Entrepreneurs: Bill Gates

By Biography.com Editors and A+E Networks, adapted by Newsela staff on 08.01.16

Word Count 441

Synopsis: Bill Gates became interested in computers when he was a teenager. He helped build the world's biggest software company, Microsoft. He is one of the richest men in the world and uses some of that money to help others.

Early Life And School

Bill Gates was born in Seattle, Washington, in 1955.

At school, a computer company provided computer time for the students. Gates would spend lots of his time on the computer. He even wrote a tic-tac-toe program.

At school, he met Paul Allen. They both loved computers.

In 1970, they came up with Traf-o-Data. It was a computer program that followed traffic. The two wanted to start their own company, but Gates’ parents wanted him go to college.

Beginning His Career

Gates went to Harvard University. His first year, he spent more time in the computer lab than in class.
Allen showed Gates a magazine story. It was about the Altair 8800 minicomputer. They were fascinated by what the computer could do. Together, they wrote software for it and showed it to the Altair company. The company gave Allen a job. Gates left Harvard to work with him. That made his parents unhappy. In 1975, the two formed a company called Micro-Soft. The name was a blend of "micro-computer" and "software."

In 1979, Gates moved Microsoft to Seattle. He became the leader of the company. Microsoft earned around $2.5 million in 1979. Gates was only 23 years old.

**Rise Of Company, Microsoft Windows**

In 1980, International Business Machines (IBM) was looking for software that would run its new personal computer (PC). Gates told the company that Microsoft could help. The problem was Microsoft did not have the program IBM needed. But Gates was not to be stopped. He bought another program made for different computers. He made the program work for the IBM PC.

By 1983, Microsoft was a big company. Almost half of the world's computers used its software.

In 1985, Microsoft introduced Windows. It made computer screens show words and pictures. Before Windows, computers could only show computer code.

Since 1987, Gates has been one of the top 400 richest people in America.

**Marriage, Family, Charity**

In 1987, Gates met Melinda French, a Microsoft employee. They got married in 1994. They have three children.

Gates decided he should use his money to help others. In 1994, he and his wife started a charity. It helps schools and hospitals around the world.

In 2014, Gates left Microsoft. He wanted to spend more time with the foundation.

Gates is not just one of the greatest businessmen in history. He has received many awards for his work helping people.
Quiz

1. Select the paragraph from "Early Life And School" that BEST shows how Bill Gates became interested in computers.

2. Which sentence from "Rise Of Company, Microsoft Windows" BEST shows that Bill Gates faced challenges in his business?
   
   (A) In 1980, International Business Machines (IBM) was looking for software that would run its new personal computer (PC).
   
   (B) The problem was Microsoft did not have the program IBM needed.
   
   (C) He bought another program made for different computers.
   
   (D) Before Windows, computers could only show computer code.

3. Read the following selection from the section "Rise of Company, Microsoft Windows".

   He bought another program made for different computers. He made the program work for the IBM PC.

   Fill in the blank. A "program" is a...
   
   (A) set of instructions.
   
   (B) presentation.
   
   (C) plan of events.
   
   (D) electronic game.

4. Read the following sentence from "Marriage, Family, Charity."

   In 1994, he and his wife started a charity. It helps schools and hospitals around the world.

   What is the BEST definition of the word "charity" based on the information in the paragraph?
   
   (A) an organization that supports people in need
   
   (B) a place where people go to learn
   
   (C) a program to help sick people
   
   (D) a project to build better schools and hospitals
Answer Key

1. Select the paragraph from "Early Life And School" that BEST shows how Bill Gates became interested in computers.

   **Paragraph 2:**
   At school, a computer company provided computer time for the students. Gates would spend lots of his time on the computer. He even wrote a tic-tac-toe program.

2. Which sentence from "Rise Of Company, Microsoft Windows" BEST shows that Bill Gates faced challenges in his business?

   (A) In 1980, International Business Machines (IBM) was looking for software that would run its new personal computer (PC).

   (B) The problem was Microsoft did not have the program IBM needed.

   (C) He bought another program made for different computers.

   (D) Before Windows, computers could only show computer code.

3. Read the following selection from the section "Rise of Company, Microsoft Windows".

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