

Social Game Changer: The Automobile



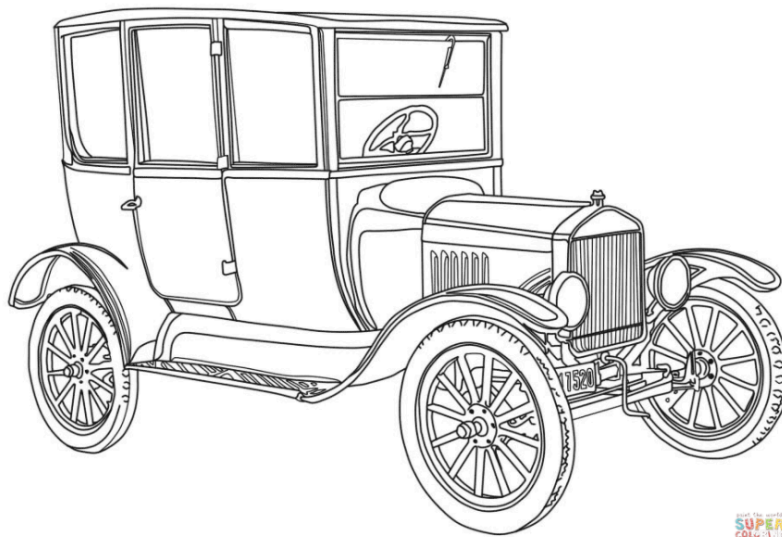
Have you ever heard the expression “a picture is worth a thousand words”? If you were going to tell a story about the photograph on the left, what would it be? What questions would you want to ask? How many words would you need to tell the story?

Many people would say that the automobile is one of the greatest inventions in human history. History credits Henry Ford and his Model T with launching big changes in society and technology that began in the early 1900s. Before the Model T, cars were for the wealthy. Henry Ford designed the Model T to be a car that everyday people could buy. It was manufactured from 1908 to

1927. And between 1913 and 1927, his company made and sold more than 15 million. No other car manufacturer even came close to that!

Automobiles changed the way people lived, worked, and even played. They gave people more personal freedom to find jobs, places to live, services, and even ways to spend their free time. With all that progress, the automobile also brought harm to the environment. Exhaust from gas-burning cars polluted the skies. And undeveloped land was used to build highways and related industries. The automobile also changed the lives of women during the same time Ford made the Model T. Women were gaining access to education and college and new types of jobs. And when men went to war in 1917 during World War I, women assumed many roles that had been for men. They went to work at factory jobs that had been held by men and they became the heads of their families. Many began to drive the family car. At the same time, women and men were supporting a change to the U.S. Constitution that would give women the right to vote. They drove cars decorated with banners “votes for women”. And they gave speeches from their cars. In 1916 two women even made a cross-country trip from New York to California to get people to support women’s right to vote. That’s not something women would have done back in that day!

Now take a look at the photo above. Describe what you see. What do you notice first? What do you think is happening in the photo? When do you think the photo was taken? What questions would you like to ask to know more? The photo shows a woman named Fannie Wilson in a Ford Model T. It was taken around 1915 when she was about 34 years old. Fannie Wilson grew up in Duplin County, N.C. and attended the Baptist University for Women. Today that is Meredith College in Raleigh. Ms. Wilson lived in Warsaw where she had a long career working for the post office. Write a caption for the photo!



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Photograph credit: Fannie Wilson in Ford Model T c. 1915, Item PhC_4_1_16, Fannie Wilson Photographic Collection, State Archives of North Carolina