

# Lamplighters: Workers Who Lit the Streets

Reading Worksheet — Level C | [tahricteaches.com](http://tahricteaches.com)

Long ago, before electric lights, cities used **gas lamps** to light their streets at night. These lamps could not turn on by themselves. Special workers called **lamplighters** had to light each lamp by hand every evening. This job was very important because dark streets were dangerous for people walking at night.



Lamplighters worked for the city. They helped everyone feel safe when the sun went down. Their job made it possible for people to walk on dark streets, shop in the evening, and feel protected from crime. Each lamplighter had their own route through the city. They knew exactly where every lamp was located and had to visit each one every single night.

The work was hard. Lamplighters carried a long pole with fire on the end. They walked many miles each evening to light all the lamps on their route. In the morning, they walked the same route again to put out all the fires. They also had to clean the glass around each lamp and fix broken parts. Rain, snow, or wind did not stop them from doing their job.

Being a lamplighter was a steady job that paid fair wages. People in the neighborhood respected lamplighters because they kept everyone safe. The job required workers to be very punctual - they had to light the lamps at exactly the right time each evening. Lamplighters also needed to be strong and healthy because they walked so much every day.

In the 1880s, Thomas Edison invented the electric light bulb. Cities started putting electric lights on their streets instead of gas lamps. Electric lights could be turned on and off from far away, so lamplighters were no longer needed. By 1900, most cities had electric street lights. Today, you can still see old-style lamplighters in a few historic places like London and Charleston, but their job mostly disappeared long ago.

## A. Vocabulary

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|------------------------|---|
| 1. route _____         | a. From an important time in the past       |
| 2. punctual _____      | b. Regular and reliable                     |
| 3. wages _____         | c. Not safe; could cause harm               |
| 4. respect _____       | d. The area where people live nearby        |
| 5. steady _____        | e. Money paid for work                      |
| 6. bulb _____          | f. To think highly of someone               |
| 7. historic _____      | g. A glass object that makes electric light |
| 8. invention _____     | h. Something new that someone creates       |
| 9. dangerous _____     | i. A path that someone follows regularly    |
| 10. neighborhood _____ | j. Always on time                           |

## B. True or False

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1. Lamplighters only worked on sunny days \_\_\_\_
2. Gas lamps could turn on by themselves \_\_\_\_
3. Lamplighters helped make streets safer at night \_\_\_\_
4. Each lamplighter had their own route through the city \_\_\_\_
5. The work was easy and did not require much walking \_\_\_\_
6. Lamplighters were respected by people in their neighborhoods \_\_\_\_
7. Electric lights were invented in the 1780s \_\_\_\_
8. Modern lamplighters still exist in some historic places \_\_\_\_
9. Lamplighters had to be punctual and light lamps at the right time \_\_\_\_

## C. Fill in the Blanks

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**Word Bank:** route, punctual, wages, steady, bulb, dangerous, invention

1. Each lamplighter followed the same \_\_\_\_\_ through the city every night.
2. Dark streets were \_\_\_\_\_ for people walking alone.
3. Edison's light \_\_\_\_\_ changed how cities lit their streets.
4. Lamplighting was a \_\_\_\_\_ job that paid fair money.
5. Workers had to be very \_\_\_\_\_ and light lamps at exactly the right time.

## D. Comprehension Questions

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1. Why did cities need lamplighters before electric lights?
2. What tools did lamplighters use to do their job?
3. How did lamplighters help make cities safer?
4. What happened to lamplighters after electric lights were invented?
5. Where can you still see lamplighters today?

## E. Discussion Questions

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1. Would you like to have the job of a lamplighter? Why or why not?
2. What other old jobs do you know that people don't do anymore?
3. How do you think cities would be different without electric street lights?

# Answer Key

*Lamplighters: Workers Who Lit the Streets — Teacher Reference Only*

**A. Vocabulary:** 1-i, 2-j, 3-e, 4-f, 5-b, 6-g, 7-a, 8-h, 9-c, 10-d

**B. True/False:** 1-F, 2-F, 3-T, 4-T, 5-F, 6-T, 7-F, 8-T, 9-T

**C. Fill Blanks:** 1-route, 2-dangerous, 3-bulb, 4-steady, 5-punctual

**D. Comprehension:**

1. Gas lamps could not turn on by themselves, so workers had to light them by hand every evening.
2. A long pole with fire on the end to light the lamps, and tools to clean glass and fix broken parts.
3. They lit street lamps so people could see at night, which made walking safer and reduced crime.
4. Electric lights could be controlled from far away, so cities no longer needed people to light lamps by hand.
5. In historic places like London and Charleston, where they keep the old tradition alive for tourists.