Name _____

A Simple Invention That Changed the World

Four hundred years ago, Galileo Galilei was a math professor in Italy. He changed the world with a simple invention called the “optik tube,” or telescope.

His simple version of what we now call the telescope was built out of two lenses inside a tube, which allowed him to see 10 times farther than with his naked eye. While not very powerful compared to telescopes today, it was considered amazing during the 1600s when the best telescope could only let you see twice as far. This allowed him to see things that nobody had seen before.

What most people don’t know is the professor had not created the instrument to look up into the skies. He was making it as a way to earn more money by selling it to the authorities as a “spyglass” to track pirates who were hijacking their trade ships.

But when Galileo pointed his invention up to the skies, he made some amazing discoveries—and most importantly, he provided evidence that all planets revolved around the Sun using his telescope. However, these discoveries brought the brilliant mathematician very little fame or money. That is because the leaders of the Catholic Church were not ready to accept such ideas. He was warned to stop spreading his views around. When Galileo continued his research, he was placed under house arrest. This is how he spent the rest of his life until he passed away in 1642. Today, the Italian is known as a genius and the father of modern observational astronomy.