Great Italian Inventions

Italy is known to be a country which has produced delectable wines, enthralling operas, and beautiful people. What is less commonly known is that the Italian people have also been great inventors. Quite a few of the essential items used around the world today in science, music, and in every day life were discovered and invented in Italy.

Leonardo da Vinci is one of the most famous Italians of the Renaissance. He is known for his research, his art, and his intriguing inventions. **One of his designs from 1483 included sketches and instructions for what would one day become a parachute.** Da Vinci's idea incorporated linen and wooden poles to form a canopy that would allow someone to jump from a significantly elevated point and still land safely. While parachutes weren't widely used until more than four hundred years later, *it is quite clear that Da Vinci provided the fundamental plan for this innovative discovery.*

The first mercury barometer was invented in Italy in 1643 by Evangelista Torricelli. While being taught by Galileo, Torricelli conducted experiments concerning vacuums. He experimented with mercury in a tube placed inside a dish. He soon discovered that atmospheric changes caused the mercury level to rise and fall within the tube. He continued to fine-tune the invention until he produced a reliable *barometer* that could measure the barometric pressure, which aided in predicting weather changes.

The Italian physicist **Alessandro Volta invented the battery in 1800.** Also known as the voltaic pile, Volta's battery was the first object that generated a constant electric current. He used copper and zinc poles in diluted sulfuric acid to generate the current. Volta's discovery was dynamic in the field of electricity, and the unit of measure for electricity was named for him: *the volt.*

In the early 18th century, **Bartolomeo Cristofori worked to invent a new instrument that used the sound generated from plucking stings.** The harpsichord and the clavichord were the popular string instruments of Cristofori's time. These instruments used hooks to pluck at metal strings, but neither of them were fully satisfactory to the musicians of the era.. The harpsichord could not produce varying levels of volume, and the clavichord played too softly overall. Cristofori decided to use leather padded hammers to play the strings, instead, which could produce excellent levels of quality sound. **His invention was called the pianoforte, or the piano.** Although it took many years before Cristofori's invention was perfected, the piano finally became extensively popular in the late 18th century.