

Walter Hunt Biography

Walter Hunt

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

Contents

Walter Hunt Biography.....	1
Contents.....	2
Biography.....	3

Biography

Walter Hunt was a remarkably creative and prolific inventor who seldom bothered to patent or profit from his numerous devices. Born in Martinsburg, New York, Hunt invented a flax-spinning machine by the time he was 20 years old. He set up a small shop in New York City in 1826 and supported himself in the real estate business while developing dozens of practical devices. In 1827 he invented an alarm gong for streetcars, fire engines, and police stations. Then he designed the Globe coal-burning stove, a knife sharpener, and a restaurant steam table.

Sometime between 1832 and 1834 in his Amos Street shop, Hunt invented the first modern, practical sewing machine. It featured an eye-pointed needle and a second thread that created a stitch. True to form, Hunt didn't patent the machine. Legend has it that his daughter said he shouldn't market the machine lest seamstresses be put out of work. When he finally did attempt to patent the machine after Elias Howe applied for his own sewing-machine patent in 1846, Hunt was refused on the grounds that he had abandoned the design, although he was recognized as having preceded Howe with the concept.

Hunt followed his sewing machine with many improvements to firearms, an ice-breaking boat, paraffin candles, a velocipede, a machine for making nails and rivets, a street-sweeping machine, conical bullets, a self-closing inkwell, and a fountain pen. He even invented the Antipodean Performers-suction shoes used by circus performers to walk up walls and across ceilings.

Hunt invented the safety pin in three hours one day in 1849 to pay off a \$15 debt; he did patent this device but later sold his patent outright for \$400. In 1854, Hunt invented a throw-away paper collar. Again, he patented the design and this time arranged for royalty payments, but the paper collar became popular only after Hunt died. Isaac Singer arranged to pay Hunt \$50,000 for his sewing machine design in 1858 in order to clear up the patent confusion about sewing machines, but Hunt died in New York in 1859 before Singer was able to make any payments.