephone operator. The operator sits in front of a large switchboard with a jack for every phone number in the area. When the operator connects the jacks for different numbers, the people with those numbers can talk to each other.

