

Back to School



Many of the common things all around you at school have fascinating histories. Choose the correct answers.

1. "National School Bus Chrome" yellow—now officially known as "National Glossy School Bus Yellow"—became the standard color for school buses in April 1939, during the first National Conference on School Bus Standards. The educators and auto and industrial engineers in attendance settled on this color because:
 - a) It was the color of the "smiley face," invented for the 1936 FDR presidential campaign as a symbol of optimism, and so an appropriate color to associate with children.
 - b) "Chrome yellow" was a common, long-used color and the paint was therefore inexpensive, a concern for school districts during the Depression.
 - c) It would contrast well in the early morning and in bad weather with the black lettering on the buses.
2. Good pencils that do not crumble or smear use "lead" consisting of ground graphite bound and hardened by mixing it with an additive. American pencil makers did not know how European manufacturers made high-quality pencils until the secret of mixing clay into the graphite was discovered by:
 - a) Benjamin Franklin, who learned the secret while Ambassador to France and brought it back to America in 1785
 - b) Henry David Thoreau, who hit on the idea about 1844, while working in his father's pencil factory in Concord, MA
 - c) John James Audubon, in 1808, when he ran out of paint while sketching wildlife in the Kentucky wilderness. He improvised drawing tools out of materials he found in the woods.
3. State requirements to vaccinate children before attending school first appeared in the mid-to-late 1800s in response to smallpox, but the greatest wave of mandatory immunization policies for schoolchildren arose in the 1960s and 1970s in response to which disease?
 - a) Measles
 - b) Polio
 - c) Diphtheria

4. Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches first became popular:

- a) Around 1900, when promoted as a healthy substitute for meat sandwiches.
- b) During the First World War, when the U.S. Army began feeding its soldiers peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, aware of their nutritional value.
- c) During the Great Depression, when the Works Projects Administration (WPA) served thousands of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to schoolchildren through its nutrition project.

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