

What Am I?

Celebrating a mystery item



Print a "What Am I?" [sign](#). Add a "clue" in the text box, print, and post on your bulletin board. Post a different clue every day or so and see who can identify the mystery item. Then plan a "What Am I?" discussion and other related activities.

Do you know what I am? Here are some clues:

1. I am named after a French army officer and explorer.
2. My company was officially founded in 1902.
3. My founder learned precision engineering during the time he spent working for gun manufacturer Samuel Colt.
4. By 1924, I came in more than 500 color combinations.
5. My company's crest is based on the founder's family coat of arms.
6. In 1999, night vision became available in my products.
7. The names of my first two products were the Runabout and the Tonneau.
8. My founder moved on to start the Lincoln Motor Company.
9. There is a ranch in Texas where I am displayed like artwork.
10. I was the first car to have a thermostat.
11. I was the first car to be manufactured with airbags.
12. My company's first SUV was introduced in 1999.
13. In 1949, my company produced its millionth car.
14. My 1950s Dagmar bumpers were named after a famous TV personality.
15. I've won the U.S. Car of the Year Award five times.
16. In 1953, my company's slogan was "The Standard of the World."

17. In 1909, my company produced the first limousine.
18. The well-known laurel wreath on my crest was removed in 2000.
19. People associate my name with luxury and the finer things in life.
20. Top Mary Kay cosmetics sellers are rewarded with me...in a distinctive shade of pink!

Can you guess what I am? You guessed it—I am a Cadillac!



Print a copy of the [pictures](#) to pass around as you share and discuss the information in the article with your group. See if your library owns any coffee table books about Cadillacs, such as [Cadillac: 100 Years of Innovation](#) or [Cadillac: A Century of Excellence](#). If you have access to any toy or model Cadillac cars, bring them in to pass around during the activity.

Introduction

When you hear the word *Cadillac*, what do you think of? Images of sleek, powerful cars and their wealthy owners come to mind. Luxury, power, and comfort are part of Cadillac's well-earned reputation. Even at its very beginnings, Cadillac worked to create vehicles that stood out as being one step above the competition. Let's learn a little about how Cadillac started out and how the company achieved its current status.

Cadillac's Early Years

The birth of one of the world's most well-known luxury car companies is linked to another major name in automotive history. Henry Ford left the Henry Ford Company in 1902 and started the Ford Motor Company. Instead of dismantling the Henry Ford Company, a new company called Cadillac was formed by engineer Henry Leland and two of Ford's financial backers. The new company was named after French explorer (and the founder of Detroit) Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac.

The first two cars that Cadillac released were horseless carriages called the Runabout and the Tonneau, both of which were very similar to Ford's Model A and featured Leland's single-cylinder engine. What quickly set Cadillac apart from its competitors was its precision engineering—courtesy of Henry Leland and his background in manufacturing.

In 1909, Cadillac was purchased by General Motors and became the luxury offshoot of that company. Leland remained with the company until 1917, when he left and formed the Lincoln Motor Company.

Over the years, Cadillac has maintained its reputation for elegant styling and high-quality products. It has had many firsts in the automotive business—from first headlights and enclosed cab to first V8 engine and airbags as well as the short-lived night vision, which used thermal imaging to help

drivers' perceive distance and to enhance their vision in poor weather conditions. Cadillac was also the first to hire a stylist, Harley Earl, to design a car. This care and attention to the beauty of the car gave Cadillac a definite edge over its competitors.

Discussion Starters

- Have you ever owned a Cadillac? If so, share some of your experiences with it. At what time in your life did you have it? Do you feel that it lived up to its reputation?
- What was your first car? What memories do you associate with it?
- Do you think that people who never learn to drive (either by choice or because they live in cities with plentiful public transportation) are missing out by not owning a car? How do you think cars contribute to people's identities?

Living the Good Life

No American-made car may be more associated with luxury and a sense of "having made it" than Cadillac. The examples that follow, however, are extreme, even for the world's most opulent cars.

The 1957 Eldorado Brougham had memory power seats, a makeup kit, and magnetic whiskey glasses. It had center-opening doors that allowed people to comfortably enter either the front or back seat. The car was hand-built and had optional lamb's wool carpeting. It cost \$13,000—approximately \$110,000 today.



Somalian leopard furs were used to upholster the 1950 Debutante. It also had a gold-plated instrument panel and ignition key. The Debutante was a concept car, though, and never reached the production line. It is not known whether it still exists today.

In more recent years, Cadillac sold the most expensive car in the world—the 2002 Cadillac Cien Concept. It sold for a whopping \$3,000,000 and could reach speeds of over 200 miles per hour. It went from 0 to 60 miles per hour in under four seconds and weighed 3,086 pounds. The Cien Concept was certainly a car that needed a very specific type of owner!

Discussion Starters

- Do you have a dream car? What makes it appealing to you?
- Do you think that the type of car a person drives says something about that person?
- Do you think that luxury cars are worth their steep prices?
- If you had the means to purchase a brand-new, top-of-the line Cadillac, would you? If not, what would you prefer to spend that money on?

Cadillac Today

Although Cadillac is often associated with older generations, plenty of pop culture references increase its appeal with a younger crowd. In particular, Cadillac is featured prominently in recent hip-hop, country, and pop music hits. This is not paid product placement, but brand awareness is certainly boosted with appearances in popular music. In fact, it's the kind of exposure that's really hard to buy.



Cadillac has had experience with pop culture popularity in the past. In the early 2000s, the Escalade popped up in a lot of rap music songs and videos as well as in several TV shows. In recent years, however, SUVs have begun to lose popularity, as consumers become more interested in greener, more fuel-efficient cars.

Like every other company, Cadillac has had to change to keep up with the times. The 1970s through the 1990s are sometimes said to be Cadillac's weaker years. Even so, the company's longevity and constant attention to quality are signs that Cadillac will continue to be a formidable presence in the car industry.

Discussion Starters

- Do you pay attention to products that you see in TV shows or movies or that are mentioned in songs or in books?
- What cars from movies or TV are most memorable to you?

Driving Mr. President

Although not all presidential limousines have been Cadillacs, many Cadillacs have had the honor of transporting presidents through the years. Currently, President Obama's limo is a Cadillac nicknamed "The Beast." It has armor plating that is eight inches thick, and its bulletproof windows are five inches thick. The trunk is said to contain firefighting equipment, oxygen tanks, and a supply of blood that matches the president's blood type. The Secret Service isn't taking any chances!

President Franklin Roosevelt used a heavily armored Cadillac that was said to have been owned by Al Capone. If it was hardy enough to keep the famous gangster safe, it could surely do the same for the president!

Two Cadillac convertibles were used during the presidencies of Truman, Roosevelt, and Eisenhower. They were nicknamed the "Queen Mary" and the "Queen Elizabeth" after ocean liners of the era. At a weight of over seven thousand pounds, they certainly resembled ocean liners! The two queens were replaced in 1956. The Queen Mary II and the Queen Elizabeth II served three presidents between 1956 and 1968.

Collectors would love to own a piece of history by purchasing one of the presidential limos, but for security reasons, the cars are no longer used after their official duties have ended.

Discussion Starters

- Do you think that Cadillacs have added prestige because they are often used as presidential limos?
- What qualities are most important to you when choosing a new car? (Bulletproof windows and armor plating are probably not on your list!)

Caddy Facts

- Cadillac created the car with the first curved glass windshield. It was introduced after World War II.
- Cadillac invented the electric starter in 1912. This made it easier (and safer) for people to start their cars. A friend of Henry Leland's died in a hand-crank incident, and Leland was determined that no one else would die trying to start a Cadillac.

- The presidential Cadillac is hermetically sealed, which means it is resistant to chemical attack.
- Cadillac was the first car to have electric lights.
- The Escalade's rear wiper is invisible. Well, not quite invisible, but it is hidden when not in use. This protects it from ice in the winter and leaves the back window clear most of the time, which adds to the aesthetic appeal of the vehicle.
- The Cadillac Eldorado was the first American car with quad headlamps.
- The Eldorado was the only American convertible from 1976 until 1984 because of government safety legislation.
- Cadillac won a Dewar Award in 1908 because its cars' parts were interchangeable.
- Paramount Pictures bought one of gangster Al Capone's Cadillacs. It appeared in many movies, including *The Godfather* and *The Untouchables*. (It even boasted authentic bullet holes.)
- The tailfin on the 1949 Coupe de Ville was inspired by a fighter plane.
- In 2013, the average age of a person purchasing a Cadillac was 60.
- Cadillac has been printing 3-D prototypes for about 30 years. It has one of the world's largest 3-D printing facilities.
- Over the years, Cadillac has had a number of slogans, some more memorable than others. Here are some of the best:
 - "You can kill a horse but not a Cadillac." (1905)
 - "More eloquent than words!" (1952)
 - "Greatness never goes out of style." (1965)
 - "The most beautiful investment on the highway." (1965)
 - "Haven't you promised yourself a Cadillac long enough?" (1970)
 - "Cadillac... Who deserves one more than you?" (1982)
 - "You've arrived." (1984)



Additional Activities

1. How many Cadillac models can you name? (Some examples: Escalade, Fleetwood, Eldorado, Coupe de Ville, Brougham, Seville, Series 60, Series 70, V-16, Allanté, Calais)
2. Pink Cadillacs come up in popular culture more often than you might think. Elvis bought his first pink Cadillac in 1955. He mentioned it in a song called "Baby, Let's Play House," which came out later that year. Listen to Elvis's tune [online](#), or if you prefer something more contemporary, try Bruce Springsteen's "[Pink Cadillac](#)" and Aretha Franklin's "[Freeway of Love](#)."

3. Go online to learn about [Cadillac Ranch](#), a piece of public artwork in Texas. Cadillac Ranch, located near Amarillo, features 10 Cadillacs, each a different model. They are halfway buried in a line facing west with their front ends in the ground.



4. Design your own Cadillac. What features would it have? What would you name it?

5. Watch the [episode of Seinfeld titled "The Cadillac."](#) in which Jerry buys his dad a fully loaded Cadillac. As you might expect, things don't go exactly the way he hopes.

6. If you're a fan of trying new cocktails, you may want to make a [Golden Cadillac](#). It originated at Poor Red's BBQ in El Dorado, California, in 1952. A couple celebrating their engagement visited the restaurant. The bartender made a drink in their honor and named it after their new gold Cadillac. Today, you can still order the famous cocktail at Poor Red's, as well as take a look at the actual gold Cadillac parked outside!



1948 Cadillac



1955 Cadillac Series 6



Cadillac Escalade



Cadillac Ranch



Pink Cadillac

