



Read the text about David Unaipon. Order the milestones of his life chronologically. Write the letters (A–K) into the table below. Two letters (C and J) have already been entered. Use each letter only once. There are three milestones you do not need.

A *His face became widely known in Australia.*

B *He followed in his father's footsteps.*

C *He became an apprentice.*

D *He believed he was close to unlocking a mystery.*

E *His technical skills brought him a sizeable income.*

F *He anticipated an invention.*

G *His contribution was honoured by the Queen.*

H *He documented the cultural history of his people.*

I *He opened a publishing company.*

J *He influenced government decisions.*

K *His campaign for a separate Aboriginal state was finally successful.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
C				J			

A hero for his people

One of the most famous Indigenous Australians is David Unaipon, whose portrait has featured on the Australian \$50 note since 1995. He was born in 1872 on the Point McLeay Mission station in South Australia as the child of a preacher.



David Unaipon in the late 1920s

- 5 David, the fourth of nine children, started his education at the mission school where teachers soon picked up on his intelligence. However, he left school at the age of thirteen and was sent as a servant to Adelaide. There he was encouraged by his employer to continue his education privately.
- 10 Five years later he returned to the mission and started learning the trade of a bootmaker. At the end of the 1890s he tried to make a living in Adelaide working in his trade but soon found out that his colour made this impossible. So instead he was forced to work as a storeman. Unhappy, he returned once again to Point McLeay and found employment as a book-keeper. At the age of twenty-nine he
- 15 got married and started working as a travelling preacher trying to raise support for the mission station.

Among his many abilities, Unaipon was also an inventor. He developed and patented a device for shearing sheep which formed the basis for modern mechanical shears. His lifelong passion for perpetual-motion machines and his foresighted ideas in 1914 for a helicopter based on the

- 20 principle of the boomerang led to his reputation as the Australian Leonardo da Vinci. Yet, despite his remarkable engineering talents, he never managed to make any money out of his technical skills.

His most significant work, however, was as a writer; he was one of the first Aboriginal authors to be published. In the 1920s he wrote several books on Aboriginal legends and stories. A

- 25 talented speaker and passionate campaigner for Aboriginal rights, education and welfare, he was able to have an effect on some aspects of government policy in the 1930s. However, his demand in 1926 for a separate Aboriginal state in central and northern Australia was never granted.

In recognition of his work he was awarded a Coronation Medal by Elisabeth II when she was

- 30 crowned in 1953. In old age he returned to his birthplace and continued working on his ideas on perpetual motion. In the early 1960s, aged over ninety, he thought he was getting near to discovering its secret. On 7 February 1967 he died in hospital and was buried in the Point McLeay Cemetery.