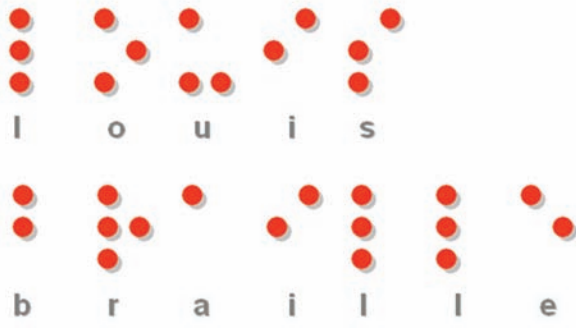


## A Young Inventor



### Mini Fact:

Braille has been adapted to other languages, including Chinese.

Have you ever thought about what it would be like to be unable to read? We read all day long: street signs, sports scores, newspapers, books, teachers' instructions, even sizes in our clothes and shoes.

But people who are blind or sight-impaired have to learn other ways to find out the same information.



Louis Braille

In 1824, a 15-year-old blind boy named Louis Braille demonstrated a better way for blind people to read. This week, The Mini Page learns more about how Louis' code changed the world for those who can't see.

### Early life

Louis Braille was born in January 1809, 210 years ago, in a small town in France called Coupvray. His father was a harness maker who worked with leather, and Louis loved to play in his father's workshop.

When he was just 3 years old, Louis climbed up on the workbench while his father was outside. As he pretended to make a hole in a piece of leather, the tool he was using slipped and punctured his right eye.

The damaged eye became infected, and soon the infection spread to Louis' left eye. By the time he was 5 years old, he was completely blind.

### Overcoming his handicap

As Louis grew, his parents taught him as much as they could. His father carved a

cane for him so he could move around the house and in the nearby village. He started his education with the local priest, who saw how smart he was. Later, Louis joined other village children at the school, but he needed more help than sighted students.

The village priest learned of a special school in Paris called the Institute for Blind Youth. He arranged for Louis to attend the school, and when he was 10 years old, Louis went to live at the school.

### Methods of reading

The founder of the institute, Valentin Haüy, had invented a system of reading and writing called **embossing**. Large letters of the alphabet would be pressed, or embossed, onto thick waxed paper, and students could trace the letters with their fingers to read.

But the size of the letters made embossed books too large and heavy to move, and they were expensive to print.

Later, a retired military man visited the school to demonstrate a system he had invented for soldiers to communicate in the dark, called **nightwriting**. He used dashes and dots to represent different sounds. Louis was excited to learn this system, but he soon figured out that it was difficult to read and didn't have symbols for punctuation.

So Louis got started on perfecting a system of his own. He worked late into the night, after classes and on weekends.

### Louis' code

Louis Braille wanted a code with which each letter could be read under one fingertip. He worked for three years to make his system just right, and finally, in 1824, he presented his invention to the school's director.

Braille's symbols represented the alphabet along with numbers, punctuation symbols and contractions.



photo by Jose Antonio Alonso

### Sharing his knowledge

Louis went on to become an instructor at the Institute for Blind Youth. His alphabet spread to other schools all across the world.

The brilliant young blind man faced many health challenges through his life, but he always managed to get well. But in 1850, he had to give up teaching for good. He was not strong enough to stand and speak loudly before his classes.

Louis Braille died on Jan. 6, 1852, two days after his 43rd birthday.

## Resources



### On the Web:

- [bit.ly/MPBraille](http://bit.ly/MPBraille)
- [bit.ly/MPgames](http://bit.ly/MPgames)

### At the library:

- "Six Dots: A Story of Young Louis Braille" by Jen Bryant

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## Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of Braille are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



- BLIND, BRAILLE, CANE,
- CODE, DASH, DOT,
- EMBOSSING, FINGERS,
- FRANCE, HARNESS,
- INSTITUTE, LEATHER,
- LETTERS, LOUIS,
- NIGHTWRITING, PARIS,
- PRIEST, READ, SCHOOL,
- TOOL.

I L F R A N C E Z D A S H U B  
 N Z L E T T E R S R I Q T F L  
 S Y P A R I S R E N A C V I I  
 T V E D O T E L L I A R B N N  
 I L O O T H D E C O D E H G D  
 T G N I T I R W T H G I N E R  
 U H R A I E K S C H O O L R E  
 T B E L O U I S P F V I M S A  
 E L J N U E M B O S S I N G D  
 T S E I R P M H A R N E S S M

## Cook's Corner

### Choco-Chip Pumpkin Muffins

#### You'll need:

- 3 cups white or wheat flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 (15-ounce) can pumpkin puree

- 1 cup canola oil
- 2 cups sugar
- 1/2 cup unsweetened applesauce
- 4 eggs
- 1 1/2 cups chocolate chips



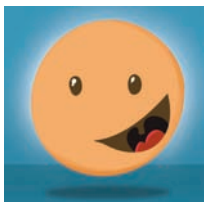
\* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

#### What to do:

1. Combine flour, baking powder, baking soda and spices in a large bowl. Mix well.
2. Beat pumpkin, oil, sugar, applesauce and eggs in separate mixing bowl until smooth.
3. Add flour mixture gradually and stir until just moistened. Gently fold in chocolate chips.
4. Line muffin tins with paper liners; fill each liner with batter until 3/4 full.
5. Bake at 400 degrees for 20 to 25 minutes until done. Makes 2 dozen.

## 7 Little Words for Kids

Use the letters in the boxes to make a word with the same meaning as the clue. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in the solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.



1. they fly in a "V" (5) \_\_\_\_\_
2. not straight (7) \_\_\_\_\_
3. hold in your arms (5) \_\_\_\_\_
4. calm (8) \_\_\_\_\_
5. opposite of straight hair (5) \_\_\_\_\_
6. write your thoughts here (7) \_\_\_\_\_
7. large body of ice (7) \_\_\_\_\_

OKED	RLY	JOUR	RY
CAR	CEF	GE	CU
ESE	NAL	GLA	ER
CI	UL	PEA	CRO

Answers: geese, crooked, carry, peaceful, curly, journal, glacier.

## Mini Jokes



- Frosty:** What often falls in the winter but never gets hurt?  
**Fiona:** Snow!

## Eco Note



Temperatures vary from year to year, but there has been an overall upward trend. Temperatures have risen by 1.3 degrees Fahrenheit since 1900. In the polar regions, they have risen much faster — by 4.1 degrees. Every decade since the 1980s has been the warmest on record. Polar ice is not the only ice that is melting. Glaciers on high mountains are also shrinking. Melted land ice is swelling the volume of water in the oceans. This is making sea levels rise.

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### For later:

Look in your newspaper for articles about other tools that help disabled people.

**Teachers:** For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit: [bit.ly/MPstandards](http://bit.ly/MPstandards). And follow The Mini Page on Facebook!



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