

THEY LAUGHED AT GALILEO: HOW THE GREAT INVENTORS PROVED THEIR CRITICS WRONG

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Publisher: Skyhorse Publishing, NY, 2015

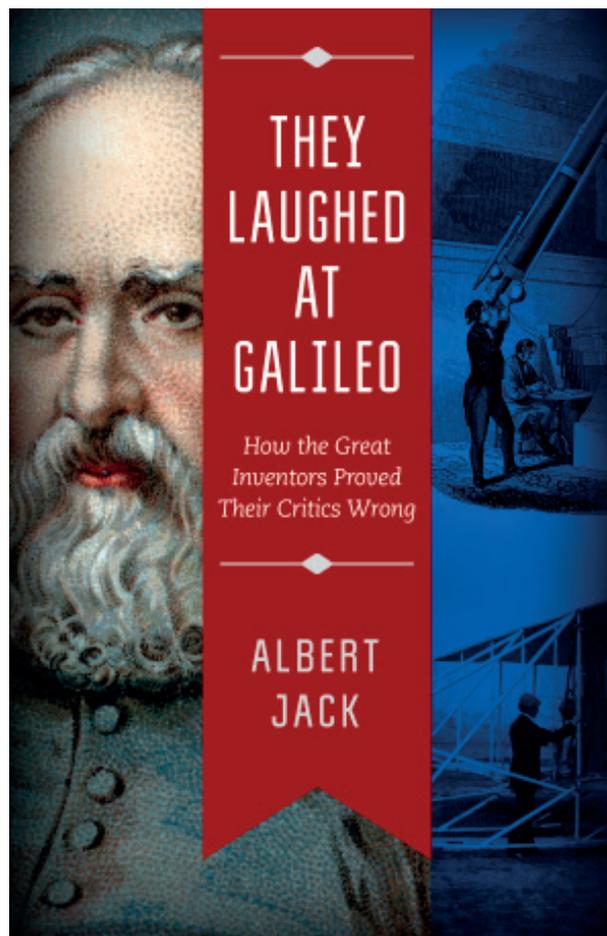
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School libraries will have many choices when considering books about inventors and inventions and parents may wish to encourage their children's inventiveness by stories about past inventors. With the current emphasis on STEM, books about invention may well be of particular value. This book, *They laughed at Galileo: How the great inventors proved their critics wrong* has both positive and negative features.

On the negative side, I was horrified when I found the following two sentences in the first pages of the introduction to this book. They were 'Way back to when man first learned to walk upright and began communicating with each other by pointing and shouting, we can find the earliest examples of this' and 'Man has programmed its brain to learn new and better ways of doing things.' The basic grammatical errors and confusion of thought made me expect the remainder of the book to be of poor quality.

Fortunately, I found that I was mistaken. Apart from the introduction, the book is well-written, though in a light-hearted style, and should prove interesting to many students. The theme is inventors and their discoveries consisting of almost one hundred stories, which are collected under nine themes. The themes are science and technology, food, popular culture, glorious failures, business and industry, accidental inventions, suppressed inventions, ridiculous inventions and eponymous inventions.

Books about inventors tend to repeat well known stories. This book certainly repeats the comparatively standard stories about Archimedes (The 'Eureka' moment-pp. 57-59), Galileo (the telescope and his persecution-pp. 6-12), Sir Humphrey Davy (Miner's lamp-pp. 245-246) and several other familiar stories. However, there are many stories that I have not seen before plus new angles on familiar stories. I found some stories such as the discovery of saccharin to lack many of the details that add interest to the story.



Students may well be amazed by the number of discoveries that were made as the result of accidents (serendipity). The author only lists seven accidental inventions, though some accidental discoveries, such as Velcro, vulcanised rubber and the Post-It note, are categorised under business and industry inventions and some such as the accidental discovery of quinine, Super Glue and X-rays do not get mentioned at all.

Overall this book may well appeal to some students; it is relatively inexpensive (A\$17.99) for the school library. Additionally, the book, *They laughed at Galileo: How the great inventors proved their critics wrong*, could provide teachers with many stories of inventions that would add spice and interest to STEM lessons.