Nobel Prizes

Reading and Discussion

Every year, there are six Nobel Prizes that may be awarded to people of any nationality who are considered to have done outstanding and groundbreaking work.

The Nobel Prizes are awarded for achievements in one of the following subjects:

1. Physics
2. Chemistry
3. Physiology or Medicine
4. Literature
5. Peace

In 1968, Sweden’s central bank instituted an additional Nobel Prize in Economics in memory of Alfred Nobel.

The Nobel Prize is based on the will of Alfred Nobel who was from Sweden. He was a chemist, an engineer, an industrialist, a weapon manufacturer, and the inventor of dynamite. It is said that in 1888, there was a premature obituary in a French newspaper reporting that Alfred Nobel was dead. A premature obituary means that the newspaper published news about someone’s death before the person was actually dead. Referring to Alfred Nobel, the French newspaper printed that “The merchant of death was dead.” This apparently made Alfred Nobel not want to be remembered as the inventor of explosives and weapons that resulted in the death of people, but for his humanity in a different way. So in his will, which he prepared in 1895, he left most of his fortune to set up the Nobel Prize.

When Alfred Nobel died in 1896, his will was opened and it came as a great surprise to those left in charge about carrying out his will. It took about 5 years after his death for the Nobel Prizes to be awarded. In 1901, the first Nobel Prize Ceremony took place at the Old Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm. The purpose of the Nobel Prizes was to honor those who have made outstanding achievements and to ensure that with the prize money, the winners would not need to worry about money for their research and work.

The Nobel Prize ceremony takes place on the anniversary of Alfred Nobel's death, which is on the 10th December of every year. The Nobel prizes consist of three things: a medal, personal diploma, and a cash award.

The Nobel prize nomination process is quite long. There are different committees or institutions for each subject that decide who will win the Nobel Prize.

- The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences chooses five people to be on a committee, so that they can decide who the winner is in Physics, Chemistry, and Economics.
- The Swedish Academy chooses four to five people to be on the committee to decide who will win the Nobel in Literature.
• The **Karolinska Institute** chooses five people to decide the Nobel winner in Physiology or Medicine.

• The **Norwegian Nobel Committee**, which is appointed by the Norwegian Parliament, chooses five people to decide who will win the Nobel Peace prize.

Before these committees choose the Nobel winners, forms are sent out to about 3,000 people asking them to nominate candidates in each subject. These people are invited to nominate individuals whom they think are worthy of receiving a Nobel Prize for their achievements. No one can nominate himself or herself or someone who has died. Then, a committee for each subject goes over the names and makes a short list of approximately 200 people. Finally, the names of these candidates are sent to specialized people who create an even shorter list of about 15 people. Afterwards, each committee sends a report with its recommendations to the institution. The institution reviews the reports and then decides who the Nobel winners will be. The names of the people nominated are not known, and all information about them is kept secret for 50 years.
Activities

Activity A: Multiple Choice:

1. Nobel Prizes are awarded in the following subjects except:
   a. Chemistry  
   b. Physics  
   c. Medicine  
   d. Philosophy

2. Alfred Nobel:
   a. Was an engineer  
   b. Invented dynamite  
   c. Set-up the Nobel Prize  
   d. All of the above

3. The following subject was not originally included in Alfred Nobel’s will:
   a. Economics  
   b. Medicine  
   c. Literature  
   d. Physics

Activity B: Match the following pairs:

_____ 1. The Karolinska Institute  a. Decides the Nobel Prize winner for Literature.

_____ 2. The Norwegian Nobel Committee  b. Decides the Nobel Prize winner for Medicine.

_____ 3. The Swedish Academy  c. Decides the Nobel Prize winner for Peace.

Activity C: True or False:

_____ 1. The names of the nominated people are known to the public and are not kept secret.

_____ 2. Alfred Nobel did not want to be remembered as a war merchant nor as a person who caused the death of people.

_____ 3. The first Nobel Prize Ceremony was held in London in 1901.

_____ 4. The Nobel Prize Ceremony takes place every year on 10th December, which is the anniversary of Alfred Nobel’s death.
Answer Key

Activity A

1. Nobel Prizes are awarded in the following subjects except:
   a. Chemistry
   b. Physics
   c. Medicine
   d. Philosophy

2. Alfred Nobel:
   a. Was an engineer
   b. Invented dynamite
   c. Set-up the Nobel Prize
   d. All of the above

3. The following subject was not originally included in Alfred Nobel’s will:
   a. Economics
   b. Medicine
   c. Literature
   d. Physics

Activity B

   b  1. The Karolinska Institute
   a. Decides the Nobel Prize winner for Literature.

   c  2. The Norwegian Nobel Committee
   b. Decides the Nobel Prize winner for Medicine.

   a  3. The Swedish Academy
   c. Decides the Nobel Prize winner for Peace.

Activity C

   F  1. The names of the nominated people are known to the public and are not kept secret.

   T  2. Alfred Nobel did not want to be remembered as a war merchant nor as a person who caused the death of people.

   F  3. The first Nobel Prize Ceremony was held in London in 1901.

   T  4. The Nobel Prize Ceremony takes place every year on 10th December, which is the anniversary of Alfred Nobel’s death.