

Name _____

Date _____

Offspring of a Legend

Being the offspring of a legend is never easy, but some make it look easier than others. Hank Williams, Jr., for instance, put together a very successful country music career that only paled in comparison to that of his legendary father. And Peter and Jane Fonda both became bona fide stars in their own right, though their father, Henry Fonda, clearly had a better career. Some have even surpassed their celebrated fathers' achievements. Barry Bonds certainly was a more productive baseball player than was Bobby Bonds, though Bobby Bonds led the National League in runs scored in 1969. Similarly, Elizabeth I was one of the best monarchs in English history, while her father, Henry VIII, is more famous today for his six wives than he is for his years of ruling England.



Of course, these are all exceptions to the rule. For most, being the son or daughter of a legend is crippling. Such is the case for the son of legendary American automaker and innovator Henry Ford. Edsel Ford was groomed to run the company his father made, the eponymous Ford Motor Company. But Edsel Ford was not his father, a fact of which his father reminded him at every opportunity. For instance, the younger Ford actually preferred cars that were more flashy than those favored by his father, whose famous innovation was the dull but economical Model T, but Henry Ford resented his son's attempts to move Ford forward. Henry had made Edsel president of the company in 1919, but Edsel's attempts to modernize Ford and make nicer looking cars were overruled by his father, who continued to rule the company behind the scenes, even after Edsel's death in 1943 (Henry would die in 1947). Thus, the Ford Motor Company was slow to introduce Edsel's suggestions, including a more powerful engine, the V-8, and a separate line of cars, which eventually became the Model A of 1927.

As if overruling Edsel's decisions were not enough, Henry was actively hostile and deprecatory toward his son. Though Henry had made Edsel president, Henry had no interest in relinquishing control. Instead, he used the presidency to manipulate shareholders in the company to sell their shares to Henry so that he could more firmly control the company. Yes, Henry attempted to decrease the value of Ford stock for his own personal gain and used his poor son for his ruse! Worst, Henry would publicly humiliate Edsel, telling him to shut up in front of Edsel's subordinates on several occasions. Once, Henry even fired an entire department (accounting) just to spite Edsel, who had begun work on new office space to provide all departments with more space.

Throughout Edsel's reign at Ford, the company's sales paled to Chevrolet's, which became the best-selling automobile manufacturers in the United States. And though Edsel was successful at strengthening overseas production for Ford, saving the stylish Lincoln line of automobiles, and modernizing the company's cars by adapting modern styling and the hydraulic brakes standard on other American cars (his suggestion to add better brakes was seen by Henry Ford as a knock on his cars and earned Edsel one of the aforementioned "shut up" shouts), Edsel Ford's time at Ford Motor Company was viewed as a failure, as the company lost its grip on the American consumer.

Today he is best remembered as the namesake for one of the biggest business blunders in history: the Edsel line of Fords designed in 1957 and named to honor Edsel. The line of cars was supposed to broadly appeal to all American consumers as the car of the future, yet the Ford Motor Company clearly misidentified what Americans were supposed to want in cars, and the committee that designed the cars ended up losing Ford millions of dollars. Today, the concept of "Edsel" is

synonymous in business circles with any product designed by a corporate culture out of touch with the consuming public. Thus, poor Edsel Ford could never escape the overshadowing presence of his father in his life and then had his name tarnished posthumously by the company he helped to save.

1) The people listed in paragraph 1 are used as examples of

- A. children whose parents treated them poorly once they became adults
- B. children of famous people who struggled to escape the shadow of their parents
- C. children of famous industrialists who were able to surpass their parents' legacies
- D. children whose parents had far more successful careers than the children did
- E. children of famous people who have made names for themselves

2) The first sentence of paragraph 2 does which of the following?

- I. It redirects the passage to its main subject.
- II. It anticipates a potential objection from a reader.
- III. It points out that the examples listed in paragraph 1 were counterexamples.
- IV. It emphasizes the conflicting relationship between the author and his or her subject.

- A. I only
- B. I and II only
- C. I and III only
- D. II, III, and IV only
- E. II and IV only

3) Based on its use in paragraph 2, the word **eponymous** could best be used to describe which of the following?

- A. a sports franchise that was named by fans as part of a naming contest
- B. a restaurant named for the region in France in which the cuisine originated
- C. a corporate conglomerate named by the fusing of two smaller companies' names
- D. a sitcom named after the famous comedian who stars in it
- E. a book named after a line from a famous poetic work

4) According to the passage, how many years passed between Edsel Ford becoming the president of the Ford Motor Company and the introduction of the Model A?

- A. 2 years
- B. 4 years
- C. 6 years
- D. 8 years
- E. 10 years

- 5) The author most likely ends the passage by discussing the Edsel line of Fords in order to
- A. conclude the author's argument about the relationship between Edsel and Henry Ford
 - B. prove that Edsel Ford eventually was able to get his designs into production
 - C. refute the notion that Edsel Ford's influence on the Ford Motor Company ended with his death in 1943
 - D. emphasize that, even in his death, Edsel Ford has not gotten the treatment he deserves
 - E. suggest that Edsel Ford is viewed as an embarrassment by the Ford Motor Company, even today
- 6) According to the author, Edsel Ford's contributions to the Ford company included each of the following EXCEPT
- A. the creation of a more powerful engine
 - B. the saving of the Lincoln line of cars
 - C. the introduction of the Edsel line
 - D. the development of the Model A
 - E. the strengthening of overseas production
- 7) The author's attitude toward Edsel Ford can best be characterized as
- A. sympathetic
 - B. disinterested
 - C. condemnatory
 - D. envious
 - E. suspicious
- 8) The author argues that Henry Ford treated Edsel Ford
- A. candidly
 - B. maladroitly
 - C. congenially
 - D. equitably
 - E. maliciously
- 9) The author says that "for most, being the son or daughter of a legend is crippling." Do you believe that this is true? Why or why not?
