

[INTRO]

IN 1791, THE HMS PANDORA WAS RETURNING FROM HER EXPEDITION IN THE PACIFIC, WHEN DISASTER STRUCK. AS THEY WERE SAILING, THEY BECAME STUCK IN A CYCLONE AND THEIR SHIP WAS SMASHED INTO THE NEARBY CORAL REEF. THE SHIP SANK IMMEDIATELY AND ALONG WITH THE MAJORITY OF HER CREW, HER TREASURES WENT TO THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN WITH HER. HER VAST TREASURES RANGED FROM PRICELESS GEMS TO BAGS OF GOLD, BUT THE MOST INVALUABLE OF THEM ALL, THE FIRST EVER MECHANICAL PENCIL.

THIS FIRST PENCIL WAS MUCH DIFFERENT THAN THE ONES WE KNOW TODAY. FIRST, THE PENCIL WAS NOT SPRING-POWERED, SO THE LEAD HAD TO BE MANUALLY ADJUSTED. SECOND, THE LEAD HAD TO BE SHARPENED ONCE THE PENCIL ITSELF WAS ADJUSTED

THE MECHANICAL PENCIL WAS THEN ALMOST FORGOTTEN ABOUT, UNTIL EIGHTEEN TWENTY TWO, WHEN THE FIRST PATENT FOR A REFILLABLE PENCIL WITH A LEAD-PROPELLING MECHANISM WAS ISSUED.

AFTER A FEW ROCKY BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS, THE HOLDER OF THAT ORIGINAL PATENT, SAMPSON MORDAN, BEGAN PRODUCING THESE PENCILS UNDER THE NAME OF SAMPSON MORDAN AND CO. IN BRITAIN. LEADING UP TO THE NEXT MAJOR OVERHAUL OF THE MECHANICAL PENCIL IN EIGHTEEN SEVENTY SEVEN, OVER ONE HUNDRED SIXTY PATENTS WERE PASSED FOR A VARIETY OF IMPROVEMENTS. THIS OVERHAUL CAME IN THE FORM OF PLACING

A SIMPLE SPRING INSIDE THE MECHANICAL PENCIL, MAKING ADJUSTING THE LEAD MUCH EASIER

[PENCIL CLICKING]

AROUND THIS SAME TIME IN THE UNITED STATES, A YOUNG ENGINEER INVENTED THE “EVERSHARP” PENCIL, WHICH HAD LEAD THAT NO LONGER REQUIRED CONSTANT SHARPENING. THESE TWO INNOVATIONS CAME TOGETHER TO CREATE THE MODERN PENCIL THAT WE KNOW TODAY.

[KEYBOARD TYPING]

MECHANICAL PENCILS IN THE DIGITAL AGE HAVE EVOLVED INTO SOMETHING TRULY SPECIAL. THEY CAN BE CUSTOMIZED IN SO MANY DIFFERENT WAYS AND HAVE A VARIETY OF USES. HOWEVER, THE MECHANICAL PENCIL ISN'T CUTTING EDGE TECHNOLOGY ANYMORE. TODAY, SOME THEORIZE THAT THE PENCIL WILL GO EXTINCT, WITH NEW TECHNOLOGIES SPREADING TO ALMOST EVERY CORNER OF THE GLOBE. EVEN WITHIN CARMEL HIGH SCHOOL, WE ARE SEEING IPADS, SMART PENS, AND EVEN OUR OWN INDEX FINGERS REPLACING THE PENCIL IN DAILY STUDENT LIFE. ON THE BRIGHT SIDE, THE PENCIL WILL NOT GO DOWN WITHOUT A FIGHT. PENCIL SALES GREW SIX POINT EIGHT PERCENT IN TWENTY THIRTEEN, WITH THE WORLD'S LARGEST MANUFACTURER MAKING ONE POINT FIVE BILLION PENCILS. IN ADDITION, PENCILS WILL BE A MAINSTAY IN STANDARDIZED TESTING FOR AT LEAST THE NEXT TWENTY YEARS. MECHANICAL PENCILS HAVE BEEN THE WEAPON OF CHOICE FOR THE WRITER, THE PHILOSOPHER, AND EVEN THE INVENTOR FOR CENTURIES, AND IT

WILL NOT BREAK IN THE FACE OF OPPOSITION. THAT WAS A BRIEF HISTORY OF
THE MECHANICAL PENCIL. THIS HAS BEEN BEN GOLDBERG FOR W-H-J-E, FOR
MORE STORIES LIKE THIS, GO TO W-H-J-E DOT COM