

The History of Gum

Fascinating facts about your favorite treat!

Got the urge to chew? Maybe you should go out to the garage and rip off a nice chunk of car tire. Not your idea of a tasty treat? A nice chunk of chewing gum is probably more like it. But there is a link between car tires and chewing gum, as a quick trip through the halls of gum history will show you.

The history of gum begins thousands of years ago, when prehistoric men and women chewed on lumps of tree *resin* (a sticky brownish substance that oozes from trees). The ancient Greeks chewed on resin, and so did Native Americans. Early settlers to New England loved to chew too. Gum made from spruce tree resin was a popular treat among early Americans.

The first big breakthrough in modern gum technology came in 1869, when a young New Yorker named Thomas Adams began experimenting with *chicle* (resin from sapodilla trees). He thought he could combine chicle with rubber and invent a new material for making tires.

His experiments were disastrous, but then Adams had another idea. If people couldn't drive on his chicle, maybe they could chew on it! Before long, Adams New York No. 1 chicle gum was all the rage.

By the late 1800s, the gum business was booming. A new product called Dentyne came out, promising to help "dental hygiene."

Around 1900, an inventive gum maker coated small pieces of chicle gum with candy and Chiclets were born.

The first bubble gum, called Blibber-Blubber, was invented in 1906, but it never sold. It was so sticky that if it popped on your skin, it was impossible to remove!

It was in 1928 that Walter Diemer accidentally invented Double Bubble, the first successful bubble gum. Diemer was an accountant who liked to experiment with new gum recipes in his spare time. One day, without specifically trying to, he happened to hit upon the perfect bubble gum recipe. He added pink dye because pink was the only color left on the shelf, then carried a five-pound lump of the gum to a local grocery store. It sold out that afternoon.

So, what will "pop" up next in the ever-evolving history of gum? That's something for you to chew on!



Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Read “The History of Gum.” Then fill in the circle next to the best answer for each question.

1. This article is mostly about

- A. how gum is made.
- B. why chewing gum is better than chewing tires.
- C. the invention of Chiclets.
- D. the history of gum.

2. Blibber-Blubber was unsuccessful because

- E. it was too sticky.
- F. it tasted bad.
- G. people thought blowing bubbles was rude.
- H. the pieces were too big.

3. Chicle is made from the resin of _____ trees.

- I. spruce
- J. sapodilla
- K. maple
- L. chiclet

4. Why did Thomas Adams decide to use his chicle to make gum instead of tires?

- M. He thought he could make more money from gum than tires.
- N. There was a shortage of rubber.
- O. His efforts to invent tires were a failure.
- P. A fortuneteller advised him to.

5. When did people first chew tree resin?

- Q. thousands of years ago
- R. no one knows
- S. 1869
- T. 1928

6. Which of the following happened last?

- U. Thomas Adams invented chicle gum.
- V. Bubble gum was invented.
- W. Chiclets were invented.
- X. Ancient Greeks chewed tree resin.

Write It Out!

Why do you think chewing gum is so popular?
Ask some friends and family members who chew gum why they love to chew it. Then write a paragraph that includes three reasons. For each reason, write supporting sentences or additional details.

ANSWERS

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1. D 2. E 3. J 4. O 5. Q 6. V

Write It Out! Answers will vary.