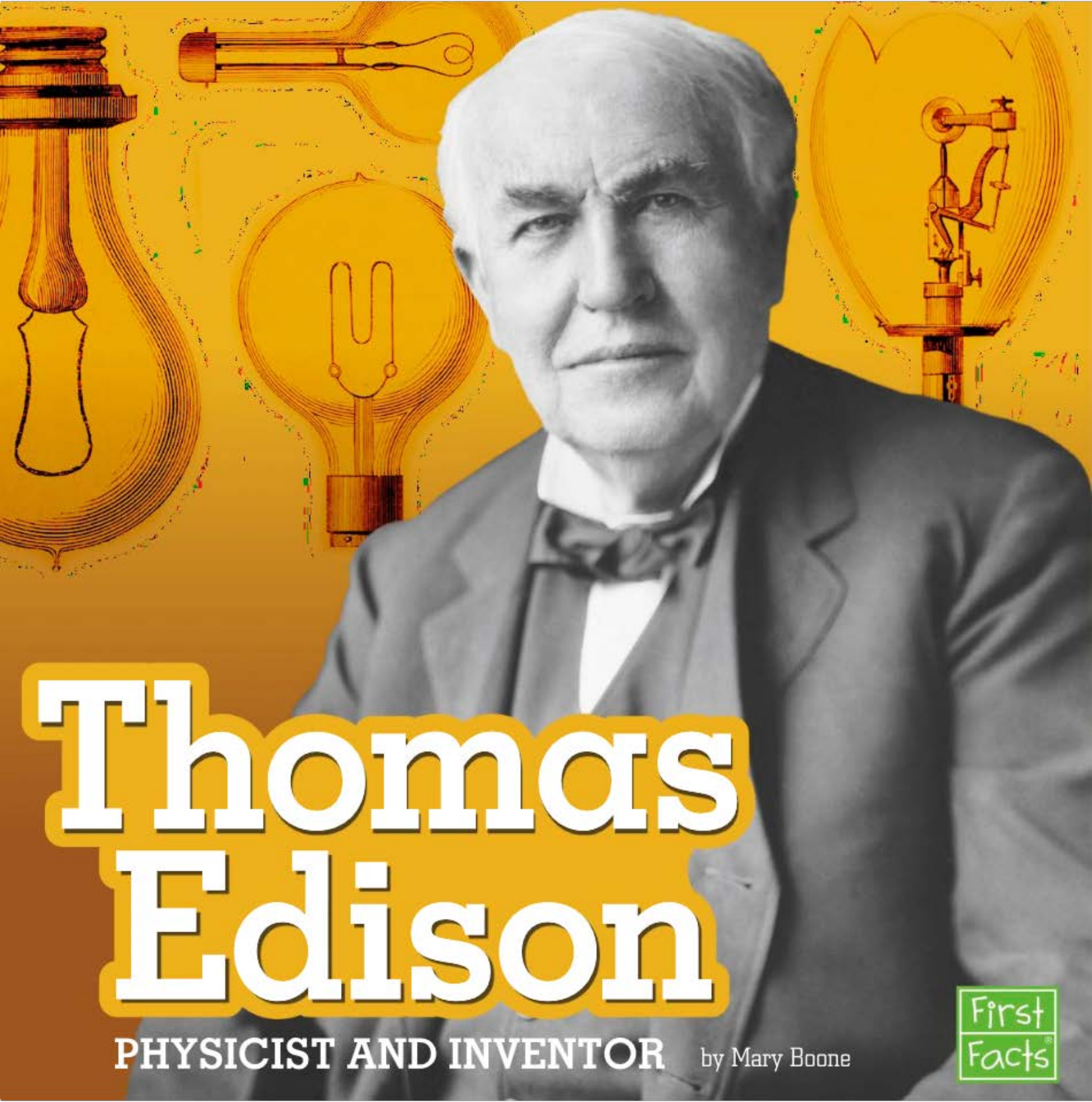




Thomas Edison

PHYSICIST AND INVENTOR

by Mary Boone



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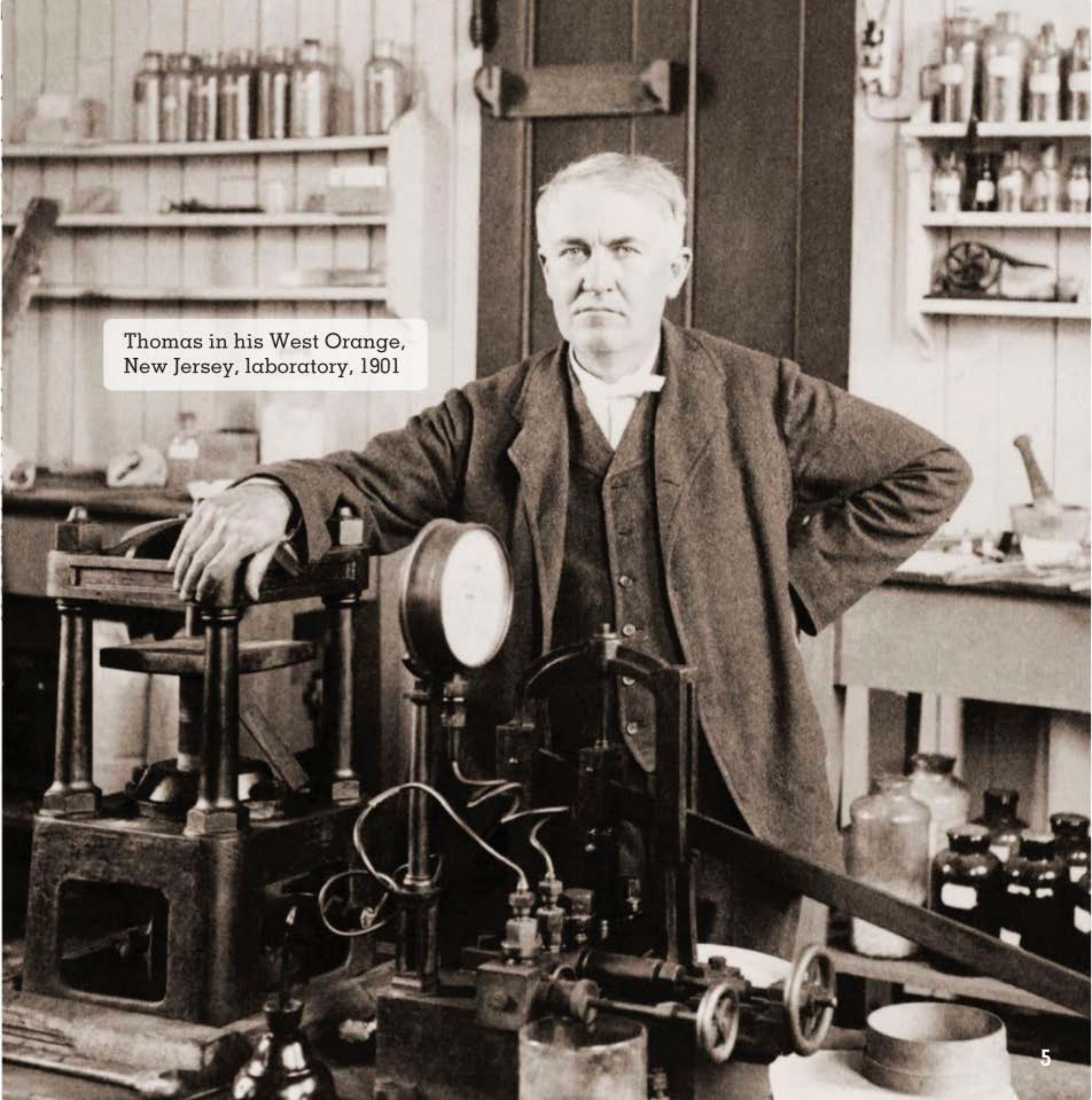
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CHAPTER 1

Young Edison

Have you ever turned on a light or watched a video? If so, your life has been touched by the **genius** of Thomas Alva Edison. He invented things we still use today. His inventions have changed over time. Thomas Edison's ideas are still seen almost everywhere.

genius—remarkable talent or intelligence

A black and white photograph of Thomas Edison in his laboratory. He is standing behind a large piece of scientific equipment, which appears to be a dynamometer or a similar device used for measuring electrical power. The equipment has a large circular gauge on the left and various mechanical components. Edison is wearing a dark suit and a white shirt with a bow tie. He has his right hand on the equipment and his left hand on his hip. In the background, there are shelves filled with numerous glass bottles, likely containing chemicals or reagents. The overall setting is a well-equipped laboratory from the early 20th century.

Thomas in his West Orange,
New Jersey, laboratory, 1901

Thomas was born February 11, 1847, in Milan, Ohio. When he was 12, he started selling newspapers and snacks on a train. As a teen he saved a toddler from a runaway train. The child's father thanked Thomas by teaching him to use a **telegraph**. This sparked Thomas' interest in **communications**.

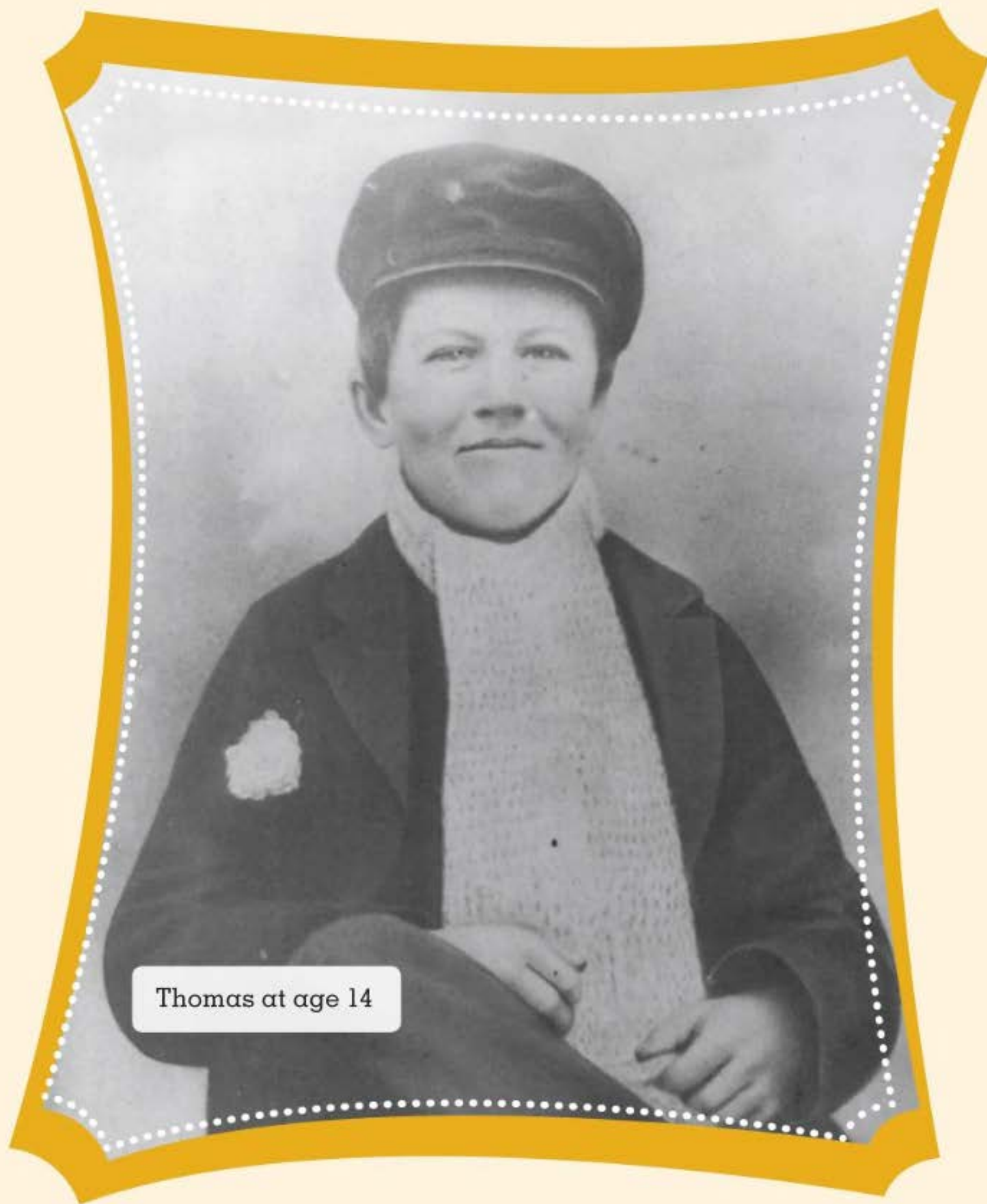


Homeschooled

Thomas did not do well in school. He asked a lot of questions. This annoyed his teacher. The teacher said Thomas' brains were "addled" or scrambled. This angered Thomas' mother. She decided to teach him at home. Years later Thomas said that his mother "was the most enthusiastic champion a boy ever had."

telegraph—a machine that uses electronic signals to send messages over long distances

communications—the ways of sending information to people



Thomas at age 14

Curiosity Leads to Invention

Thomas started working as a telegraph operator when he was 15. In his spare time, he enjoyed taking things apart to see how they worked. His curiosity led him to **patent** his first invention when he was 20 — a vote counting machine. The machine worked, but it never caught on.

patent—a legal document giving an inventor sole rights to make and sell an item he or she invented



Glossary

communications (kuh-myoo-nuh-KAY-shuhnz)—the ways of sending information to people

cylinder (SI-luhn-duhr)—a shape with flat, circular ends and sides shaped like a tube

engineering (en-juh-NEER-ing)—using science to design and build things

genius (JEE-nee-uhss) remarkable talent or intelligence

Model T (MOD-uhl TEE)—an early type of automobile made by the Ford Motor Company in 1908

patent (PAT-uhnt)—a legal document giving an inventor sole rights to make and sell an item he or she invented

peephole (PEEP-hohl)—a small opening through which you can look

physicist (FIZ-uh-sist)—scientist who studies physics

stock (STOK)—a share of a company that can be bought, sold, or traded

telegraph (TEL-uh-graf)—a machine that uses electronic signals to send messages over long distances

Critical Thinking Questions

1. How do you think light bulbs have changed since Thomas Edison's day?
2. Thomas was good at marketing his inventions. Pretend you are Thomas in the 1890s. How would you advertise your new movie camera and viewer?
3. Would Thomas have been as successful as he was if he lived today? Why or why not?

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